

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND INTERNAL EFFICIENCY IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

In recent time, concerted efforts have been made on strategic planning to achieve internal efficiency in the school system. In fact, strategic planning, as a systematic and comprehensive analytical process that scans the internal and external environment of an institution, is more than ever before now receiving attention as a viable alternative in institutional management. This paper intently examined the relationship between strategic plan implementation and internal efficiency in Nigerian universities. The descriptive survey research method was used. Two thousand seven hundred lecturers were used as participants in the study. “Strategic Plan Implementation Questionnaire” (SPIQ) and “Internal Efficiency Checklist” (IEC) designed by the researchers and validated by six experts in the field of Educational Management in the University of Ilorin were used to gather necessary data. Refined Cohort Wastage Rate and Graduation Rate were used to answer three research questions raised in the study. Pearson product-moment correlation statistical analysis was used to test the research hypothesis formulated at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that: only 11.5% of the respondents indicated that the level of implementation of strategic plan in their universities was low; wastage rate in the universities was low with a mean of 19%; graduation rate was high in each of the universities with a mean of 88%; there was significant relationship between strategic plan implementation and internal efficiency in the universities (calculated $r\text{-value} = .135 > \text{critical } r\text{-value} = .06, p \leq .05$). Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that universities’ management, staff and students should be more committed to the implementation of strategic plan to achieve internal efficiency in their institutions.

Key words: Strategic Plan Implementation, Internal Efficiency, Nigerian Universities

Introduction

Society depends on institutions of learning to produce well adjusted individuals who can fit properly into the environments. The education sector, like the economic sector, needs the use of human, material and financial resources to function. Universities, as the highest educational institutions, are statutorily charged with the responsibility of producing high level manpower/human capital. Learning at the university level could be described as effective if it results in bringing about the expected transformation in the attitudes, skills and knowledge of the recipients/students over a period of time (Babalola, 2008). In fact, effective learning, especially at that level should result in producing graduates who are adequately informed, technically equipped and morally prepared to become parents, good citizens and selfless leaders.

In recent years, however, the use of strategic planning by the Nigerian universities has become widespread due to the fact that many institutions now find themselves in circumstances where old methods of planning and management are no longer effective in guaranteeing a steady future. Strategic planning is about developing a good match between an institution's activities and the demands on the environment in which it operates (Nte, 2007). It focuses on the institution's mission, objectives, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In essence, strategic planning aims at ensuring internal efficiency of an organization/establishment or institution.

Internal efficiency is the internal operation of an organization relating to avoidance of wastages through judicious use of resources that are available to the organization at a given time. Succinctly, internal efficiency is a measurement of the use of resources to achieve the desired results. Effective strategic planning in the universities could help to reduce wastage in the use of the available resources which, in turn, could help the universities achieve their goals. But inadequate or lack of effective planning and implementation of plans, inadequate academic staff as well as poor infrastructural facilities have been identified as factors militating against internal efficiency, and invariably effective management of Nigerian universities(Ignatius,

2001). There is, therefore, the need to examine the relationship between strategic plan implementation and internal efficiency in Nigerian universities.

1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the level of strategic plan implementation in the Nigerian universities; the internal efficiency of the Nigerian universities; and the relationship between strategic plan implementation and internal efficiency in the Nigerian universities.

2. Theoretical Framework

Strategic planning is a recent management technique in vogue in organizations. In fact, the concept was developed in the United States of America in the early 1960s, as a framework for long-term decision taking in private and commercial enterprises (Martins & Macsen, 1992). In the 1970s, the concept was transferred to the management of higher education, in the context of declining student numbers, stagnant funding and increased competition amongst the numerous institutions which makeup USA higher education. In Africa, the Association of African Universities (AAU) commissioned a study in 1990 and 1991 on the cost effectiveness and cost efficiency in African Universities. The National Universities Commission (NUC) adopted the findings of the AAU and directed all universities in Nigeria to embark on strategic planning. As a result of the directive, the concept of strategic planning received wide attention in organizational behaviour literature on education in the country (Sofoluwe, 2002). Farrant (1995) identified the significance of strategic planning in achieving equilibrium between the university and its turbulent environment; helping it to absorb pressures, demonstrating competence, reducing unpredictability and establishing the basis for subsequent performance monitoring

Strategic planning is a process through which an examination of the external and internal factors of an organization results in a set of mission, purpose, objectives, policies, plans and programmes for implementation and strategies to achieve them (Higgins, 1993). Hunt (1998) elucidated that strategic planning provides a mechanism for enhancing communication between various units of an organization on its strengths and weaknesses in the pursuit of a common set of objectives. This would

enhance the organization's ability to prevent problems. In fact, Fehnel (2000) aptly noted that strategic planning is a systematic process in which an organization assesses its basic reason for being (that is, its purpose or mission), what its strengths and weaknesses are, and what opportunities and threats it might face in the immediate and foreseeable future. The organization then uses this assessment to decide whether or not to make changes in what it does, how it does it, and with whom it interacts in order to fulfill its purpose. Yepwi (2007) concluded that strategic planning is a comprehensive statement of an organization's mission, objectives and strategies, adding that it is a detailed roadmap that an organization intends to follow in conducting its activities.

Strategic planning is an exercise of foresight. It is a continuous rolling process of both planning and implementation of plans. It involves reviewing the institution's mission and setting quantified targets in the context of the internal and external environment of the institution. It is also a collective exercise as all stakeholders should be involved in the process for it to succeed. As a medium to long term form of planning, it generally spans a period of three to five years (NUC, 2003). There is no gain saying the fact that strategic planning remains a veritable tool through which an institution can use to arrive at a desired destination within a short period of time based on analysis of both internal and external factors.

Efficiency, as a concept, has its origin in economics. It is the optimal relation between inputs and outputs. The internally efficient educational cycle/system is one which turns out graduates without wasting any student-year or without dropouts or repeaters. The system may be externally quite inefficient if the graduate turned out is not what the society, economy or higher level of education wants (Ayo, 1995). According to Padmanghan (2001), internal efficiency refers to the number of students who pass from one grade to the other and complete that cycle within the stipulated period of time. It shows the relationship between input and output at a given educational level. Gupta (2001) noted that the question of internal efficiency is ultimately linked to the issue of resources allocation and utilization.

The indicators of internal efficiency used by Abdulkareem (1989); Durosaro (1991); Owolabi and Fabunmi (1999); and Afolabi (2006) are wastage rate and graduation rate. Wastage rate is caused by unsuccessful school leavers, who left school system before the completion of the course. Wastage may occur between grade

level, among those students who repeated the grade and those who dropped out of the system. Wastage rate could be crude-cohort wastage rate or refined-cohort wastage rate. Crude-cohort wastage rate is the percentage of repeaters and drop-outs from the first year to the final year of academic sessions of a given cohort of students, while refined cohort wastage rate is the percentage of those who passed out or the graduates to the enrolment of the cohort. This is based on the basic fact that not all the students that reached the final year took the final year examination or passed.

Graduation rate refers to the percentage of the students that finally leave the system on completion of the course to the total number that enrolled in the final grade of the level. This is very vital to the work of educational planners because it enables them to compute the input-output ratio in determining the efficacy of the system.

Owolabi (2000), in his study, submitted that it was unrealistic to compare the examination results of schools in terms of successful completion of a particular cycle, without at the same time considering the students inputs, and the incidence of drop-outs and the repetition in the institution, which is likely to have a great influence on their performance at their final year. Therefore, the number of students exposed to the available resources will count in their mastery of the content of what is being thought in the lecture room.

Educational programmes are expected to meet the manpower needs of the society as the products can only be useful by deploying themselves or being employed in the various sectors of the economy. It is, therefore, desirable that the general need for skills and the needs of the labour market be continuously scanned and tracked with a view to making academic curricula respond adequately to them (Chan, 1993). Strategic planning serves as multi-purpose, multi-dimensional and nebulous plan in improving and achieving internal efficiency in such complex organization as the universities. Strategic plan implementation would be of great value in the university in ensuring that there is effective mobilization of the available human and non-human resources to achieve the institution's goals.

3. Methodology

The study was a descriptive survey type. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 24 out of the 32 public universities (Federal and State) offering courses in humanities (in the Faculties of Arts, Business and Social Sciences/Management Sciences and Education) and sciences (in the Faculty of Science), and had been established before year 2005 in Nigeria as sample used in the study. Furthermore, 2700 (66.11%) out of the 4084 senior lecturers and above in the faculties were selected as respondents in the study. The study was limited to courses terminating at 400 level and only 200 level students were used as initial enrolment.

3.1 Research Questions

To guide the study, the following research questions and hypothesis were formulated:

1. What is the level of strategic plan implementation in Nigerian universities?
2. What is the wastage rate in the universities, using the 2003/2004 student cohort?
3. What is the graduation rate in the universities, using the 2003/2004 student cohort?

3.2 Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between strategic plan implementation and internal efficiency in Nigerian universities.

3.3 Research Instrument

Two researcher-designed instruments titled: “Strategic Plan Implementation Questionnaire” (SPIQ) and “Internal Efficiency Checklist” (IEC) were used to collect necessary data from respondents in the sampled universities. The instruments were validated by six experts in the field of Educational Management in the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. Test re-test method was used to obtain reliability coefficient value of .85 for SPIQ. The instruments were administered by the researchers and four research assistants.

4. Data Analysis

Refined Cohort Wastage Rate (RCWR) and Graduation Rate were used to analyze data to answer the research questions raised in the study, while Pearson product-moment correlation statistic was used to test the research hypothesis formulated at .05 level of significance.

5. Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of strategic plan implementation in the Nigerian universities?

To answer this question, the responses to the level of strategic plan implementation were collated and computed using frequency counts and percentage, as shown in Tables 1.

Table 1: Level of strategic plan implementation in the sampled Nigerian universities

N	Universities	High		Moderate		Low		Total
		No	%	No	%	No	%	
1	Abia State Universities	54	66.7	16	19.8	11	13.6	81
2	Adamawa State University	18	39.1	20	43.5	8	17.4	46
3	Adekunle Ajasin University	40	48.2	36	43.4	7	8.44	83
4	Ahmadu Bello University	78	49.7	65	41.4	14	8.9	157
5	Ambrose Ali University	30	34.5	45	51.7	12	13.8	87
6	Benue State University	46	41.4	58	52.3	7	6.31	111
7	Delta State University	54	46.6	45	38.8	17	14.7	116
8	Ebonyi State University	45	37.2	60	49.6	16	13.2	121
9	Imo State University	44	55.7	30	38	5	6.3	79
10	Kogi State University	24	38.1	34	54	5	7.9	63
11	Lagos State University	80	40.8	83	42.3	33	16.8	196
12	Nasarawa State University	23	52.3	17	38.6	4	9.19	44
13	University of Ado-Ekiti	41	35.3	60	51.7	15	12.9	116
14	University of Benin	67	48.2	54	38.8	18	12.9	139
15	University of Calabar	34	43	40	50.6	5	6.3	79
16	University of Ibadan	85	45	94	50	10	5.39	189
17	University of Ilorin	69	43.9	80	51	8	5.14	157

18	University of Jos	51	42.9	60	50.4	8	6.78	119
19	University of Lagos	35	35	50	50	15	15	100
20	University of Nigeria	75	39.9	89	47.3	24	12.8	188
21	University of Maiduguri	66	42.3	54	34.6	36	23.1	156
22	University If Port-Harcourt	35	37.66	45	48.4	13	14	93
23	University of Uyo	34	32.7	66	63.5	4	3.8	104
24	Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University	22	28.9	40	52.6	14	18.4	76
Total		1150	42.59	1241	45.96	309	11.45	2700

The results in Tables 1 show that almost all the sampled universities had fully implemented strategic plan. The reason for differences in the responses to the level of strategic plan implementation might be due to the newness of the management technique in the nation's university system as well as the commitment of the participants to strategic plan implementation in their institutions.

Research Question 2: What is the wastage rate in the universities, using the 2003/2004 student cohort?

To answer this question, the total number of students and graduates in the sampled faculties between 2003/2004 and 2005/2006 was obtained to compute Refined Cohort Wastage Rate (RCWR) as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Wastage rates in the sampled Nigerian universities

N	Universities	200L (2003/2004)	Graduates (2005/2006)	Wastage Rate
1	Abia State Universities	4067	3110	24
2	Adamawa State University	1370	1112	19
3	Adekunle Ajasin University	16406	15039	8
4	Ahmadu Bello University	12903	11387	7
5	Ambrose Ali University	11279	8091	28
6	Benue State University	11215	9756	13
7	Delta State University	9991	9102	9
8	Ebonyi State University	6931	5644	19
9	Imo State University	17840	14756	17
10	Kogi State University	4607	3026	34

11	Lagos State University	32673	29301	10
12	Nasarawa State University	1871	1007	46
13	University of Ado-Ekiti	4408	3125	29
14	University of Benin	22103	19623	11
15	University of Calabar	20802	18917	9
16	University of Ibadan	6176	4789	22
17	University of Ilorin	13331	10783	19
18	University of Jos	9175	7785	15
19	University of Lagos	19547	17208	12
20	University of Nigeria	16295	14217	13
21	University of Maiduguri	10002	8027	20
22	University If Port-Harcourt	18291	16123	12
23	University of Uyo	8539	6315	26
24	Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University	10719	7235	32
Total		290541	245478	454
Mean Wastage Rate		12106	10228	19%

Table 2 shows that 12 (50%) of the selected universities had less than 19%, the mean wastage rate, while 9 (37.5%) of these institutions had wastage rates above 19%. The wastage rate was minimal in the selected universities, which implies that internal efficiency was high in the institutions.

Research Question 3: What is the graduation rate in the universities, using the 2003/2004 student cohort?

To answer this question, the total number of students in the sampled faculties between 2003/2004 and 2005/2006 was obtained to compute the graduation rate as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Graduation rates in the sampled Nigerian universities

N	Universities	400Level (2005/2006)	Graduates (2006)	Graduation Rate
1	Abia State Universities	3203	3110	97
2	Adamawa State University	1240	1112	90
3	Adekunle Ajasin University	15430	15039	97
4	Ahmadu Bello University	12102	11387	94
5	Ambrose Ali University	10426	8091	78
6	Benue State University	10752	9756	90
7	Delta State University	9235	9102	99
8	Ebonyi State University	6003	5644	94
9	Imo State University	16998	14756	87
10	Kogi State University	3781	3026	80
11	Lagos State University	30971	29301	95
12	Nasarawa State University	1604	1007	63
13	University of Ado-Ekiti	3872	3125	81
14	University of Benin	21005	19623	93
15	University of Calabar	19654	18917	96
16	University of Ibadan	5298	4789	90
17	University of Ilorin	12972	10783	83
18	University of Jos	8734	7785	89
19	University of Lagos	18088	17208	95
20	University of Nigeria	14985	14217	95
21	University of Maiduguri	8897	8027	90
22	University If Port-Harcourt	17003	16123	95
23	University of Uyo	7968	6315	79
24	Usmanu Dan fodiyo University	9967	7235	73
Total		270188	245478	2123
Mean Graduation Rate		11258	10228	88%

As shown in Table 3, the mean graduation rate in the selected universities was 88%. Furthermore, eight (33.3%) universities had less than 88%, while 16 (67%) had above 88%. Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between strategic plan implementation and internal efficiency in Nigerian universities.

Pearson product-moment correlation statistic was used to test this hypothesis at .05 significance level. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Strategic plan implementation and internal efficiency in selected universities in Nigeria

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	Calculated r-value	Critical r-value	Decision
Strategic plan Implementation	2700	56.22	15.489				
				2698	.135	.062	Ho: Rejected
Internal Efficiency	2700	4.95	2.262				

As shown in Table 4, the calculated r-value (.135) is greater than the critical r-value (.062) at .05 level of significance and for 2698 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between strategic plan implementation and internal efficiency in the Nigerian universities, is rejected.

6. Discussion:

As indicated in Table 1, there is no gain saying the fact that strategic planning could, in no small measure, bring about better management of organizations if well implemented at the appropriate time. In fact, Chan (1993) concluded that strategic planning integrates both internal and external contexts of an organization by creating a vision of the desired future that rests firmly on common values, and this will channel institutional energies toward repositioning itself in a changing environment.

Wastage in education as shown in Table 2 happens as a result of low promotion rate, high repetition rate and high drop out rate. It presupposes that if educational managers carefully and effectively handle educational resources, better results would be achieved. Fadipe (1992) concluded that the quality of inputs always influences the outputs of the school system. Thus, educational planners and administrators must be concerned with the responsibility of reducing educational wastage.

It is obvious from the results in Table 3 that graduation rate was high in the selected universities. This implies that the mean graduation rate was high enough to establish high internal efficiency in the institutions. The results in Table 4 indicate that the high level of strategic plan implementation would enable the institutions to attain increase in graduation rate and decrease in wastage rate. In fact, as a result of the participatory nature of strategic plan implementation, staff and students would get involved in pursuing the institutions' aims and objectives, which may invariably increase their internal efficiency. The finding in this study agrees with Maiyo's (2006) that, there is significant relationship between the schools setup and drop-out rate of students. The rates of drop-out and graduation in the Nigerian universities hinge on the institutions' plans and level of implementing the plans.

7. Conclusion

Strategic planning is a detailed road map which enables an institution to efficiently and effectively manage its available resources in order to achieve its stated goals and objectives. It is reasonable, therefore, to assert truism to assert that any university without strategic planning would find it difficult to achieve stated goals and objectives. Effective implementation of strategic plan would in no small measure improve the internal efficiency and invariably the effectiveness of the universities.

8. Recommendations

Based on the results in this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Universities' management, staff and students should be more committed to the implementation of strategic plan in their institutions. Effective implementation of strategic plan would bring about better management of the university system, thereby enhancing the attainment of the institutions' vision and mission statements.

- ii. Staff and students should be given more opportunities to partake in making decisions that concern them so that they can be actively involved in strategic plan implementation in their institutions.
- iii. Wastage rate should be reduced to the barest minimum by ensuring that facilities in the institutions are improved on to accommodate more students.
- iii. More emphasis should be laid on conferences, seminars and workshops for staff and students in order to enhance effective implementation of strategic plan in their institutions.

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