



Strategic Plan Implementation and Monitoring in Secondary Schools in Anambra State

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ARTICLE INFO

Article No.: 012315011

Type: Research

DOI: 10.15580/GJER.2015.2.012315011

Submitted: 26/09/2014

Accepted: 02/03/2015

Published: 25/03/2015

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Keywords:

strategic planning, implementation, monitoring, secondary school

ABSTRACT

This study examines how proper implementation of strategic plans and monitoring enhance principals' managerial roles to contribute to quality education provision and service delivery in secondary schools in Anambra State. The study uses a descriptive survey design paradigm. Respondents consist of 217 principals of public secondary schools in the State, South-East, Nigeria. However, only 195 schools developed strategies in the plan document. There was no sampling as all the principals were used. Data were collected using 'Schools' Strategic Plan Implementation and Monitoring Questionnaire' (SSPIMQ). Research question one on a general perspective showed that schools have implemented their strategies to a moderate extent as indicated by the overall mean score of 66.81. Finding of research question two indicated that schools monitoring of the implementation of their strategic plan was to a low extent with the mean score of 14.87. Results also revealed that urban schools significantly differed from the rural in terms of implementation. However there was insignificant difference in their monitoring and evaluation. This implies that the quality assurance practice is at the average level in secondary schools. The study reveals that principals have inadequate understanding of strategic planning process. It therefore becomes pertinent that the Planning, Research and Statistics Unit should attempt organizing for educational managers (principals) and staff members, periodic capacity development workshops - regular short courses and seminars, one-on-one supervisor-subordinate discussions on strategic planning to enable them grasp the fundamentals and have confidence in planning strategically.

INTRODUCTION

Every sector of economy in our world today including education sector is fast developing great interest in quality provision and service delivery.

Quality provision in education according to (Ayeni, 2012) is the efficient management, monitoring, evaluation and reviews of the resource inputs and transformation process (teaching and learning) to produce quality outputs (students) that meet set standards and expectations of the society. Effective service delivery is a challenge facing our secondary schools today. It is the prerogative of schools to offer unique services in different areas such as academics, discipline, and regularity in attendance, commitment of teachers, enabling environment for learning, supervision, instructional materials, curriculum coverage/delivery, malpractice-free examinations, moral, career counseling, community relations, aestheticism, sports, cultural activities and Information Communication Technology (ICT). There is a public outcry about the deterioration in quality of public education. A number of scholars and education stakeholders in the different States of Nigeria, such as (Ajobiewe, 2008; Iyamu, 2005 & Titilayo, 2002) pointed out the gross dissatisfaction with the quality of education delivery and output in the Nigerian education sector today. Anambra State Government painfully decried the degree of deterioration of education system in the State particularly as concerned the provision of essential reading materials. These challenges have been identified as poor quality assurance, poor funding, poor infrastructure, poor quality teachers, inadequate staffing, lack of equipment and facilities among others (Anambra State Government 2010).

The goal of secondary education in Nigeria as we all know according to the National Policy on Education is to prepare the people for useful living in the society and for participation in higher education, Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2008). From the stated broad and specific objectives it is right to conclude that secondary education in Nigeria has services to perform for each student that comes into it. It has the duty to reveal to each student his dominant powers and develop them to the highest degree possible within the time the student is in school. Specifically secondary education should develop in each Nigerian child the knowledge, interests, ideals, habits, and powers whereby he will find his place and use that place to shape both himself and society towards nobler ends.

Onwuka (1994) describes this type of education as that which helps people to become good workers who, effectively combine their hands, heads and hearts.

The provision of resources, facilities and funds in right quantity and quality is one of the major determinants for the achievement of these broad goals. However, the (FRN) (2008 p.viii) strongly emphasized among other things the need to promote "the effective use of strategic planning to improve the quality of education provision and service delivery".

Strategic planning is about developing a good match between the activities of an institution and the demands of 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 or institution. Fehnel (2000) defined strategic planning, as a systematic process in which an organization envisions its future and assesses its basic reason for being (i.e. its purpose or mission), what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) it might face in the immediate and foreseeable future. Strategic planning is seriously advocated for because many institutions and organizations now find themselves in circumstances where old methods of planning and management are no longer effective in dealing with the future. It is used to provide the institutions, stakeholders and managers with a clearer future of how a rapidly changing environment is shaping the critical decisions that their institutions face and how it is conditioning the resources that the institution is likely to have to carry out its decisions. Typically, strategic planning includes the following components: setting a vision for the organization; scanning the external environment; assessing internal capabilities; and establishing goals, performance measures, and implementation of plans. Strategic planning keeps the organization focused.

It is pertinent therefore that if improved and qualitative education is desired by any government for its citizens, adequate attention should be given to strategic planning in the education system. This has to do with ensuring that adequate resources (human and material), equipment, facilities and funds are provided to enable the principals to plan strategically and hope to maximally achieve the objectives of their schools.

It is however noted that over the years the challenges facing our public secondary schools have been those of poor infrastructure, inadequate staffing, inadequate funding, and poor quality assurance owing to various training limitations (e.g. lack of facilities, equipment and essential reading materials, etc.) unsuitable policy environment and other organizational and management issues pertaining to school administration, manpower requirements and curriculum development, (Onwuliri, 2008). Probably the reason for the unfortunate situation could be adduced to poor strategic management skills of the principals who have not dutifully planned strategically to put things in place. Besides, many policies and programmes have been initiated in the past without commensurate result or impact. It would seem therefore that the need for the use of effective tools for school administration has not been given requisite attention.

To address these challenges and other problems of education sector, the Minister of Education in 2008 developed a 4 - Year Strategic Plan for the Development of Education Sector which took off from 2011 and to last till 2015. It is expected that at the end of

this period, the Nigerian Education system will be able to effectively support “Nigeria’s human capacity needs and meet developmental objectives” (FRN, 2008 p. 10). However, this can only be acceded to the local level and other sectors if these sectors play their own part. It is then ardent that each State should re-examine the state of its education or face the problem of being behind. To this effect, the government of Anambra State in turn, empowered the Anambra State Education Sector to initiate a Strategic Plan in which the entire secondary schools in the State will participate for the sole purpose of salvaging the system (Anambra State Government, 2010). The Post-Primary School Service Commission (PPSSC) Anambra State is at the forefront as the agency that manages the secondary school sector and has therefore developed a strategic plan in line with the State’s Strategic Education Sector Plans (SESP). This body in turn mandates the secondary schools to develop and implement their own strategic plan which took bearing from the commission’s strategic plan. PPSSC strategic plan encompasses the following: vision and mission statements, goals/policy objectives, strategy, time-frame, targets, output, outcome and indicators of performance.

Concepts of Strategic Planning and Implementation

Johnson and Scholes, (2002) define Strategic planning as a means that determines the direction and scope of an organization over the long term, matching its resources to its changing environment and in particular, its markets, customers and clients, so as to meet Stakeholders’ expectations.

Yepwi, (2007) asserts that basically strategic planning is a comprehensive statement for an organization’s mission objectives and strategies, a ‘detailed road map’ of the direction and course that an organization intends to follow in conducting its activities. The latest definition agrees with earlier definitions already proffered. Strategic planning is therefore an organization’s process of defining its strategy or direction of making decisions; on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy. Goodstein, Nolan and Pfeiffer, (2008) defined it as the process by which the guiding members of an organization envisions its future and develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future. This involves a belief that aspects of the future can be influenced and changed by what we do now. It helps the organization to create its future. Strategic planning as a reiterative process builds the strategic-management capacity of the organization.

Bryson, (2011) defines strategic planning as a set of concepts, procedures and tools, designed to assist leaders and managers with their tasks. It is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization or other entity is, what it does and why it does it with a focus on the future. Bryson is more technical by describing it as “a set of concepts, procedures, and tools designed to help leaders,

managers, and others think and act strategically on behalf of their institutions and their institutions’ stakeholders.”

Strategic planning forms a bridge between where an institution is now and where it wants to be in future in the light of its analysis of the environment. It analyzes internal strengths and weaknesses; external opportunities and threats; generates alternative strategies; chooses from alternatives in the light of predetermined criteria; sets measurable goals and objectives; draws up implementation plans, which include action plans, people responsible and time frames and draws up evaluation criteria. Bryson (2004) states that Strategic Planning is a process whereby an organization makes choices through asking the following questions: Why do we exist? What are the major goals of this organization? What resources do we need for a successful future? Who will be our customers?

Ansoff and McDonnell (1990) define implementation as a process that establishes a desired organizational behaviour, in accordance with the strategy content. Implementation they continued is the process of causing the firm to behave in accordance with the purposes, guidelines and strategies.

According to Merriam–Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (2001) implementation is the completion of the actions and tasks that the plans laid out. Implementation is the carrying out, execution, or practice of a plan, a method, or any design for doing something. As such, implementation is the action that must follow any preliminary thinking in order for something to actually happen. For de Kluyver and Pearce (2003) implementation is a hands-on operation and action-oriented human behavioral activity that calls for executive leadership and key managerial skills. In addition, implementing a newly crafted strategy often entails a change in corporate direction and frequently requires a focus on effecting strategic change. FCAR (2001 p.6) therefore emphasizes the importance of undertaking the following necessary and specific steps in strategic planning (a) develop and implement the plan and (b) track and monitor progress as well as review or revise plans.

Statement of the Problem

The ultimate goal of secondary education is to develop the individual’s mental capacity and character for higher education and useful living within the society (FRN, 2008). In spite of the societal demand for quality assurance in education and the need for thorough policy implementation, monitoring and supervision in schools, there is a growing concern about the realization of secondary education objectives due to doubt that many principals give little attention to implementation and monitoring/supervision of strategic plans of their schools. Consequently, there have been steady poor policy implementation; monitoring and evaluation according to Okah (2011). This has been largely attributed to gaps in poor management skills and lack of accountability of

principals which are among the major challenges facing education in Anambra State (Anambra State Government, 2010). The identified gaps and challenges include the following:

- 1) poor quality formulation of strategic plans;
- 2) inappropriate strategies for implementation;
- 3) lack of commitment of stakeholders of education;
- 4) lack of proper monitoring and evaluation;
- 5) inadequate training facilities to develop teachers/students;
- 6) poor quality funding

A consideration of the above shows that there is a greater challenge ahead of principals partly because of existing gaps and poor quality education provision inadequacies in their supervisory duties. Effective strategic plan formulation and implementation is a major tool which school administrators use to address such strategic issues for the achievement of their schools' objectives. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the extent of strategic plan implementation and monitoring of the process in secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- (1) To what extent do secondary schools implement their strategic plans to achieve their stated goals and objectives?
- (2) To what extent do secondary schools monitor their strategic plan implementation?

Hypotheses

1. Secondary schools in urban and rural areas do not differ significantly in the implementation of their strategic plans.
2. Secondary schools in urban and rural areas do not differ significantly in the monitoring and evaluation of their strategic plan implementation.

METHOD

The study employed the descriptive survey design. With this design, both quantitative and qualitative methods which involve systematic and objective collection and analysis of data were adopted to elicit responses from the participants in order to find solutions to the problems identified. The target population comprised 195 principals of Anambra State public secondary schools. The secondary schools used were the only ones that had strategies among the 217 secondary schools that participated in strategic planning process. There was no sampling technique as all the schools from the six educational zones in Anambra State of the 21 Local Government Areas formed the population of the study. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. The questionnaire called 'Schools' Strategic Plan Implementation and Monitoring Questionnaire' (SSPIMQ) is a 26-item questionnaire made up of two sections which contained 20 and 6 items respectively. Section 1: elicited information on the extent schools implemented their strategic plans while section 2: measured the extent of monitoring the implementation of the schools' strategic planning.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

To what extent do schools implement their strategic plan?

Table 1: Extent of Schools Implementation of their Strategic Plan

Strategies	N*	Mean	SD	Remark
Objective 1: Student Academic Development				
1. Organizing career Convention for students by school guidance Counsellor	165	3.85	.82	Moderate
2. Organizing leadership training for functionaries by the guidance Counsellor	165	3.61	1.03	Moderate
3. Inviting resource persons for teaching entrepreneurial subjects to Students	137	3.60	.97	Moderate
4. Awarding prizes to best students in different core subjects as incentives for hard work	168	3.73	.83	Moderate
5. Sponsoring of students to competition such as cowbell, peak milk, mathematics, science and essay competition	181	3.68	.94	Moderate
Objective 2: Staff Development				
6. Sponsoring teachers to conference organized by Professional bodies like WAEC, NECO, STAN, G/C etc annually	168	3.66	.85	Moderate
7. Giving teachers the chance to gain the ICT knowledge	162	2.64	.94	Low
8. Inviting resource persons to assist in teachers' forum/discussion monthly	177	3.66	.78	Moderate
9. Organizing clinical supervision every two weeks by principals and vice-principals	172	3.09	.80	Moderate
10. Sponsoring teachers to workshop to train as trainers by the school	141	2.35	.77	Low
Objective 3: Infrastructural Development				
11. Reaching NGOS with fund raising proposal for building of the dormitories in specified period	166	2.26	.84	Low
12. Raising funds for Old Girls/Old Boys Association in respect of building new classroom blocks	184	3.33	.98	Moderate
13. Sourcing fund from State Government to build toilets and bathrooms for students	181	2.33	.74	Low
14. Raising funds by the friends of the school to renovate dilapidated classroom blocks	126	3.74	.74	Moderate
15. Applying to State Government to build well equipped science laboratory	180	2.49	.77	Low
16. Renovating the existing science and Home Economics Laboratories through raising funds from the PTA	159	3.77	.65	Moderate
17. Sourcing fund from the State Government to procure facilities for the science laboratories	181	3.20	.99	Moderate
Objective 4: School Library Development				
18. Providing a standard school library by raising funds from PTA and the State Government	169	3.39	.91	Moderate
19. Providing furniture for the school library through the PTA funds	165	3.38	.88	Moderate
Objective 5: School ICT Development				
20. Applying to the State Government and philanthropists to help equip the ICT room.	157	3.02	1.04	Moderate

*Analysis based on 195 schools that developed strategies for achieving their objectives. However N varies where strategies were endorsed as "Not Applicable" by some schools.

As shown in table 1, 15 out of the 20 strategies were implemented to a moderate extent. Therefore schools were judged to have implemented their strategic plans to a moderate extent. In terms of implementation of individual objective, student academic development, staff development, infrastructural and library development were implemented to a moderate extent while school ICT development strategies were implemented to a low extent. In terms of student academic development components, all the strategies were implemented to a moderate extent. For staff development, three out of the five strategies were implemented to a moderate extent while two were

implemented to a low extent. Concerning infrastructural development objective, four out of the seven strategies associated with it were implemented to a moderate extent while the rest were implemented to a low extent. Strategies associated with library and ICT development were implemented to a moderate extent.

Research Question 2

To what extent do secondary schools monitor their strategic plan implementation?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Schools Monitoring and Evaluation of Strategic Plan Implementation

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Monitoring and Evaluation of Strategic Plan Implementation	217	14.87	3.35

Table 2 shows that the mean score for monitoring and Evaluation of Implementation is 14.87. This is below the scale average of 18.00, it was therefore decided that schools monitor and evaluate the implementation of their strategic plan to a low extent.

Hypothesis 1

Schools in urban and rural areas will not differ significantly in their implementation of their strategic plans.

Table 3: Z-test of Schools Implementation of their strategic plan by School Location

	Urban			Rural			df	Z-cal	Z-crit	Decision
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD				
Organize career Convention for students by school guidance Counsellor	91	4.11	.62	74	3.53	.92	163	4.82	1.96	Rejected
Organize leadership training for functionaries by the guidance Counsellor	85	4.12	.64	80	3.06	1.09	163	7.60	1.96	Rejected
Invite resource persons for teaching entrepreneurial subjects to Students	72	4.04	.54	65	3.11	1.09	135	6.44	1.96	Rejected
Award prizes to best students in different core subjects as incentives for hard work	95	4.05	.49	73	3.32	.98	166	6.35	1.96	Rejected
Sponsor of students to competition such as cowbell, peak milk, maths, science and essay competition	101	3.94	.65	80	3.35	1.14	179	4.40	1.96	Rejected
Sponsor teachers to conference organized by Professional bodies like WAEC, NECO, STAN, G/C etc annually	95	3.83	.66	73	3.44	1.00	166	3.05	1.96	Rejected
Give teachers the chance to gain the ICT knowledge	90	2.70	.87	72	2.57	1.03	160	.88	1.96	Not Rejected
Invite resource persons to assist in teachers' forum/discussion monthly	100	3.76	.67	77	3.53	.90	175	1.93	1.96	Not Rejected
Organize clinical supervision every two weeks by principals and vice-principals	99	3.15	.76	73	3.00	.85	170	1.23	1.96	Not Rejected
Sponsor teachers to workshop to train as trainers by the school	87	2.44	.74	54	2.20	.79	139	1.77	1.96	Not Rejected
Reach NGOS with fund raising proposal for building of the dormitories in specified period	96	2.00	.58	70	2.61	1.00	164	-4.99	1.96	Rejected
Raise funds for Old Girls/Old Boys Association in respect of building new classroom blocks	101	3.41	.93	83	3.23	1.04	182	1.21	1.96	Not Rejected
Source fund from State Government to build toilets and bathrooms for students	99	2.10	.52	82	2.60	.86	179	-4.78	1.96	Rejected
Raise funds by the friends of the school to renovate dilapidated classroom blocks	87	3.82	.66	39	3.56	.88	124	1.78	1.96	Rejected
Apply to State Government to build well equipped science laboratory	100	2.36	.67	80	2.66	.86	178	-2.65	1.96	Rejected
Renovate the existing science and Home Economics Laboratories through raising funds from the PTA	88	3.83	.53	71	3.69	.77	157	1.35	1.96	Not Rejected
Source fund from the State Government to procure facilities for the science laboratories	98	3.26	.92	83	3.14	1.06	179	.75	1.96	Not Rejected
Provide a standard school library by raising funds from PTA and the State Government	91	3.57	.78	78	3.18	1.02	167	2.84	1.96	Rejected
Provide furniture for the school library through the PTA funds	95	3.61	.72	70	3.06	.98	163	4.19	1.96	Rejected
Apply to the State Government and philanthropists to help equip the ICT room.	81	3.19	.85	76	2.84	1.19	155	2.09	1.96	Rejected

Table 3 shows that of the 20 strategies, urban and rural secondary schools significantly differ in terms of their implementation of 12 as the calculated Z values (4.82, 7.60, 6.44, 6.35, 4.40, 3.05, -4.99, -4.78, -2.65, 2.84, 4.19 and 2.09) were greater than the critical Z value of 1.96. It was therefore decided that urban and rural secondary schools differ significantly in their implementation of strategic plan. The z-values (4.82, 7.60, 6.44, 6.35, 4.40, 3.05, 2.84, 4.19 and 2.09) show the mean ratings of principals in the schools in urban areas were greater than that of rural schools. This is an

indication that schools in urban areas did significantly better than those in the rural in terms of implementation of their strategic plans. The null hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected.

Hypothesis 2

Secondary schools in urban and rural areas will not differ significantly in the monitoring and evaluation of their strategic plan implementation.

Table 4. Z-test of Schools Monitoring and Evaluation of the Implementation of their strategic Plans by School Location

Variable	Location	N	Mean	SD	df	Z-cal	Z -crit	Decision
Monitoring and Evaluation of Strategic Plan Implementation	Urban	112	14.46	3.03	215	1.88	1.96	Not Rejected
	Rural	105	15.30	3.64				

Using z-test, there was no significant difference between urban and rural schools in terms of monitoring and evaluation of their strategic plan implementation, z-cal (1.88) was less than the critical z-value (1.96). The mean ratings by principals in urban schools which was 15.30 was therefore not significantly greater than that those in urban schools (Mean = 14.46). The null hypothesis was not rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine and describe how proper implementation of strategic plans and monitoring enhance principals' managerial roles to contribute to quality education provision and service delivery in secondary schools. In an attempt to accomplish this objective, efforts were made to examine key variables pertaining to principals' managerial tasks of implementing and monitoring their strategic plans, and strategic challenges in secondary schools.

The findings of research question one on a general perspective showed that schools have implemented their strategies to a moderate extent as indicated by the overall mean score of 66.81. The schools were also judged to have implemented their strategic plans to a moderate extent as shown in table one.

All the items for students' development yielded moderate extent in the mean ratings which are as follows: items 1-5: Organizing career Convention for students by school guidance Counsellor - 3.85; Organizing leadership training for functionaries by the guidance Counsellor - 3.61; Inviting resource persons for teaching entrepreneurial subjects to students - 3.60; Awarding prizes to best students in different core subjects as incentives for hard work - 3.73; Sponsoring of students to competition such as cowbell, peak milk, mathematics, science and essay competition - 3.68; respectively. Staff development yielded moderate extent for three items - Sponsoring teachers to conferences organized annually by Professional bodies like WAEC, NECO, STAN, G/C etc was - 3.66; Inviting resource persons to assist in teachers' forum/discussion monthly was - 3.66; Organizing clinical supervision every two weeks by principals and vice-principals was - 3.09 and low extent for two which are as follows: Giving teachers the chance to gain the ICT knowledge was - 2.35;

Sponsoring teachers to workshop to train as trainers by the school was - 2.64.

For Infrastructural development the following items yielded moderate extent: Raising funds for Old Girls/Old Boys Association in respect of building new classroom blocks - 3.33; Raising funds by the friends of the school to renovate dilapidated classroom blocks - 3.74; Renovating the existing science and Home Economics Laboratories through raising funds from the PTA - 3.77; Sourcing fund from the State Government to procure facilities for the science laboratories - 3.20; and low extent for the remaining three items: Reaching NGOS with fund raising proposal for building of the dormitories in specified period - 2.26; Sourcing fund from State Government to build toilets and bathrooms for students - 2.33; Applying to State Government to build well equipped science laboratory - 2.49. : School Library Development has the following: Providing a standard school library by raising funds from PTA and the State Government - 3.39; providing furniture for the school library through the PTA funds - 3.38; both of them yielded moderate extent. Finally the ICT development of one item is of moderate extent - Applying to the State Government and philanthropists to help equip the ICT room yielded - 3.02.

The result of the hypothesis indicated that there was significant difference between urban and rural schools in terms of implementation of strategic plans.

The finding of research question two indicated that schools monitoring of the implementation of their strategic plan was to a low extent with the mean score of 14.87.

There was significant difference between urban and rural schools in terms of monitoring and evaluation.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the gaps in input-process-output system were challenges that principals have faced in the tasks of institutional governance, resource inputs and curriculum management. These require that the principals as instructional leaders are expected to be more resourceful and pro-active in collaborating with the stakeholders in education sector to ensure effective resource inputs, skillfully coordinating and managing human and material resources in their strive to meet the competing demands of school administration and instructional supervision which are germane for

continuous improvement and achievement of the set goals in secondary schools. Therefore in the light of reasons above principals need to create an enabling environment for proper implementation of strategic planning a veritable tool managers employ for successful administration in order to profitably achieve the desired goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made. The study reveals that principals have inadequate understanding of strategic planning process. It therefore becomes pertinent that the Planning, Research and Statistics, PPSSC should attempt organizing for educational managers (principals) and staff members, periodic capacity development workshops - regular short courses and seminars, one-on-one supervisor-subordinate discussions on strategic planning to enable them grasp the fundamentals and have confidence in planning strategically.

School principals should collaborate with relevant stakeholders to promote capacity development of teachers through intensive and regular in-house seminar/workshop to improve knowledge, pedagogical skills and competence of teachers in various subjects, and improvisation of instructional materials to enhance teaching- learning process in secondary schools.

All the stakeholders in the education sector should collaborate to organize annual education summit for comprehensive review and assessment of the degree of success in school strategic plan implementation with a view to producing the desired outputs and achieving the overall educational objectives to ensure sustainable improvement in institutional management and curriculum delivery in secondary schools.

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Cite this Article: Ikediugwu NP, Chukwumah FO, 2015. Strategic Plan Implementation and Monitoring in Secondary Schools in Anambra State. Greener Journal of Educational Research, 5(2):017-026, <http://doi.org/10.15580/GJER.2015.2.012315011>.