

CHALLENGES AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLANS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OTUOCHA EDUCATION ZONE OF ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study was a descriptive survey and the population of the study comprised 26 principals and 680 teachers in public secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State. Through simple random sampling, the researcher sampled 30% of teachers in the Zone. The instrument of data collection was a structured questionnaire which was developed by the researcher and validated by three experts in education. Mean, standard deviation and t-test was used to analyze data for the study. Findings revealed that principals implement strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State to a low extent. It was also revealed that non-availability of fund,

Introduction:

Education is crucial to the social and economic development of any nation. This is because education is an instrument for national development. According to the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013), education is the “instrument per excellence”. This implies that education is the foundation for everything good. The FRN (2013) stated that education is a tool that prepares its recipient for useful living resulting in the development of their intellectual capacity and contribution to national development. In Nigeria, formal education is carried out at three levels; primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

poor institutional leadership, lack of qualified staff, lack of interest on the part of stakeholders, poor communication skills, poor knowledge of the strategy implementation plan, lack of teaching resources and lack of physical facilities are some of the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone. Furthermore, there was no significant difference in the opinion of principals and teachers on the extent of implementation and challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in the Zone. It was recommended based on the findings that the Ministry of Education and the Post Primary School Service Commission should regularly organize training programmes (short courses, seminars, workshops and conferences) where principals will be educated on strategic planning and its implementation process in schools. It was also Principals are encouraged to be innovative in their thinking through improving their collaborative initiatives with private experts in the area of resource provision and development of the human capacity in their schools.

Keywords: *Challenges, Affecting, Strategic Plans, Implementation, Secondary Schools*

The secondary level of education is the conduit stage of education in Nigeria. This is because it is between the primary and tertiary education. Secondary education is that level of education that prepares students for tertiary education. The FRN (2013) further stated that secondary education is aimed at preparing students for useful living and for higher education. In each Nigerian child, secondary education will develop the knowledge, values, beliefs, practices and forces by which it can find its position and use that place to mold both itself and society for nobler ends (Chukwumah & Ezeugbor, 2015). This entail that secondary education is that level of education that equips the child for the demands of life and the requisite academic knowledge for higher education. It is therefore imperative that the curriculum, mission and vision statement, school processes and administration of secondary schools are properly drawn out so as to meet the objectives of secondary education in Nigeria. To achieve the above, secondary schools administrators need to adopt strategic plans. Before defining strategic plan, it is important to have a clear

understanding of what planning is in education. Planning according to Manafa (2015) is defined as an effort to increase the value of decision-making by deliberately identifying and regularly changing possible policy tools to find the right way to meet the school objectives. This implied that planning in education entails finding the best possible strategies to meet school goals. Similarly, Ndegwah (2014) defined planning as an administration tool used to identify an objective and then agree on the approaches, strategies, methods, procedures, time frame and resources needed to achieve the objective. It is clear that planning in education administration is integral to the achievement of goals and objectives. If planning encompasses these activities, then what is the need for a strategic plan?

Strategy is defined as the long-term direction of an organization and the types of actions required to achieve the objectives. It is the direction and scope of an organization over the long term; which achieves advantage for the organization through its configuration of resources within a changing environment and to fulfill the stakeholders' expectations (Damas, Wasike & Dhafane, 2019). Kiprop, Bommet and Michael (2015) stated that strategic planning provides significantly better performance than unplanned, opportunistic adaptive approach. It provides an integrative framework for other forms of planning. The planners have to match the activities of the organization to its environment and also the organization's resource capabilities. Strategic plan is defined as a well thought out process that integrates the values, mission, and goals of a school system with a series of coherent strategies and activities designed to achieve certain objectives (Reeves in Chukwumah & Ezeugbor, 2015).

The purpose of the strategic plan is to develop a clearer road map to guide the school to meet its objectives by concentrating on the mission, values, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the schools. Fehnel in Ereh, Chigbata and Ikpo (2019) saw strategic planning as a systematic process in which a school envisions its future and assesses its mission, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats it might face in the immediate and near future. Chukwumah and Ezeugbor (2015) noted that strategic planning is a tool that transforms the school for better performance. This is because strategic planning leads to school improvement and enhances the quality of the school products. Strategic planning significantly leads to improvement on school principals' competitiveness and students' learning outcome in schools. Strategic

planning brings the school exercises to the present by knowing what can be achieved if the school resources is properly harnessed. Mwangi (2017) averred that strategic planning enables the school principals to dedicate a significant amount of time and efforts to school operations, target-setting, monitoring, human and non-human resources management in the day-to-day activities of schools. Kiprop, Bommet and Michael (2015) emphasized that strategic planning has led to improved school practices in the USA and Europe.

In Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State, the adoption and effectiveness of the implementation of strategic plans by secondary schools as mandated by the Post Primary School Service Commission seem not to be visible to the human eye (Chukwumah, 2015). This assertion is made given the poor state of secondary schools in the education zone. Schools in the area are fraught with challenges relating to shortages of quality teachers, shortage of teaching and learning resources, ill equipped library and empty computer laboratory among others. This points to failure in the implementation of the schools strategic plan. Implementation according to Sang, Kindiki, Sang, Rotich and Kipruto (2015) is an action taken by institutional members aimed at accomplishing formulated strategies. Sang et al (2015) further noted that implementation entails reaching a consensus, information flow, group cohesiveness, control systems and risk undertaking. Raps (2009) opined that the strategic plan if formulated does not add value to the school except it is properly implemented. The implementation of the strategic plan involves having a well-crafted mission and objectives statement, environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation and control. The principal as a chief executive plays a critical role in this engagement. The principal is required to come up with plan strategies that are geared toward incorporating all stakeholders in the school according to Sang et al (2015). The failure of implementation of a school strategic plan has been blamed on factors relating to funding, lack of implementation team, lack of quality staff, lack of facilities and resources and lack of interest on the part of stakeholders in implementing the plans (Chukwumah & Ezeugbor, 2015). It has also been suggested that the noninvolvement of teachers in drafting and implementing the school strategic plan can negatively affect the successful implementation of the plan. This claim, however, has not been empirically proven to be correct. It is against this backdrop that the researcher investigated the challenges affecting the adoption and

implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary education is a very important level of education in Nigeria. This is because of its strategic position in the development of the individual for livelihood and for higher education. Sadly, in Otuocha Education Zone, the expectation of products of secondary schools seem to be below expected standard as stipulated by the objectives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) national policy on education. This failure is further manifested in the resource gap evident in most public secondary schools in the Education Zone. It worrisome to note that since the PPSSC made its own strategic plan in 2013 and instructed each school to have its own strategic plan, secondary schools in the zone seem not to have improved in terms of resource allocation and quality of products.

Secondary schools in the area are still saddled with the problems of shortage of teaching staff, ill equipped libraries and computer laboratories, lack of teaching and learning materials and poor physical conditions. This situation points to a failure in adopting a school strategic plan or inability of school leaders to implement the school strategic plan. The researcher is their worried that if this situation is left unchecked that the quality secondary education in the zone will be in shambles.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha education zone of Anambra state. Specifically, it determined:

1. The extent of principals' implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha education zone of Anambra state.
2. The challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha education zone of Anambra state.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

1. To what extent do principals' implement the school strategic plan in secondary plans in secondary schools in Otuocha education zone of Anambra State?

2. What are the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha education zone of Anambra state?

Hypotheses

The following hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent principals implement strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha education zone of Anambra state.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and on the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha education zone of Anambra state.

Method

Research Design

The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The researcher design was used because it enabled the researcher elicit information from the respondents through the use of a questionnaire.

Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Otuocha Education zone. The zone is one of the six education zones in the state. There are 26 public secondary schools in the zone.

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study comprised 26 principals and 680 teachers in public secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State. Through simple random sampling, the researcher sampled 30% of teachers in the Zone. This amounted to 204 teachers as samples for the study. The entire population of principals were used in the study. Thus, the sample for the study was 230 principals and teachers in public secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State.

Instrument of Data Collection

Data was collected through the use of a structured questionnaire which was developed by the researcher. The instrument was titled "Questionnaire on Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Strategic Plans in Secondary Schools in Otuocha Education Zone". The questionnaire has two sections; A and B. Section A elicit information on the respondents

status (Principal and Teachers). Section B1 contains eight items on information relating to implementation of strategic planning practices of secondary schools while section B2 contains eight items eliciting information on challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools. The questionnaire was based on a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE)/Strongly Agree (SA), High Extent (HE)/Agree (A), Low Extent (LE)/Disagree (D) and Very Low Extent (VLE)/Strongly Disagree (SD).

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by three experts in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The instrument was validated to ensure clarity and suitability of items for answering the research questions.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument's was determined by was administering the instrument on 10 principals and teachers in state government owned public secondary schools in Enugu Metropolis of Enugu State who were not included in the area/population of the study. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha and coefficient values of 0.84 and 0.89 for clusters B1 and B2 respectively were obtained. An overall reliability coefficient value of 0.86 was obtained for the instrument. These coefficient values indicated that the instrument was reliable because they are all above 0.70. This is in line with Nworgu (2015) who stated that research instruments with reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above are deemed reliable.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for the study were analyzed using mean and the t-test. The mean value was used to answer the research questions while the t-test was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. For the research questions, the decision rule was based on the real limits of numbers:

	Values	Real Limit
Very High Extent/ Strongly Agree	4	3.50- 4.49
High Extent/Agree	3	2.50- 3.49
Low Extent/ Low Agree	2	1.50- 2.49
Very Low Extent/Strongly Disagree	1	1.00- 1.49

For the hypotheses, where the calculated t-value was less than the critical value of t, it means that the variable did not significantly influence respondents' mean ratings and the hypothesis was not rejected. Conversely, where the calculated t-value was equal to or greater than the critical t-value, it means that the variable had a significant influence on the respondents' mean ratings and the hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question 1

To what extent is do principals implement the school strategic plans in secondary plans in secondary schools in Otuocha education zone of Anambra State?

Table 1: Respondents' Mean Ratings on the Extent of Principal' Implementation of Strategic Plans in Secondary Schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State (N=230)

S/No.	Items on Implementation of Schools' Strategic plans	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Having a clearly defined mission statement	2.34	0.70	Low Extent
2.	Having a vision statement	2.16	0.74	Low Extent
3.	Identifying the school's resources	2.70	0.80	High Extent
4.	Classifying the school's resources	2.43	0.76	Low Extent
5.	Selecting a strategy which best exploits the school's resources and capabilities relative to external opportunities	2.03	0.61	Low Extent
6.	Ensuring that the school strategy plan is progressively evaluated	2.16	0.76	Low Extent
7.	Identifying resource gaps which need to be filled	2.89	0.71	High Extent
8.	Replenishing the school's resource base	2.21	0.78	Low Extent
	Cluster Mean	2.36		Low Extent

Results in Table 1 indicate that the respondents opined that items 3 and 7 were implemented to a high extent with mean ratings of 2.70 and 2.89 respectively. However, they opined that items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 8 with mean ratings ranging from 2.03 to 2.43 and standard deviations ranging from 0.61 to 0.78 were implemented to a low extent. The cluster mean of 2.36 indicates that principals and teachers in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State opined that principals in secondary schools implemented

school strategic plans to a low Extent. The standard deviations show that principals and teachers rating for each item is closely related.

Research Question 2

What are the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra state?

Table 2: Respondents' Mean Ratings on the challenges affecting the implementation of Strategic Plans in Secondary Schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State (N=230)

S/No.	Items on challenges affecting the Implementation of Schools' Strategic plans	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Non-availability of fund to carry out the implementation process.	3.35	0.87	Agree
2.	Poor institutional leadership on the part of some principals	3.01	0.76	Agree
3.	Lack of qualified staff	2.98	0.81	Agree
4.	Non-involvement of stakeholders (teachers, parents and community) in the strategy implementation processes	3.11	0.86	Agree
5.	Poor communication skills	3.09	0.75	Agree
6.	Poor knowledge of the strategy implementation plan	3.12	0.82	Agree
7.	Lack of teaching resources	2.90	0.87	Agree
8.	Lack of physical facilities	3.05	0.76	Agree
	Cluster Mean	3.07		Agree

Result in Table 2 reveal that the respondent agreed that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 with mean ratings of 3.35, 3.01, 2.98, 3.11, 3.09, 3.12, 2.90 and 3.05 respectively are the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State. The cluster mean of 3.07 indicate that non-availability of fund, poor institutional leadership, lack of qualified staff, non-involvement of stakeholders, poor communication skills, poor knowledge of the strategy implementation plan, lack of teaching resources and lack of physical

facilities are some of the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent principals implement strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra state.

Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis of Respondents Mean Ratings on the Extent Principals implement Strategic Plans in Secondary Schools in Otuocha Education Zone

Status of Respondents	N	X	SD	df	Cal. t	Crit. t Decision
Principals	26	2.42	0.72	228	1.12	1.96 NS
Teachers	204	2.18	0.76			
Total	230					

Data in Table 3 show that the calculated t-value of 1.12 at 228 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance was less than the critical value of 1.96. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no statistically significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent principals implement strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra state.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and on the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha education zone of Anambra state.

Table 4: Summary of t-test Analysis of Respondents Mean Ratings on the challenges affecting the implementation of Strategic Plans Secondary Schools in Otuocha Education Zone

Status of Respondents	N	X	SD	df	Cal. t	Crit. t Decision
Principals	26	3.02	0.82	228	0.75	1.96 NS
Teachers	204	2.98	0.86			
Total	230					

Data in Table 4 show that the calculated t-value of 0.75 at 228 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance was less than the critical value of 1.96. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no statistically significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra state.

Discussion

Finding on the first research question revealed that principals implement strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State to a low extent. Findings further revealed that principals do not have clearly defined mission and vision statements for their school. This findings may have resulted because some of the school principals are not well in tune with outlining their schools vision in consideration of the present situation of the school or the environment in which the schools are located. Other findings revealed however that some school principals identify their school resources and know the resource gaps which needs to be filled to a high extent. However, they fail to classify the school's resources, select a strategy which will best exploit the school resources and capabilities to external opportunities. All these seem to affect the effectiveness of the school to meet the stated objectives of secondary education. This finding is in agreement with Owino and Oloko (2015) who held that school principals seem not to understand the importance of implement school strategic plans for school improvement. This lack of understanding have resulted in their inability to effectively implement their schools strategic plans. In agreement, Sang, Kindiki, Sang, Rotich and Kipruto (2015) in their study also found that most secondary schools do not have functional strategic plans to guide their respective schools to achieve their desired mission and vision. Sang et al (2015) further found that most of the plans in place are used in academic purposes, planning, and infrastructure development. Furthermore, findings revealed no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent principals implement strategic plans in their schools. This shows that the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Zone is very minimal.

Finding on the second research question revealed that that non-availability of fund, poor institutional leadership, lack of qualified staff, lack of interest on the part of stakeholders, poor communication skills, poor knowledge of

the strategy implementation plan, lack of teaching resources and lack of physical facilities are some of the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone of Anambra State. This findings is in agreement with that of Manafa (2019) who found that inadequate fund to procure materials needed for planning and principals' not involving the concerned staff in planning are also causes of poor planning. This indicate that funding is an essential element in the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools. This is because through adequate funding resources can be procured and harnessed to meet the school mission and vision statements. It is also important to note that the non-involvement of teachers and other stakeholders in the implementation of the school strategic plans is another challenge that could affect its implementation. In agreement, Chukwumah and Ezeugbor (2015) found that principals lack the necessary skills to adequately harness the school resources to meet school needs. It is therefore notable that principals who are at the fore front of strategic plan implementation process are proactive enough to ensure that all stakeholders are involved and educated on the schools strategy and direction. Further findings also revealed that principals and teachers did not differ in their opinion of the challenges affecting the implementation of strategic plan inn secondary schools in Otuocha Education Zone. The finding of the study agrees with Sang, Kindiki, Sang, Rotich and Kipruto (2015) and Chukwumah and Ezeugbor (2015) who noted that factors like poor funding, lack of teaching resource, poor communication and non-involvement of stakeholders were affecting the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools.

Conclusion

The finding of the study showed that the implementation of strategic plans in secondary school is poor. This indicate that principals of secondary school do not have adequate knowledge of the strategic plan implementation processes and procedures. The low level of implementation of school strategic plan is an indicator that certain factors impedes the effective implementation of such plans. It is clear that the ability of principals to successfully implement their school strategic plan might have resulted because of issues relating to poor funding, lack of communication skills, non-involvement of stakeholder and lack of resources. It is pertinent that principals as school leaders are adequately

equipped with necessary skills that will enhance their ability to manage the human and material resources at their disposal to meet school goals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Ministry of Education and the Post Primary School Service Commission should regularly organize training programmes (short courses, seminars, workshops and conferences) where principals will be educated on strategic planning and its implementation process in schools.
2. Principals are encouraged to be innovative in their thinking through improving their collaborative initiatives with private experts in the area of resource provision and development of the human capacity in their schools. This will reduce their overdependence on government for school resource provisions.
3. Government should review their policy regarding school strategic plan in a way that it will involve the active participation of the host community and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in education service delivery.
4. Government should actively make funds available for school principals by establishing an endowment fund for the realization and implementation of Secondary schools strategic plans.

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