

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING AS DETERMINANTS OF STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AGBANI EDUCATION ZONE

Igah, Collins Chinonso

Department of Educational Management
Enugu State University of Science & Technology, Enugu

Abstract

This study assessed strategies planning and decision as making determinants of students academic performance in public secondary schools in Agbani Education Zone. Two purposes of study and two corresponding research questions were used for the study. The study was carried out using a descriptive survey design. The population for the study was the entire teachers in Agbani Education Zone. The population includes 1121 teachers in the Zone. Taro yamen formular was used to determine sample size of 295 (251 was retrieved). Simple random sampling was used to select all the secondary schools in the zone. The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed structured questionnaire titled “strategic planning and decision making as determinants of students academic performance (SPDMDSAPQ)”. To assess the internal consistency of the instrument, the researcher applied the Cronbach alpha reliability method, producing value of .75, confirming its reliability. Data collected from their responses were used in analyzinig the study using mean statistics. Data collected revealed that there is relationship between strategic planning, decision-making, and students' academic performance in secondary schools and that effective strategic planning and decision-making practices contribute to improved academic performance. From the findings, it was recommended that teachers and principals should adopt strategic planning and decision-making, to assist students' in their academic performance in secondary schools and that students should be encouraged to plan and make prompt decisions since it improves students academic performance.

Keywords: Strategic Planning, Decision making, academic performance.

Introduction

Strategic planning has been defined as a formal means by which an organization communicates its goals, priorities, and mission to the external stakeholders; and informs the decision and action that shape the organization. Poister (2020) argued that, strategic planning assumed a broader picture approach by blending the futuristic thinking, objective analysis, and subjective evaluation of priorities, goals and values that enable the organization to maneuvers into the future by ensuring that the organization’s effectiveness, vitality and its ability to add value to the public thus enhancing performance. Strategic planning process is conducted in organizations to facilitate setting of spending priorities. Both private and public sectors organization apply strategic planning as a tool to fast track their performances (Arasa and K’Obonyo, 2021). It involves selecting from a range of strategies and building a plan to carry out those strategies, which include marshaling the available resources and organizational elements necessary to carry out the plans and evaluate their performance. Planning enable programs within the institution to run to completion without stalling (Kesi, 2020). Strategic planning has been more important for the schools as an organization to deal with the changing of so many aspects of life which make strategic planning more crucial for a longer business life and competitiveness (Al-Shaikh, 2019). Strategic planning is considered as an important tool of management (Aldehayyat, 2020). Stonehouse and Pemberton (2018), stated that strategic planning is a center on the setting of long-term organizational objectives and the development

and implementation of plans designed to achieve them. Daft (2021), International Academic Research Journal of Business and Technology described that planning as the act of determining goals and defining the means for achieving them and planning helps managers think toward the future rather than thinking merely in terms of day-to-day activities. Thus, it can be concluded that strategic planning is the process to determining the long-term goals and the objectives of the organization and determining the guidelines and procedures to attain them. Al-Shaikh (2019), argued that the benefits of strategic planning are highlighted from various perspectives. Among others is generating information, ensuring thorough consideration of all feasible options, forcing the company to evaluate its environment, stimulating new ideas, increasing motivation and enhancing internal communication. Long-term planning is important not only for business but also for education. There are no reasons for organization to ignore doing it, because the strategic planning enables them to capitalize the opportunities that lie in the future and be able to prevent the threats it contains for effective decision making.

Decision-making involves making trade offs that are constrained by the limits of human cognition and influenced by personal and environmental characteristics. Personal characteristics include past experiences (Juliussen, 2017), biases (Kahneman, 2023), and emotions (Damasio, 2024). Environmental influences include perceived feasibility, expected outcomes, and social consequences (Grant, 2021). The limitations of human cognition require that effort be expended to identify evaluate alternatives until the decision maker stops searching and makes a decision (Zopounidis, 2021). The decision maker's ability to maximize choice is strongly influenced by the conditions of the choice situation. In the rational model of decision making, the ideal choice situation is one in which the decision maker is fully aware of the desired outcome, has identified clear selection criteria, can evaluate each alternative to determine the optimal choice, and has the ability to implement the decision (Schoenfeld, 2021). Open-ended problems in self-directed learning rarely meet all conditions for being considered ideal decision situations. Here, the concept of bounded rationality may be more appropriate, as it recognizes that the decision maker must explore all options, has a limited ability to predict the outcomes of each choice, and selects options that are satisfactory within the given constraints (Simon, 2017). Objectively rational decision making becomes largely impractical when the problem space is not well defined and an exhaustive list of options cannot be provided. Kaggwa (2018) explained academic performance as the quality and quantity of knowledge, skills, techniques and positive attitudes, behaviors and philosophy that students achieve. Strategy has always been considered the queen of the managerial disciplines (Boisot, 2018). Many of the misconceptions with strategy begin with its use in the corporate sector. Bush (2022) argued that schools are too different to commercial companies in the nature of their business for direct sharing of concepts. Kelly (2017) argued that business leaders develop strategy, whereas educational leaders develop people. However, recently Davies and Davies (2016) highlighted that strategic leadership is not a new categorization of leadership, but a key dimension of any leadership activity. Commonly, criticism of strategy, strategic management and strategic leadership begin with the central argument that schools are about learning and teaching not corporate management and that corporate models remove the leaders attention away from an instructional leader. The school academic strategies begin with the school setting a direction by articulating a vision for schools, specific goals consistent with that vision and a framework of best practices that principals can use to achieve that vision and meet key goals. The strategies give principals and their teachers the support, the capacity, the resources and the flexibility to meet their goals. A comprehensive strategic plan provides principals and their staff with direction and support so that they can shape and implement a school improvement plan based on the unique context of their school and the academic, social and emotional needs of their students. The district education office can assist each school leadership team in developing a school improvement plan and provide the resources, the high-quality professional

development, and the technical assistance, coaching and feedback to the school principal and teachers, then school leadership team should be held accountable for implementing the plan with fidelity and, eventually, for improved student performance (Bottoms and Fry, 2019). The strategy should focus on motivating and engaging students in learning and performance can become an individual mandate that all educators follow—from the education ministry to the classroom teacher. The focus on students' intellectual and academic performance can become a matter of teachers' self-regulation rather than a response to external pressure as the school establishes benchmarks to ensure that students are on track to graduate from high school prepared for college and careers (National Research Council, 2018).

Academic performance is the dependent variable of this study and it is of different definitions. Academic performance at university level is considered up to the mark if the student has persistently maintained his GPA. Academic performance is a multidimensional construct consisting of three dimensions: student's characteristics, teacher/lecturer's competencies and academic environment. The students' characteristics dimension of the academic performance concerns how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers help define the extent of performance (Loo and Choy, 2020). Some investigators confirmed that the alignment of teaching strategies and learning styles has a positive impact on the academic achievement of students. Meanwhile, the present study aimed at identifying strategic planning and decision making as determinant of students' academic performance in secondary schools in Agbani Education Zone.

Statement of the Problem:

The academic performance of students in secondary schools remains a pressing concern, with many institutions struggling to achieve optimal learning outcomes. Despite the importance of strategic planning and decision-making in driving educational success, many schools lack a clear, cohesive approach to planning and decision-making, leading to ineffective resource allocation, inadequate instructional strategies, and insufficient support for students. This study seeks to investigate the relationship between strategic planning, decision-making, and students' academic performance in secondary schools, with a view to identifying best practices and areas for improvement." The effort to improve academic performance of students in national schools has occupied an important debate of education system. Secondary schools face numerous challenges, including limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and high student-teacher ratios, which can hinder strategic planning and decision-making, ultimately affecting students' academic performance. The absence of a clear, data-driven approach to strategic planning and decision-making in secondary schools can lead to ineffective allocation of resources, poor instructional strategies, and inadequate support for students, ultimately impacting their academic performance.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to identify strategic planning and decision making as determinants of students' academic performance in secondary schools in Agbani Education Zone. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. determine the relationship between strategic planning, decision-making, and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Agbani Education Zone.
2. identify effective strategic planning and decision-making practices that contribute to improved academic performance of secondary school in Agbani Education Zone.

Research Questions

The following research questions are developed to guide the study

1. What is the relationship between strategic planning, decision-making, and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Agbani Education Zone?

2. What is the effective strategic planning and decision-making practices that contribute to improved academic performance in Agbani Education?

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Agbani Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. The population for the study was the entire teachers in Agbani Education Zone. The population includes 1121 teachers in the Zone. Taro yamen formular was used to determine sample size of 295 (251 was retrieved). Simple random sampling was used to select all the secondary schools in the zone. The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire titled “ strategic planning and decision making as determinants of students academic performance (SPDMDSAPQ) with response options of ; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) respectively. The questionnaire items will be grouped into two sections, A and B. Section A for bio-data of the respondents while section B will be comprised of question items. The questionnaire was validated by three experts, two from the department of Educational Management and one from the department of Mathematics and Computer (Measurement and evaluation option), Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. The reliability of the instrument deal with the extent to which the results accruing from an instrument are stable and consistent. In order to determine how reliable the instrument was, the test –retest reliability procedure was adopted. The instrument was administered on the same respondents selected from Secondary Schools in Enugu Education Zone in two occasions at an interval of two weeks. The data gathered from the responses were statistically analyzed using Crombach Alpha, this gave a reliability index of 0.78 which signifies that the instrument is reliable. The researcher personally collected data by distributing questionnaires from the 25 teachers from the12 selected secondary schools in Agbani Education Zone. After which the researcher was immediately collect the questionnaire items from the 251 respondents out of 295 (85 percent return) sampled respondents for scoring. The data was analyzed using mean method. The mean of the nominal values assigned to the response options on the questionnaire will be using: $X = \frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$ Any mean rating of 2.5 and above will be regarded as high extent while any mean below 2.5 will be regarded as low extent.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between strategic planning, decision-making, and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Agbani Education Zone?

Table 1: Mean response on relationship between strategic planning, decision-making, and students' academic performance

s/n	Response Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	EFX	X Mean	Remark
1	Collaborative decision-making involves stakeholders, promoting a sense of ownership and commitment to academic goals.	50	50	100	51	251	601	2.39	Disagree
2	Effective strategic planning ensures resources are allocated efficiently to support academic programs.	110	80	41	40	251	802	3.19	Agree
3	Strategic planning enables schools to prioritize initiatives and focus on high-impact activities.	100	100	25	26	251	776	3.09	Agree

4	Decision-making informed by data and research helps schools make informed choices about instructional strategies, resource allocation, and student support.	120	50	40	41	251	751	2.99	Agree
5	Effective decision-making allows schools to adapt to changing circumstances, such as shifts in student needs or new technologies.	130	30	10	81	251	711	2.83	Agree
Grand Mean								2.89	Agree

From the table 1 above, the analysis showed items 2, 3, 4 and 5 with the mean score with the mean score of 3.19, 3.09, 2.99 and 2.83 were above the cutoff point of 2.50. This implies that relationship between strategic planning, decision-making, and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Agbani Education Zone.

Research Question 2: What is the effective strategic planning and decision-making practices that contribute to improved academic performance in Agbani Education?

Table 2: Mean response on the effective strategic planning and decision-making practices that contribute to improved academic performance.

S/N	Response Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	EFX	X mean	Remark
6	Developing Clear Strategic Plans: Establishing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives that align with the institution's vision and mission.	80	70	20	81	251	651	2.59	Agree
7	Data-Driven Decision-Making: Using data and evidence to inform decisions, assess progress, and adjust strategies as needed.	75	30	50	96	251	586	2.33	Disagree
8	Stakeholder Engagement: Involving stakeholders, including students, parents, faculty, and community members, in the strategic planning process to promote ownership and commitment.	150	10	80	11	251	801	3.19	Agree
9	Resource Allocation: Allocating resources efficiently, guided by data-driven decision-making, to maximize impact on institutional performance..	100	100	30	21	251	781	3.11	Agree
10	Continuous Improvement: Regularly assessing and refining strategies to meet evolving challenges and capitalize on new opportunities.	50	50	130	21	251	631	2.51	Agree
Grand Mean								2.74	Agree

From the computed mean in table 2: it was found that the mean of items (6,8,9 and 10) were above the cut- off point of 2.50 and therefore agreeing on how effective strategic planning and decision-making practices contribute to improved academic performance in Agbani Education. While items (7) were below the cutoff point of 2.5 therefore not agreed on how effective strategic planning and decision-making practices contribute to improved academic performance in Agbani Education.

Summary of the Findings

The major findings of this work are as follows:

1. Results of the findings shows that there is relationship between strategic planning, decision-making, and students' academic performance in secondary schools
2. Result of the findings shows that effective strategic planning and decision-making practices contribute to improved academic performance.

Discussions

Findings in research question one showed that the relationship between strategic planning, decision-making, and students' academic performance in secondary schools is positive. From the findings the study agreed that effective strategic planning ensures resources are allocated efficiently to support academic programs, strategic planning enables schools to prioritize initiatives and focus on high-impact activities, decision-making informed by data and research helps schools make informed choices about instructional strategies, resource allocation, and student support, effective decision-making allows schools to adapt to changing circumstances, such as shifts in student needs or new technologies. This has link with the findings of Fagbemi, Sani & Ajibade, (2022) who opined that there is a significant relationship between strategic planning, decision-making, and students' academic performance in secondary schools.

Findings in research question 2 sought to find out effective strategic planning and decision-making practices that contribute to improved academic performance in Agbani Education. From the findings the study agreed that developing clear strategic Plans: Establishing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives that align with the institution's vision and mission, involving stakeholders, including students, parents, faculty, and community members, in the strategic planning process to promote ownership and commitment, allocating resources efficiently, guided by data-driven decision-making, to maximize impact on institutional performance and that regularly assessing and refining strategies to meet evolving challenges and capitalize on new opportunities, has link with the findings of Obiageli, Lasbat and Olatunji, (2020) who revealed that effective strategic planning and decision-making practices contribute to improved academic performance.

Conclusion

The conclusion was based on the findings of this study which was earlier presented that findings show that strategic planning and decision making have a strong influence on students academic performance in secondary schools in Agbani Education. The study also found out that establishing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives that align with the institution's vision and mission that can boost decision-making informed by data and research helps schools make informed choices about instructional strategies, resource allocation, and student support.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are were made based on the analysis of data from the field and conclusion reached.

1. Teachers and principals should put strategic planning and decision-making, to assist students' in their academic performance in secondary schools
2. Students should be encouraged to plan and make prompt decisions since it improves students' academic performance.

REFERENCES

- Aldehayyat, J. S. & Twaissi, N. (2020). Strategic planning and corporate performance relationship in small business firms: Evidence from a Middle East country context. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 6(8), 255- 263.
- Al-Shaikh, F. N. (2019). Strategic planning process in developing countries: The case of United Arab Emirates business firms. *Management Research News*, 24(12), 7-16.
- Arasa, R., and K'Obonyo, P. (2021). The relationship between strategic planning and firm performance. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 2 (22), 108-112
- Boisot, R.O (2018). The report of Education, Education Research Publication.
- Bottoms, O.I. and Fry, R.O (2019). *Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice*. London: Kogan Page Limited.
- Bush, D.O. (2022). How to Manage Urban School Districts. *Harvard Business Review*, 84(11), 55-68
- Daft, R.L. (2021). *Management* (10th ed.). Mason, Ohio: South-Western, Cengage Learning.
- Davies, B.J. & Davies, B. 2004. Strategic leadership. *School Leadership and Management*, 24(1), 30–38.
- Damasio, T.O. (2024). the formal strategic planning process, planning flexibility, and innovativeness to firm performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(9), 2000-2007.
- Fagbemi, S.O., Sani, M.A. & Ajibade, J.C. (2022). *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Pitman Publishing Company, 276
- Grant, R.O. (2021). Impact of Human Capital Management on Organizational Performance. *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences* 34 (2), 11-15
- Kesi, T.O. (2020). *Diploma in Education Management for Secondary Schools*. Kenya Literature Bureau.
- Juliusson, K.A. (2017). *Proposal and Thesis Writing, An Introduction*, Panlives Publications Africa, Nairobi.
- Kaggwa, R.S. (2018). *Research Methodology*; New Delhi, new age International (P) limited publishers.
- Kahneman, F.N. (2023). *Leading Change*. Boston Mass: Harvard Business School Press.
- Kelly, C.C. (2017). Strategic planning in smaller enterprises – new empirical findings. *Management Research News*, 29(6), 334-344.
- Loo, J.N. and Choy, L.O. (2020). Strategic Planning and Firm Performance: A synthesis of More than Two Decades of Research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37, 1649-65.
- National Research Council (2018). *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. 5th edition. Holder Education UK.
- Obiageli, T.L. and Olatunji, J.C. (2020). *Educational Management Theory and Practice*. Nairobi University Press, Kenya
- Poister H. T., (2020). The Future of Strategic Planning in the Public Sector: Linking Strategic Management and Performance. *Public Administration Review*. Special Issue
- Schoenfeld, G.O. (2021). A longitudinal study of small business strategic planning. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 23(1), 7-15.
- Simon, U.O. (2017). *Strategic Planning: A Practical Guide to Strategy Formulation and Execution*. California: Praeger.
- Stonehouse, G., & Pemberton, J. (2018). Strategic planning in SMEs—some empirical findings. *Management Decision*, 40(9), 853-861.
- Zopounidis, R.O. (2021). *Books, buildings and learning outcomes: An impact evaluation of World Bank support to basic education in Ghana*. Washington DC: World Bank