

Effective Educational Planning of Secondary Schools in Cameroon: A Prerequisite for Academic Excellence

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Annotation: *In its broadest sense, educational planning is the application of rational, systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and goals of its students and society. Education has long been recognized as a central element in development (Bacchus, 1992). It is often said that failing to plan is planning to fail and this idiom strongly applies to the domain of education particularly secondary education which this paper focus on. Planning of secondary schools must endeavour to produce quality graduates with skills ready for the job market. This paper examined the necessity for appropriate secondary school planning and recommended the way forward by using stakeholders as pointer s to the way forward to achieving better academic excellence. Methodology used was analytical making use of secondary sources of data like journals and books.*

Keywords: *planning, educational planning, secondary schools, academic excellence.*

Introduction

Planning is forecasting or projecting an action to be carried out in the future. It is therefore a dream of what an individual or system intends to achieve within a period of time in the future. As pointed out by Aluko(2004),planning is an activity by which managers analyze present conditions so as to determine the variousways of reaching the desired goals. This implies that planning is intended to solve an identified problem of an individual or system.

Peretomode and peretomode(2008) define planning as a deliberate, systematic, organized, rational and continuous process of determining in advance what is to be done or what the goals are as well as establishing policies, programmes and procedures regarding the use of resources to achieve the predetermined objectives and goals. Undue (2007) says planning is a process of determining what is to be done, who to do it, when to do it in order to achieve the objectives economically. This further reaffirms the fact that planning is a painstaking activity that requires exploring all that are required to achieve the goals set by an institution or organization.

Since planning is an indispensable tool for charting the course of executing any viable project or activity, it is necessary to define planning as it relates to the field of education. Simply put, educational planning may be viewed as the holistic approach to mapping out all the processes and procedure necessary for ensuring a successful educational system at all levels in the state or nation. Google. Com(2017) defined educational planning as a process of setting out in advance, strategies, policies, procedures, programmes and standards through which an educational objective or set of objectives can be achieved. This means that educational planning is forecasting into the future. Educational planning can also be viewed as the step by step or the process of preparing a set of decisions about education and how it will be

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sufficiently realized with available resources (Horeegreen blogspot.com). Viewed from another perspective, educational planning aims at researching into the problems that militate against education as well as developing, implementing and advancing policies (laws and rules that govern the operation of education at all levels) programmes and reforms within educational institutions(www.learn.org.).

Another dimension in defining educational planning as presented by peretomode (1995) is that it involves the process of curriculum planning and development, school location and plant planning, manpower planning and development. In the same vein, National Open University of Nigeria (2006) viewed educational planning as involving the process of identifying educational needs, the direction which education should take and how to implement the decision taken, this implies that planning for implementation of the decision taken is the final stage in educational planning.

OBJECTIVES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL/EDUCATION PLANNING

The principal objective of secondary school education is to provide the learner with opportunities to acquire necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for the development of the self and the nation. Promote love for and loyalty to the nation (www.schoolnet.org.za>jogwel>ob---)

In India, there are four objectives of school planning

1. economic growth
2. achieving full employment
3. attaining economic self reliance
4. modernization of various sectors of the economy

Virsiyi and Donald (1999) brought out four aspects regarding planning objectives:

1. social concern
2. economic concern
3. technological concern
4. political concern

Regarding social concerns virsiyi and Donald opines that we should keep in mind that school is part of the society and that as we see the changes that school undergoes makes the society to go beyond its limit. Educational planning therefore must consider changes that school can bring to the society or how society can influence our school system.

Talking about economic concern, they explained that planners need to take into consideration the end product and the person studying. Generally, the plan must take into consideration the economic benefit to the nation in years to come.

Regarding the technical dimension, educational planning should consider the use of technology in pedagogy. The contemporary world is technologically inclined and education sector is part and parcel of this global phenomenon. Planners must put in advance technology in dispersing teaching so as to catch up with the fast growing technical world.

On political concerns, they noted that the countries where education services exist is guided by the politicians. Therefore, planning must consider the political climate and atmosphere.

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THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL PLANNING

Educational planning is imperative to produce quality man power at all levels especially secondary and higher education to drive the nation's economy. It is an indispensable tool for charting the course of executing any viable project or activity. Statistics show that due to poor statistical information on the school sector there have been insignificant government financing which have drastically affected the educational sector. due to inaccurate demographic school diagnosis in 2005, only 15% of the state budget went to the school sector of which 44% went to secondary education (sector wide approach/education Cameroon,2005). Proper demographic and school diagnosis would have indicated the gross importance of secondary education sector meriting above 44% of the 15% state budget allocated to education sector.

CHALLENGES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLANNING

The challenges shall be analyzed under the following headings:

1. poor statistics obtained
2. problem of persisting inherited grammar education which has come to stay (old habits die hard)
3. poor school mapping activities in some localities
4. unplanned secondary school planning (no strategic plan)
5. poor supervision in terms of evaluation/monitoring

POOR STATISTICS OBTAINED

The Cameroonian educational system lacks indicators and performs ant statistics information system which could avoid sailing in the dark and sometimes confusion. According to the sector wide approach, the quality of learning, the future of graduates, school mapping, the keen observation of local stakeholders, the desire to surpass needs in order to orientate information to diversify sources of financing do not seem to interest all those managing the educational system.

Progress in managing the school system could be attributed to concrete statistical data which to a greater extent is lacking in Cameroon. To the point that it is difficult to formulate policies in planning which will be far better than those in the current system? Statistics information on the school system is a common good which should be collected at all levels to be used in the management of training institutions and to forward to the administration for its proper management for the good of all.

PROBLEM OF PERSISTING INHERITED GRAMMAR EDUCATION WHICH HAS COME TO STAY (OLD HABIT DIE HARD)

Over the years (since independence) the type of education inherited persists till date and has become part of the education menu in all household. To the extent that parents see this type of education as the best. Thinking of another type of education was for children who were considered slow or weak or dull. Leke and Ndongko (2000) explain that this type of education (grammar) has become a problem to the social and economic development of Cameroon. This system inherited was not skill oriented. To the extent that it has become habitual. Planning has not been able to break the chain of grammar education being embedded in the educational system.

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POOR SCHOOL MAPPING

School mapping is a government plan to ease access to schools. But from observation our secondary schools are seemingly clustered in certain localities especially in urban zones leaving some areas with fewer schools. This frustrates planning.

UNPLANNED SECONDARY SCHOOL PLANNING (NO STRATEGIC PLAN)

Secondary school planning is not planned. In most cases strategic planning is suppose to be done in our secondary education sector considering the availability of resources and objectives to be attained. what we have observed in recent years is strategic planning in higher education.

POOR SUPERVISION IN TERMS OF EVALUATION/MONITORING

Effective evaluation /monitoring is poor. Formative and summative evaluation which is an indispensable instrument to ascertain results in the most part is weak leaving attained objectives and reporting absent.

IMPROVING PLANNING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: THE WAY FORWARD

To improve planning in secondary schools in Cameroon is the responsibility of all stakeholders in the education sector especially those in the secondary education sub sector. They include: students, parents, teachers, principals and the ministry of secondary education.

A) THE ROLE OF STUDENTS

Students are a key stakeholder in secondary schools. While other stakeholders in education are doing their best to improve the standard of secondary schools, students need to understand that all is for their good and cooperate with the school in areas of continuous presence in school, exhibiting discipline behaviour and acceptable study habits. so that accurate statistics can always be available for use by hierarchy.

B) THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents on their part need to establish cordial relationship and communication link with the school to monitor their children's conduct. Attend P T A meetings in order to be abreast with school issues related to their children's progress in school. Make sure their children actually go to school early and follow up their academic work after school.

C) THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

The teacher is a major stakeholder in the education industry and has a lot to assist planning in schools. Firstly, by researching and dishing to students the right content required for the class. Secondly, by collaborating with administration especially regarding providing some relevant information that will help school planners. Thirdly, acting as orientation agents that guide the students as they progress in their studies.

D) THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

The principal could simply be referred to as the chief executive officer of the school with varying roles associated with pedagogy, administration, finance and social. All information related to the four domain listed above need to be scrupulously taken and made available to hierarchy. It is the principal who is the coordinator of all and close collaborator of planners in the ministry of secondary education.

E) THE ROLE OF THE MINISTRY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

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The ministry of secondary education is the highest body responsible for planning after receiving relevant statistics from the subordinates who are based in schools and society. It is imperative that the ministry plan the secondary education planning and make it an issue of necessity after a period of time (after five or ten years). Strategic planning is the best way to plan secondary education with objectives clearly written.

CONCLUSION

An effective educational planning of secondary schools is suppose to be a concerted effort of many stakeholders. Each stakeholder's role will go a long way to bring effective secondary education planning. The ministry of secondary education as the major stakeholder in terms of implementation needs to develop strategic plan if an effective secondary education planning is to be carried out.

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