
Review Article

STRATEGIC PLANNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: PROGRAMME OF ACTION

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Article No: 008 | **Received:** 20 June 2026 | **Accepted:** 30 June 2026

Abstract: Abstracts Strategic planning is an essential aspect of leadership; anybody that refused to plan has already planned to fail. This paper examined strategic planning in higher institutions in Nigeria. The paper is a position paper where the researcher review literatures on the topic. It is a form of qualitative research. It critically looked at the concept of strategic planning, higher education in Nigeria, where it states that higher education is an education given to students after they obtain secondary education. It also examined the problems of higher education in Nigeria and confirmed the degradation of the Nigerian tertiary education by producing graduates who cannot defend their certificates. Lastly the paper outlines some programmes of action for higher education in Nigeria, some of them are; the vision or mission, environmental scan and bench marking.

Keywords: Strategic Planning, Higher Education, Nigeria, Educational Management, Tertiary Institutions

Introduction

The educational sector, like any other sector in Nigeria, is faced with numerous challenges which hinder the smooth running of the higher institutions, which become a barrier for achieving its goals. Therefore, call for strategic planning in higher education. Strategic planning is an organizational management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employers and other stakeholders are working toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes/results, and assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment¹.

The development of a strategic plan for higher education became necessary so as to address various issues challenging the higher institutions of learning, as well as position it to face the emerging trends in tertiary education delivery; this is due to the necessary demand for high-quality higher education services and graduates in Nigeria. It is also aim at positioning the academic processes in the higher institutions strategically to shoulder the responsibilities vested upon it, by the established law and vision of the founding stakeholders. Strategic planning is needed in higher education in Nigeria from time to time; due to certain changes that normally takes place in the system: such as an increase in the population of students, technological changes in the society, economic instability and changes in the curriculum. The big question to ask, however, are the graduate of higher education adequately educated for labour market? This is a question that concern the graduate who are seeking employment and to employers who consider hiring them. How well does the graduate are able to perform when they obtain employment? The question of why and how are strategic in nature. This paper will focus on strategic planning in higher education; and programme of action for the successful achievements of educational goal

The concept of strategic planning

Planning involves a basic management function involving formulation of one or more detailed plans to achieve an optimum balance of needs or demands with the available human and materials resources². As a student's one can plan his programme as to when to read, carry out research, cook and have a group discussion with colleagues using the available time at his dispersal.

The concept of strategic planning simply means an organizational process of defining its strategy, or direction and making decision on how to allocate it resources in order to pursue this strategy. It may also involve control mechanism for guiding the implementation of the strategy. This is normally executed by strategic planners or strategists, who involve so may parties and research sources in their analysis of the organization and its relationship to the environment in which its completes³. From the forgoing discussion strategic planning could simply means setting of goals, determining actions goals that an organization set to achieve, and also mobilizing some resources to execute the actions.

Higher education in Nigeria

Higher education in Nigeria is the education giving after secondary school education. It comprises Federal Universities, State Universities, University of Technology, University of Agriculture, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. They are also referred to as post-secondary education or tertiary institutions, or institutions of higher learning owned either by the Federal Government, State Government or Private Agencies as provided by the National Policy on Education (NPE 2014)⁴.

The role of higher education as essentials to national development cannot be overemphasized. This is due to the contribution of higher education in producing higher

level skills and competencies as essential to national development particularly in the context of globalization and shift towards knowledge economies.

For this reason, countries all over the world Nigeria inclusive are giving higher education the need policy attention. Higher Education includes all types of study, training or trainings for research at post-secondary level, provided by the universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by competent state authorities (UNESCO 2003)⁵.

Johnstone, opined that higher education is an agent of change, national growth and instrument for the realization of collective aspiration should contribute to the development of the entire education system through teacher education, curriculum development and educational research, thereby providing educated populace needed by any country to ensure indigenous sustainable development.⁶

Problems of the higher education system in Nigeria

The recent findings in the state of Higher education in Nigeria as conducted by the World Bank and UNESCO had confirmed the degradation of the Nigerian educational system. Nigeria was a country that produced world class graduate from university who can compete very well with their colleague all over the world; and hard work was their watchword, what is happening today is that, Nigeria are only producing the worst set of uneducated tertiary graduate that cannot construct a simple sentence. Emerging a mechanical engineer from the university cannot be able to lose a nut from his car, or an Electrical Engineer who cannot perform electrical wearing in his house.

Before the discovery of oil in 1960 the Nigerian economy was founded by the revenue generated from cash crop such as groundnut, palm oil and cocoa produce from the north, western and eastern part of the country. Then children were seeing handwork in their parent and the spirit of hard work was in them. Moral education was part of the family responsibilities. Today students are unable to compete in a healthy academic atmosphere due to the destruction, roles of the family, government and the university community. Roy⁷

Babalola, also asserted that graduate of the higher education were also reported incapable of technical solutions to routine problems as expressed of individual of their level of higher education training as a result, a number of firms, especially larger ones with some investment capitals put their recruits through intensive post-employment training to prepare them to carry on with their responsibilities in their work place effectively. Recently, domestic and foreign co operations based in Nigeria like shell, Mobil, Chevron and Texaco are in a massive recruitment drive to hire Nigerian graduate from foreign institutions based in Europe, Asia, America, South Africa, including other West African countries. These co operations lack trust and confidence in the Nigerian educational system to justify their action based on the fact that they spend huge millions of naira in retraining Nigeria graduate to perform their jobs, which were supposed to be learnt at their respective institutions of higher learning.⁸

With all the problems mentioned above one can see the need for strategic planning of higher institution in Nigeria to address the present global challenges.

Programme of action for strategic planning in higher education in Nigeria

Implementing strategic planning in higher institutions is the goal and commitment for every single Dean, Director, Teacher and Employee of higher education. Hunter⁸ opined that strategic planning is often seen as a key instrument for a more rational and systematic approach to bringing about the necessary changes for greater internationalization in the daily institutional direction and operations.

The importance of strategic – planning in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria stands that, if strategy plan is carefully designed “it creates a space for collaborative implementation and becomes the glue that holds the internationalization process together. In other word, it can act to strengthen the culture of the institution to become the institution it wants to be. Strategic planning in higher education can also contributes to maintaining stability in a permanent changing environment, considering the long term goals of the higher institution.

The emergence of strategic planning in higher education comes up as the result of fluctuation in the enrolments of students, student’s demographics started to change and funding of the higher education system in Nigeria.

Programme of action

Strategic planning is a process that involves a set of interactive and overlapping decisions that leads to the development of an effective strategy for a given system. Some steps have been recognized in strategic planning process. Although every strategic plan has to go in line with need of the particular organization. But every successful “model” includes most of the following recognized steps.

The vision or mission: This is the first step in any strategic planning process of an organization in the university for example, the vision set out the reasons for the existence and what the university aims to achieve. The mission specifically identifies major goals and performance objectives. Both are defined within the framework of the philosophy of higher education in Nigeria and are also used as a context for the development of strategic planning. The higher education sector more especially the university education, is focusing on the output of the system in terms of the level of its efficiency and effectiveness and all must be in the vision statement of the university.

The environmental scan: This stage involves the analysis of the environment. It has to do with the analysis of the external and the internal environment of the university. The environment may be social, economic, demographic and political factor, the industry and internal organizational factors. The labor market projections are most valuable for the environmental scan.

The gap analysis: This is the evaluation of the difference between the current position and what university education will like to achieve in future. Higher education can

therefore develop specific strategies and allocate resource to close the gap to ensure a revitalized higher education setting. For example, in the case of entrepreneurship education in the higher education setting.

Benchmarking: This measure compares the operations, practices and best practices. Through an ongoing systematic benchmark process, a university may find a reference point for setting its own goals and target.

Strategic programming: This is the development of deliberate strategies for achieving the institutional mission. In university for instance, strategies goals, action plans and tactics are set during this stages. Strategic goals are the milestone which the university aims to achieve and such goals must involve strategic issues. Action plans relate to how the university gets to where it wants to be. Tactics are specific actions used to achieve the strategic goals and implement the strategies plan.

Emergent strategies: Some event which are unpredicted to occur and which differ from the intended strategies of the higher education and to which the institution most respond. Mintzber⁹ state that emergent strategy is “a pattern, a consistency of behaviour over time, in a realized pattern that was not expressly intended in the original planning of strategy” it result from a series of action conveying into a consistent pattern.

Evaluation of strategy: In the assessment of the success of the strategies planning process periodic evaluation of strategies, tactics and actions programme are essential. Rowley¹⁰ argued on the important of measuring performance at least one a year. To evaluate the effect of specific action on long term results and on the vision and mission of the institution. The higher institution is expected to measure the current performance against the previous self-expectations, and consider any change or event that may have impacted the desired course of actions.

Preview of the strategies plan: After a thorough assessment of the progress of the strategic plan process, the institution needs to review the strategic plan, make necessary changes and adjust its course based on the evaluation result. The revised plan most takes into consideration emergent strategies and changes affecting the institutions intended course of action. It will help the institution meet it mission or goals.

Strategies thinking: With time, people routinely make their decisions within the framework of the institution strategic vision and mission. Lerner¹⁰ strategic become an organizational norm deeply embedded within the organizations decision-making process and participants learn to think strategically as part of their regular daily activities. Strategic thinking involves “arraying options through a process of opening up institutional thinking to a range of alternative and decisions that identify the best fit between the institution, its resources and the environment” Rowley, Lijan & Dolence¹².

Conclusion

The paper examined the issue of strategic planning in higher education. The development of a strategic plan in higher education is done in order to address the various problems facing the higher educational system in Nigeria. It is also aimed at repositioning

higher education to meet the challenges of producing the high manpower needs of the country. It was concluded that for higher education to perform well, there is a need for a strategic plan from time to time through a programme of action.

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