Promoting Educational Resilience through Effective Strategic Planning of Students Learning Outcomes by Educational Institutions

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Abstract
The paper examined the ways of promoting educational resilience through strategic planning of students learning outcomes by educational institutions management. Specifically, it investigated the extent management strategic planning operations can improve students learning outcomes, and promote educational resilience. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study, and it was carried out in National Open University of Nigeria with a population of 600 facilitators/lectures in eight faculties. A sample of 60 lectures was purposefully selected from five faculties. A 16-items questionnaire and secondary data were used for data collection. The questionnaire was validated and trial tested to determine the reliability coefficient, which was 0.80. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the two research questions. The findings revealed that management strategic planning operations can improve students learning outcomes to a high extent, such as: the institutions’ mission, vision, aspirations and objectives, core values, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; strategies and operational tactics; evaluation and funding streams. It was also revealed that effective strategic planning of students learning outcomes can promote educational resilience to a very high extent, such as: creating an inclusive process (collaboration); having expectation for shared responsibility, taking ownership in managing and securing data, consistency in motivating and building staff capacities, and commitment to making changes in organization. The study gave the importance of Strategic planning in education amidst the past COVID experiences; and the limitations of strategic planning in building educational resilience, these ranges from cultural, structural, managerial values, environmental, human resource capacity, management style, to inadequate strategy formulation and implementation of plans.

Keywords: Strategic Planning, Educational Resilience, Learning outcomes.

Introduction
Fostering educational resilience through strategic planning in open learning institutions entails promoting healthy behaviours, better employment and high-quality standard. Strategic planning in education is the process of determining educational long-term goals and identifying the best approach for achieving those goals (Krach, 2006). It involves defining educational strategy or direction and making decisions on allocating resources to pursue the strategy, including its capital and people. It also encompasses the determination or re-assessment of the vision, mission and goals of education and mapping out objective (measurable) ways to accomplish the identified goals. The stages of strategic planning in education involves the following four basic management operations stages, consisting of: (i) system analysis; (ii) policy formulation; (iii) action planning and implementation, and iv) evaluation. Educational institutions of all sizes use strategic planning to achieve the broad goals of improving student outcomes while staying within the resources they are given. Educators adopt blended strategic planning with community engagement activities to ensure that the students’ learning outcomes are increased and the quality of graduates produced are improved (Billingham, 2012). Thus, the philosophy of open learning is based on accessibility, flexibility, quality education and life-long learning (FRN, 2006).

Learning outcomes are measurable and attainable knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes that students will acquire at the completion of a course, program or service (Mbanefo, 2019). It identifies what the learner will know and be able to do by the end of a programme. However, it is a statement that describes the significant and essential learning that students achieve and can reliably demonstrate at the end of a programme (Shirley, 2014).

Psychologists define resilience as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress, such as family and relationship problems, serious health and emotional problems, or workplace and financial stressors. It involves “bouncing back” from these difficult experiences and profound personal growth (APA, 2021). The role of resilience is to help one control, modify, and grow with different aspects of one’s life. It does not only help one get through difficult circumstances, but also empowers one to grow and even improve one’s life along the way. Thus, educational resilience is the ability to survive adverse conditions or challenges in education; It empowers people to accept and adopt to situations and move forward (Katie, 2020). Resilience involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that anyone can learn and develop intentionally and it takes time. One can withstand and learn from difficult and traumatic experiences by focusing on four core components to be empowered, such as: i) connection-relationship, ii) wellness, iii) healthy thinking, and iv) seeking help. Consequently, educational resilience in open learning refers to students and facilitators achieving good educational outcomes and success despite adversity.
of stress, rigor, environmental conditions and challenges. For institutions to promote resilience involves strategic planning and detailed management practice involving the whole school community to help vulnerable people do better than their circumstances and situations might have predicted. Students suffer difficulty or distress in open and distance learning but they demonstrate resilience through their individuals' efforts; they rebuild their lives and stay on to complete their courses (Mbanefo, 2019).

The strategic plan entails evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the institution and developing an action plan template. The major parts/components of a standard strategic plan according to Krach (2016) include the following: Mission, vision, and aspirations; Core values; Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT); Objectives, strategies, and operational tactics (OSOT); Evaluation and funding streams. The Educational Institutions Management Operations: The educational institutions through the administrators/managers make educational policies, plans, and implement them, using the process of planning, controlling, directing, organising and evaluation. These responsibilities are sensitive to many environmental factors and there are four conditions of learning that are important and considered in planning students learning outcomes to prevent educational wastage and build resilience. These are: i) physical and emotional health and safety; ii) sense of belonging, connectedness, and support; iii) academic challenge and engagement; and iv) social and emotional competence for students and staff (Fullan, 2007).

**Problem of Study:** Students in open learning are being exposed to increasingly difficult learning tasks, rigor and life environments that can significantly obstruct their learning outcomes and academic success. Research has identified a wide range of risk factors (e.g. psychological difficulties or distress, community violence, family issues, poverty, disruption, disadvantaged location, insecurity and others) that can negatively affect students' lives, interfere with learning, and increase the likelihood of school failure (Borman & Overman, 2004). However, many studies have shown also that a probability estimate of risk does not necessarily determine future outcomes. Many factors and interactions in students' lives can help them defy the odds and experiences to succeed; Resilience has been recognized as an enabler of thriving in such adversity to remain vague in education.

**Purpose of the Study:** is to examine the ways of promoting educational resilience through strategic planning of students learning outcomes by educational institutions management. Specifically: i) To identify the management strategic planning operations that can improve students learning outcomes; ii) To examine the ways of using strategic planning effectively to promote educational resilience; iii) To discuss the importance of Strategic planning in education amidst the past COVID experiences, and explain the limitations of strategic planning in building resilience in students.

**Research questions:** The following questions guided the empirical study:
1. To what extent can institutional management strategic planning operations improve learning outcomes of students?
2. To what extent can effective strategic planning of learning outcomes promote educational resilience?

**Review of literature**

Strategic planning is characterized by its being: a continuous process and a collaborative one; dynamic and not static, it is changing and systematic for deciding the future of an organization. As it evolves over time it adopts new challenges but holding on to its principles. It is becoming and never being, according to Greg Satell (2013). It is also a tool for school self-evaluation regarding the goals and actions/implementation plans; and for achieving educational goals and students learning outcomes, especially when there is a new programme, like open online learning. The difference between planning and strategy according to Mbanefo (2022) is that Strategy is action oriented; based on practical experiences, and is for the long term, to enable the organization achieve its objectives by bringing together vision, execution and action. Strategic planning helps in knowing what we are and where we want to go so that environmental threats and opportunities can be exploited by students for resilience. The components of an effective strategy are shown in Fig. 1 as following:
The institution’s Vision: aspiration, mission: why the institutions exist and what the founders envisaged; and objectives—result that the institution aims to achieve, which are the learning outcomes. ii) The Execution: strategy: the long-term plan designed to achieve objectives; and the approach: methodology for the execution of the plan. iii) The Action are the tactics that are, smaller focus action plans that support the overall strategy, like innovations (Mbanefo, 2022).

Some essential tools for strategy planning and analysis according to Nwankwo (2014) include:

i) The SWOT analysis used to list the organization’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats; ii) The PESTEL framework used for ensuring that a broad range of possible sources of opportunities and threats are considered; iii) The McKinsey 7-S used for ensuring that all aspects of the organisation are considered when identifying its strengths and weaknesses; and iv) the Objectives and Key Results analysis.

Resilience is defined as the ability of a system to maintain key functions and processes in the face of stresses or pressures by resisting to and then recovering or adapting to change. However, resilience includes three components: a) resistance; b) recovery; and c) transformation. Resilient people tend to be flexible in their way of thinking and responding to stress. An important component of cognitive flexibility is accepting the reality of our situation, even if that situation is frightening or painful. Acceptance is a key ingredient in the ability to tolerate highly stressful situations. Dr Ginsburg (2013) proposes that there are 7 integral and interrelated components that make up being resilient, these are: competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping and control and there are four different kinds of resilience: Mental, Emotional, Social and Physical resilience. Summarily, the factors for promoting resilience are being: confidence, control, connections, commitment, calmness, and care for self. Other ways of building resilience are: Being self-compassionate; Flexible; Reframing frustrations; doing exercise and having sleep (Stace, 2012).

The techniques for building resilience according to APA (2020) include: i) Building connections with empathetic, understanding people, trustworthy and compassionate individuals, ii) Fostering wellness by taking care of one’s body for mental health and building resilience. iii) Finding purpose to help and encourage others in their own time of need. Be proactive and foster self-discovery; iv) Embrace healthy thoughts by keeping things in perspective, and v) Seeking help, when it is crucial in building one’s resilience (APA, 2020).

Literature have shown that Four main themes of factors affecting resilience were: (i) the influence of individual factors (e.g. individual traits and skills, having a higher purpose, being self-determined), (ii) environmental and organizational factors (e.g. school climate and culture), (iii) approaches that an individual takes when interacting with her/his circumstances (e.g. professional shielding and self-reflection), and (iv) effective educational interventions (e.g. resilience support services). Some examples of resilience are shown in: Overcoming challenges and problems. Staying positive, and can motivate the team or one-self to keep going. Remaining organized and focused when things go wrong. Responding constructively to problems and criticism (Youth Employment, 2018).

Resilience theory argues that it’s not the nature of adversity that is most important, but how we deal with it. When we face adversity, misfortune, or frustration, resilience helps us bounce back. It helps us survive, recover, and even thrive in the face and wake of misfortune, but that’s not all there is to it (Positive Psychology, 2022).

Problem solving theory: Problem solving according to cognitive psychology is defined as a nonroutine activity oriented toward changing an undesirable state of affairs. The focus on change differentiates problem solving from coping, which is oriented toward relieving feelings of stress. Consequently, there are problem solving skills according to Indeed Editorial Team (2020). Such as: active listening, analysis, research, creativity, communication, dependability, decision making and collaboration (team-building). This study adopted problem solving theory to examine the ways of promoting educational resilience because it focuses on change and differentiates problem solving from coping, which is oriented toward relieving feelings of stress on students.

Importance of Strategic Planning: Strategic planning is important to an educational system because: i) It provides a sense of direction and outlines measurable goals. Strategic planning is a tool that is useful for guiding day-to-day decisions and also for evaluating progress and changing approaches when moving forward; like: flipped classroom, OER materials, MOOCs and blended learning adopted by institutions after COVID-19 pandemic. ii) According to Roshina (2018) strategic planning starts by asking oneself simple questions like- What are we doing? Should we continue to do it or change our product line or the way of working? What is the impact of social, political, technological and other environmental factors on our operations? Are we prepared to accept these changes etc.? iii) Strategic planning helps in knowing what we are and where we want to go so that environmental threats and opportunities can

### Table: Objectives, Execution, Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>• Vision/Aspirations</th>
<th>• Mission</th>
<th>• Objectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>Execution</td>
<td>• Strategy</td>
<td>• Approach</td>
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Strategic planning is for school self-examination regarding the goals and means of accomplishing them, so that the school is given both direction and cohesion. Consequently, the strategies should map long-term plans to objectives and actionable steps, foster innovative and creative thinking, as well as anticipate and mitigate potential pitfalls, given the strengths and weaknesses of the institution (Overgaag, 2020). **Strategic Goals** for building educational progress and resilience in open learning could be: improving students support services, providing positive reinforcement, composure, commitment and control for students’ abilities; effective school norms; Increase number of publications; Improve Students’ academic performance; Enhanced staff performance through motivation and trainings; Restructured institutional administration; ICT and Artificial intelligence (AI) skills development; Staff capacity development on Online teaching & learning; Implementation of innovative and entrepreneurship programmes; Increase fund allocation and infrastructure; Increased community involvement and others (Mbanefo, 2022).

Consequently, Mbanefo stated that strategic planning has **limitations** which ranges from: cultural, Structural, managerial perception/values, environmental, human resource capacity, management style, to inadequate strategy formulation, implementation and monitoring. These are found in management’s lack of knowledge of strategic planning, implementation and monitoring, and lack of focus in defining their vision, mission, objectives and values; Financial resource considerations; insufficient resources to execute the plans; The organizational culture and structure in terms of managerial style and lack of flexibility to change; Interdependence of units or departments that entails lack of effective performance measures in the units and accountability;

**Methodology:** The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and it was carried out in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) to elicit information from lecturers/facilitators on the ways strategic planning of learning outcomes can promote educational resilience in Open learning institutions. The population of the study consist of 600 lecturers/facilitators in eight faculties of the University; and a sample of 60 facilitators was purposefully selected from five faculties. Two instruments were used for data collection: i) A 16-item questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on Promoting Educational Resilience through Strategic Planning of Students Learning Outcomes” (QPERSPOSLO) was administered to the HODs and lectures/facilitators, and ii) Secondary data from documents. The questionnaire was validated by three experts in the field and pilot tested to obtain the reliability coefficient: the Cronbach’s alpha (α) coefficient was .80. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using mean and standard deviation analysis of the participant’s responses to the extent the items can improve students’ learning outcomes and promote educational resilience. The boundaries of the responses were calculated by dividing the serial width (4) by the number of responses (5) and it was found to be 0.8. This was used to interpret the mean values. The acceptable boundaries for each response are: 0 = 0.0 + 0.8 = 0.8 (Not applicable), 1= 0.8+ 0.8 = 1.6 (VLE), 2= 1.6+ 0.6= 2.4 (LE), 3= 2.4 + 0.8= 3.2 (HE), 4= 3.2 + .8 = 4.0 (VHE).

**RESULTS**

**Research Question one:** To what extent can institutional management strategic planning operations improve students’ learning outcomes?

**Table 1: Mean ratings and Standard deviation analysis of the participant’s responses to the extent institution management operations can improve students’ learning outcomes.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency of Response scores</th>
<th>of the mean (x)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Having a clear vision of providing accessible education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Having a mission to provide cost-effective learning experiences</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The objective of enhancing equal opportunities that support life-long learning education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Effective interaction during facilitation (synchronous-live session)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Big-data challenges of conflicting course codes and others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Having operational tactics of introducing Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for blended learning</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The problem of hardware compatibility with server system compliance that occur in automated system of assessment/marking.

Increased allocation for funding online: instructional materials, processes and infrastructure

Implementation of entrepreneurship programmes. Cluster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency of the Response scores</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The problem of hardware compatibility with server system compliance...</td>
<td>3 2 17 29 9</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.954</td>
<td>HE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Increased allocation for funding online: instructional materials, pro...</td>
<td>- 1 6 34 19</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>.676</td>
<td>HE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Implementation of entrepreneurship programmes. Cluster</td>
<td>3 1 8 29 19</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.991</td>
<td>HE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \bar{x} = \text{Mean}; \quad SD = \text{Standard Deviation}, N= 60 \)

Table 1 above showed the mean ratings and standard deviation of the responses of the facilitators on the extent institution management strategic planning operations can improve students’ learning outcomes. The analysis indicated that the lectures rated the items 1-4 and 6 to a very high extent; and items 5, 7-9 to a high extent. The cluster mean (\( \bar{x} \)) average is 3.13 and they are accepted as high extent. The cluster standard deviation (SD) is .741, which indicates that the degree of variance from the mean is not much. It is also deduced from the analysis that the different aspects of the institution management operations can improve learning outcomes of students to a high extent in open learning.

Research Question 2: To what extent can effective strategic planning of learning outcomes promote educational resilience?

Table 2: Mean ratings and Standard deviation analysis of the participant’s responses on the extent effective strategic planning of learning outcomes can promote educational resilience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency of the Response scores</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Creating an inclusiveness process of engaging the stakeholders for resources.</td>
<td>- 1 5 19 35</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>.724</td>
<td>VHE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Taking ownership in managing (capturing, securing) data</td>
<td>1 - 9 31 19</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td>HE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Having expectation from the shared responsibilities of instructional delivery by faculties, departments and centres.</td>
<td>1 1 9 35 14</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.781</td>
<td>HE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Commitment to making changes in the organisation to adopt better options,</td>
<td>1 - 5 36 18</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>.717</td>
<td>HE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Being consistent in motivating staff,</td>
<td>- - 9 25 26</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.715</td>
<td>VHE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Constant building of stakeholders’ capacities.</td>
<td>- 1 2 35 22</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.619</td>
<td>VHE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Being consistent in ensuring standard and quality education.</td>
<td>1 - 5 29 25</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.761</td>
<td>VHE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cluster

\( \bar{x} = \text{Mean}; \quad SD = \text{Standard Deviation} \)

Table 2 above showed the mean ratings and standard deviation of the responses of the facilitators on the extent effective strategic planning of learning outcomes can promote educational resilience. The analysis indicated that the lectures rated the items 10, 14-16 to a very high extent; and items 11- 13 to a high extent. The cluster mean (\( \bar{x} \)) is 3.22 and they are accepted as being very high extent. The SD is .728 which indicates that the degree of variance from the mean is not much. It is also deduced from the analysis that the different aspects of effective strategic planning of learning outcomes can promote resilience in students to a very high extent in open learning.

Discussion of Findings

Research question one sought to find out the extent institution management strategic planning operations can improve learning outcomes of students in open learning. The results revealed that over 80% the facilitators indicated that: Having a clear vision of providing accessible education; a mission to provide cost-effective learning experiences; the objective of enhancing equal opportunities that support life-long learning education; Having operational tactics of introducing Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for blended learning and Effective interaction during facilitation; can improve students learning outcomes to a very high extent. These are in line with Krach (2016) who opined that the items are components of standard strategic planning. The Big-data challenges of conflicting course codes and others, and the problem of hardware compatibility with server system compliance, can improve students learning outcomes to a high extent. These are also in line with Fullan (2007) who stated that academic challenge and engagements are important conditions considered in planning students learning outcomes to prevent educational wastage and build resilience. Increased allocation for funding online instructional materials and infrastructure and Implementation of entrepreneurship programmes can improve learning outcomes. These are also in line with the
findings Billingham (2012) what stated that a good strategic plan can improve students learning outcomes, keep great teachers and enhance the reputation of school management.

The second research question sought to determine the extent effective strategic planning of learning outcomes can promote educational resilience. Over 85% of the facilitators/lecturers expressed in their responses that Creating collaborative and inclusiveness process of engaging the stakeholders (facilitators, students, experts and community) for resources can promote educational resilience to a very high extent. This is in line with the findings of Billingham (2012) who stated that strategic planning is best accomplished with the inclusion of community. Taking ownership in managing (capturing, integrating, storing, securing) data; Having expectation from the shared responsibilities of instructional delivery: Commitment to making changes to adopt better options; Being consistent in motivating staff and ensuring standard and quality education; Constant building of stakeholders capacities can promote educational resilience to a very high extent. These are in line with Mbanefo (2022) who opined that staff capacity development on online teaching and learning; Implementation of innovative and entrepreneurship programmes, and community involvement can promote educational resilience.

Conclusion
Consequently, the practices of the institutional management that result in more effective strategic plans are: personal involvement; community engagement, and collaborative planning to gain community support. Strategic planning helps in knowing what we are and where we want to go so that environmental threats and opportunities can be exploited by staff and students for resilience. It is good to build resilience in students to help them discover and tap into their strengths and support systems to overcome challenges/hardship and work through problems. This is also applicable to staff (the facilitators) that are shifting to online instructional delivery.

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