ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL OF GRDUATE STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING STREAM

THE PRACTICE AND PROBLEMS OF PREPARING AND IMPLEMENTING EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN IN AMHARA REGION



BY

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JUNE 2010

ADDIS ABABA

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Abawey Yohannes

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List of Acronyms

The following acronyms appear in the text as stated hereunder

AAU-	Addis Ababa University
AESDP	Amhara Education Sector Development Program
ANRSEB:	Amhara National Regional State Education Bureau
AR	Amhara Region
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BEd	Bachelor of Education
BSc	Bachelor of Science
CRDA	Christian Relief and Development Association
Df	Degree of Freedom
EFA	Education For All
EKU	Eastern Kentucky University
GOs	Governmental Organizations
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
MA	Master of Arts
MEd	Master of Education
MOE	Ministry Of Education
MSc	Master of Science
NGOs	Non- Governmental organizations
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
WEO	Woreda Education Office
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZED	Zone Education Department

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to assess the practice and problems of preparing and implementing educational strategic plans in Amhara region with the intent of suggesting ways for improving it. Accordingly, to answer the basic research questions in relation to the magnitude of stakeholders' involvement, adequacy and utilization of resources, competence of ZED and WEO heads for effective preparation and implementation of educational strategic plans, system of plan monitoring and evaluation, and major difficulties encountered in preparing and implementing educational strategic planning were sought in the course of the study. The research method employed was a descriptive survey. Stratified, purposive, and simple random sampling techniques were used to identify and select the major data sources of the study. The study included 96 department heads; 24 principals; 84 zone and woreda planners, process owners and experts; and 11 work process performers, plan and program experts from region and zone as main data sources. Questionnaires, interview, and document analyses were the major instruments used for data gathering. The data obtained through the above instruments were analyzed using percentage, mean scores, weighted mean values, chi-square test, and t-test. The finding of this study indicated that the educational strategic planning practices in Amhara region has been characterized by weak stakeholders involvement in the strategic planning activities, inadequate budget and poor utilization of resources, lack of competence of ZED and WEO heads to implement the strategies, inadequacy of monitoring and evaluation systems, very poor motivational incentives given to the workers and inadequacy or unreliable data were the major problems that affect the successful implementation of the educational strategic plans in Amhara region. Based on the major findings conclusions were drawn as; meaningful participation of stakeholders, relevant planners' knowledge and/or experience found to be weak and there was an inadequacy of plan monitoring and evaluation system in the selected zones ads woredas. Finally recommendations were accordingly forwarded. Thus, increasing stakeholders participation, expanding sources of resource, providing sustainable capacity building trainings for ZED and WEO Heads, creating an independent body for plan monitoring and evaluation, the need for further research works were some of the most important remedies that need to be taken so as to alleviate the existing situations.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to assess the practice and problems of preparing and implementing educational strategic plans in Amhara region with the intent of suggesting ways for improving it. Accordingly, to answer the basic research questions in relation to the magnitude of stakeholders' involvement, adequacy and utilization of resources, competence of ZED and WEO heads for effective preparation and implementation of educational strategic plans, system of plan monitoring and evaluation, and major difficulties encountered in preparing and implementing educational strategic planning were sought in the course of the study. The research method employed was a descriptive survey. Stratified, purposive, and simple random sampling techniques were used to identify and select the major data sources of the study. The study included 96 department heads; 24 principals; 84 zone and woreda planners, process owners and experts; and 11 work process performers, plan and program experts from region and zone as main data sources. Questionnaires, interview, and document analyses were the major instruments used for data gathering. The data obtained through the above instruments were analyzed using percentage, mean scores, weighted mean values, chi-square test, and t-test. The finding of this study indicated that the educational strategic planning practices in Amhara region has been characterized by weak stakeholders involvement in the strategic planning activities, inadequate budget and poor utilization of resources, lack of competence of ZED and WEO heads to implement the strategies, inadequacy of monitoring and evaluation systems, very poor motivational incentives given to the workers and inadequacy or unreliable data were the major problems that affect the successful implementation of the educational strategic plans in Amhara region. Based on the findings of the study it was suggested that, increasing stakeholders participation, expanding sources of resource, providing sustainable capacity building trainings for ZED and WEO Heads, creating an independent body for plan monitoring and evaluation and commissioning further research works were some of the most important remedies that need to be taken by AEB so as to alleviate the existing situations.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with background of the study, statement of the problem objective of the study, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, definition of terms and organization of the study.

1.1 BAGROUND OF THE STUDY

Among other things, the development of world economy and society is at present being strongly influenced by education, which has resulted in scientific and technological progress that seems to be accelerating and beyond the control of any system (UNESCO, 1998). Thus, it seems that education long been recognized as an engine that largely drives the socio-economic transformation of nations and facilities personal success. This could be the major reason for education to be given top priority by most developed and developing countries.

Despite these realities, educators sometimes fail to reach desired purposes, the fact that they are unable to deal with the complexities of planning, making decisions and implementing the change itself (Cunningham, 1982). This implies that educators need to plan in order to make better use of the changes and the results that would be brought about. As no organization is free of change, which is often the result of education, effective planning ensures survival and growth (Forojolla, 1993). Hence, a fairly systematic preparing and implementing educational strategic plan needs to be adopted in various educational organizations accordingly.

Planning as a management task can take place at all levels of the education system, other management functions such as organizing, staffing, leading and controlling are all based on the results of planning. This implies that planning is a central part of the whole process of the educational management. As Forojella (1993: 23) noted ''the notion of development has come to be bounded with education and planning; as now days no sound development can occur in the absence of the proper planning system and an equally sounded education system.'' If education is to make an effective contribution to national development, a more successful educational planning is needed to supplement its effort. A systematic preparation and implementation of

educational strategic plans to the developing nations has become more popular since 1960's, which is followed by qualitative turning point. Regarding the origin of the strategic planning Preedy et al. (1997:219) has the following to say:

> *''Strategy becomes popular in the 1950s and 1960s when large number of firms and expanding business opportunities necessitated looking more systematically at the figure. This look the form of long range planning, the purpose of which was to first define the firms objectives, then establish some plans in order to achieve the objectives, and finally to allocate resources through capital budgeting. Such long range planning, as away of formulating strategy, lost its appeal when it becomes evident that forecasting existing trends in to the future did not produce accurate results. Consequently, long range planning was replaced by strategic planning, which incorporated accepting possible changes in trends and was not based on the assumption that adequate growth could be assured.''*

Education, like many other fields is going through a period of unprecedented change and it has become very difficult to anticipate the future. According to Preedy et al. (1997:158) strategic planning is a means for establishing and maintaining a sense of direction when the future has become more and more difficult to predict.

Today, unlike the past, educational planning has received the concern of many scholars and has been given diverse definitions depending on the political or economic context in which it is used. Among this, Goodstein et al. (1993:87) defined strategic planning as ''the process by which the guiding member of an organization envisions its future and develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future.'' These shows that the preparation and implementation of educational plan is a special kind of decision making which enables to forecast the future and helps to solve problems related to education.

The Amhara regional state is committed to improve educational quality, relevance, efficiency, equity and expand access to education with special emphasis on primary education in rural and unreserved areas, as well as the proportion of education for girls as a first step to achieve primary education by 2015 (AESDP,2006:1). For the realization of the above issues, it has introduced a sector wide approach in preparing and implementing its educational strategic plans.

To bring some highlight about the research setting in light, Ahmhara region is one of the regions of Ethiopia with the area of 157,076.74 square km, accounts 14% the area of the country and with a total population of 19,624,000 and among these 9,805,000 were males and the remaining 9,819,000 are females (CSA, 2007/08). The regional administration has further decentralized the power of decision making on the strategic planning to the zones and woredas so that they could implement their plans accordingly. But, though the region tried its best to decentralize planning responsibilities the various units of planning practitioners, especially at woreda levels are not seen while executing their respective plans as desired. Hence, examining the educational planning practices of the zones and woredas in line with strategic plan of the region was found to be timely response to the current situation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Educational institutions have to respond to new level of global completion and economic restructuring, increasing uncertainties, and accelerated rapidity of change. Hana (1985:2) argued that with the emergence of the present era of uncertainty and turbulence, prediction become impossible and strategic adaptation has to replace the stable rules of slow evolution. New productive organizations are emerging with flexible system of production, outward looking and customers focused cultures, less hierarchical structure and learning oriented process of planning and decision making.

In the contemporary world, the need for strategic planning has significantly been increasing although there have been debates on its importance. For instance, scholars such as Napuk, Burch and others have been arguing useless and fruitless exercise. Particularly, Napuk (1993:2) claimed that, '...we are far too busy doing the business to waste time on useless plans; they are never any good any way, because they always change.'' Similarly, Burch (1996) showed his doubts on planning that it is not as such important since every body exists as an individual in a purposeless and moving universe.

However, despite these realities arguments there have long been convincing evidences showing that organizations which practice strategic planning consistently perform better than those with

none or limited strategic planning and improve their performance over a period of time (Chandan, 1997). Thus, it seems that it is very rare for an organization solely by luck or circumstance. In other words, planning facilitates the successes and/or failure of the organization depending on the capacity to put it in to effect. Hence, if an organization really wants to put a bridge between its current performance and where it dreams to be in the future, it sure necessarily plans it's over all activities. If not, the organization may lose its status quo to greater degree since failure in strategic planning is immediately felt every where in the organizational structure.

Planning implies that the managers should be proactive and make things happen rather than reactive and let things happen. They can adjust what, when, where, how and how much they do according to their intended goals. Planning helps managers to consider seriously the present status of the organization and the environment in to which it operates. Besides, Forrojella (1993:39) noted that the central task in educational planning is to recognize the present conditions inadequacies that point to the desirability of change. Therefore, educational planning contributes to the process of policy formulation by identifying the central areas and the various policy options which are available to address the problems. Every country has designed its development plan for some years. Similarly different sectors of the country draw their strategic plan to achieve the development objectives, so education as a sector has designed its own plan to accomplish its own plan and purposes in order to achieve the long term development goals of the country.

Implementation is an essential and integral part of strategic planning. Failure in implementation is failure in plan. This means the core of the plan lies in its implementation. Coombs (1970) argued that ''planning is a continuous process, concerned not only with where to go but how to get there and by what best means. Its work does not get end when a plan gets on paper and has won approval. Planning to be effective, it must be concerned with its own implementation.''

In implementation, organizations put ideas, designs and visions to work. Effective implementation is crucial to organizational change and innovation (strategic plan). Wolf (1994:195) argued that it is more important to know what an organization does than what it

decided to do. As Klein and Sorra (1996:1055) noted "increasingly, organizational analysis identify implementation failure, not innovation (strategic plan) failure, as the cause of many organizations' inability to achieve the intended benefits of the innovations they adopt."

Effective plan preparation and implementation are a key factor in the effect. Harvey (1982:286) argued that strategy implementation consists of securing resources, organizing these resources, and directing the use of these resources with in and out side of the organizations. However, the experiences of developing countries have revealed that it has been rare educational plans to achieve their objectives. Magnen (1991:43) suggested that the lack of realism in setting of objectives, in the evaluation of administrative capacities and in the estimation of available resources is the most obvious causes of implementation failure. Moreover, Mbua (2002:93) explained that many African countries now have educational plans. The main difficult with most of these plans is that they too rarely get off paper and into action. According to him, implementation has become the number one problem of educational plan. Judson (1996:9) also argued that, there are four main themes recur to explain why strategic planning yields disappointing outcomes. These are failure in implementation after strategy formulation, failure in concepts underling plan formulation, inadequate plan information/poor assumptions, and failures in analysis of information. However, according to him the most dominating cause for disappointing outcome is failure to implement the strategy once prepared. It is clearly indicated in the MOE (2005:64) inadequate planning and management capacities at the lower level of the organizational structure a critical problem in realizing the goals of education. Skills to interpret polices collect and analyze appropriate date, and enabling schools to take appropriate action to meet the minimum quality standards defined for local situations are critically lacking at the lower levels of the organizational structure. On the other hand, Tesfaye (2008) witnessed the government of Ethiopia and donors have conducted serious of trainings to building the planning capacity at different levels of the education system ranging from woreda to the Federal Ministry of Education. However, lack of planning capacity has continued and even worsens in some cases in spite of all the efforts made. Success in building the capacity of the educational planners from all woredas of the country through various trainings was reported. But, still many woredas don't have the required capacity to produce and implement educational strategic plans and the regions capacity problem is still visible. From these, the researcher understood that the preparation and

implementation of educational strategic plans still require much effort to be exerted in most regions of Ethiopia

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to assess the practice and problems in preparing and implementing educational strategic plans in Amhara region in

Accordingly, this study intended to assess the current practices and problems of preparing and implementing educational strategic plans in Amhara region in relation to their practice, problems and prospects in terms of preparation of their plan, implementation strategies and the results that gained based on the following five basic research questions.

- What is the degree of stakeholders' involvement in the current educational strategic plan preparation and implementation in Amhara region?
- To what extent are the resources required for putting strategic plans into practice in the region been adequate and utilized effectively?
- To what extent are the WEO and ZED heads competent enough to implementing the strategic plans?
- To what extent does monitoring and evaluation systems been instituted for tracking implementation progress, to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses and for making corrections?
- What are the major challenges encountered while implementing the strategic plan in the region?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to assess the current practice and problems of educational strategic plan preparation and implementation in Amhara region. The specific objectives of the study are stated as follows:

1. It is widely recognized that planning is a participatory activity involving varies stakeholders. However, the actual situations of planning hardly coincide with what has been supposed. To this effect, the objective of this study was to assess the involvement of stakeholders in the current practices of educational strategic planning in Amhara Region.
2. Educational organizations especially below the national level have several problems in implementing what they have planned. This may due to the problem of human, material, financial constraints. Taking the issue into account the third objective of this study is to examine the adequacy and utilization of the required resources for successful strategic plan execution in Amhara Region.
3. The strategic planning process has several problems from its pre-liminary activities to its evaluation. For this reason, attempts were made to identify the possible challenges confronting the implementation of the strategic plan.
4. To forward possible solutions for the problems identified in the study.

1.4 Significance of the Study

For every development of a society, whether it is economic, social or technological; the use of strategic planning is unquestionable. It helps originations by forcing them to focus, helping to coordinate activities and people and motivating workers, particularly educational strategic plan is a means for achieving educational end results.

Therefore, the findings of this study may have the following significances:

1. It would provide a better understanding and awareness on the problems related to the practice of preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in Amhara region.
2. It might contribute the efforts being made to strengthen the quality of the practice in preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in Amhara Region.

3. It may add some new information in relation to the preparation and implementation of educational plans at Zone and Woreda levels of Amhara region to the already existing ones.
4. It helps to examine how much plans can be prepared and implemented at the lower levels of the education system.
5. It might provide suggestions to the concerned bodies on the practice and problems in preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in Amhara Region.

1.5 Delimitations of the Study

Preparing and implementing educational plan is a broad issue; which is difficult to be dealt with in such time – bounded study. Because of this, delimiting the scope of the study becomes very important. Thus, the spatial boundary (space) of the study is delimited to Amhara Region of which, four Zones namely; East Gojjam, South Gonder, South Wollo, and Oromiya Zones are include in the study. Additionally, Twelve Woreda Education Offices and 12 secondary schools (one school from each woredas) are included in the study. Similarly, there was logically a need to delimit the time gap of the educational strategic planning practices. Therefore, the time boundary of the study was fixed to the planning practices of the last five years 2005/06- 2009/10 (strategic plan period)

1.6 Limitations of the Study

Research undertaking is not an easy task that can be carried out without a lot of ups and downs. It requires availability of sufficient and accurate data and volunteer respondents. The majority of the respondents were not willing to cooperate as needed, and some filled the questionnaires carelessly. Additionally, getting the ZED and WEO heads to conduct interview was much challenged to the researcher. The researcher tried to manage these limitations by discussing clearly and arranging appropriate time for the respondents.

1.7 Operational Definition of Key Terms

Education organized and sustained instruction design to communicate the combination of knowledge, skills and understanding valuable for all the activities of life.

Educational Plan: is a plan document of the education sector which contains a set of future events and indicates needed resources which helps to attain the intended goals.

Implementation: is the realization of an application, or an execution of a plan or policy (McNamara, 2008)

Mission: statement that defines the fundamental purpose of an organization, basically describing why it exists (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

Plan: is a set of activities intended to achieve goals; whether an entire organization department or an organizations -John Argenti

Planning: is a function and process to set a future course of action to decide and agree in advance on.

Strategies: are the means by which an organization sets out to achieve its goals (Nicholas, 2000)

Strategic Plan: is a planning technique, intended to identifying to indenting SWOT and its vision of the future and how it will seek to achieve its vision.

Vision: statements that defines the desired or intended future state of a specific organization (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

1.8 Organization of the Study

This study has been organized in to five major chapters, each containing further subdivision. Accordingly, the first chapter deals with background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, basic research questions, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study ,operational definition of key terms, organization of the study. The second chapter review of the related literature, and chapter three contains research design and methodology. Chapter four focuses on the presentation and analysis of the data obtained from respondents. While chapter five covers the summery, conclusion and recommendations. Finally, reference, questionnaires, interview guide and other important documents were annexed to the last part of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITRATURE

This chapter mainly deals with reviewing literary works of various scholars on the practice and problems of preparing and implementing educational strategic planning. Primarily, concepts related with Planning, Strategic Planning, Characteristics of Strategic Planning, Importance of Strategic Planning, Process (Steps) of Strategic Planning, the Relation between Strategic and Operational Planning, Problems of Educational Strategic Plan, Making Strategic Planning Effective, Strategic Plan Formulation, Strategic Plan Implementation, Plan Monitoring and Evaluation, Why Strategic Plans Fail? and Meaningful Participation, Planners' Knowledge and Experiences.

2.1 Planning: An overview

Planning is considered as a crucial activity for an organization's success by deciding in advance what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and who is to do it. It bridges the gap from where we are to where we want to arrive since it makes possible for things to occur which would not otherwise happen (Burch, 1996). In this Sense, changes and events are left to chance and random unless they are accompanied by effective and efficient planning. Moreover, although the exact future can rarely be predicted and factors beyond which may interfere have tendencies to bring some undesired consequences, planning by far, has the power to minimize these uncertainties and risks since it is the conscious determination of a course of action, the basing of the decisions on purpose, facts, and considered estimates.

Planning serves to gain control of the future through current acts and its purpose is to provide a bridge between useful knowledge and purposeful coordinated action (Cunningham, 1982). In this regard, administrators look ahead, predict events, prepare for contingencies, formulate directions map out activities, and provide an orderly sequence for achieving goals through planning (Morphet,et al., 1982). Even though there is widespread support for using strategic planning in education, there are those who do not see the value of its application. Mintzberg

(1994), former president of the Strategic Management Society, was one of the earliest critics of strategic planning. Although his criticisms of strategic planning were not directed specifically at education, his views can be applied to its use in schools. For Mintzberg (1994), one of the major weaknesses of strategic planning process lies in the fact that formal planning does not produce effective strategies. He argued, "We have no evidence that any of the strategic planning systems--no matter how elaborate--succeeded in capturing the messy informal processes by which strategies really do get developed" (Mintzberg 1994: 296).

On the other hand (Mintzberg 1994:184) describe as strategic planning as is an involved, complicated, and complex process that takes an organization into the uncharted territory. It does not provide a ready to use prescription for success; instead, it takes the organization through a journey and helps develop a framework and context within which the answers will emerge. Literature and research has documented extensively the possible problems that may arise during the process. Being aware of these issues and prepared to address them is essential to success: organization's strategic planning effort may fail if these potential pitfalls are ignored.

With regards of inflexibility, Strategic planning might inhibit changes, and discourage the organization from considering disruptive alternatives. Planning might inhibit creativity, and "does not easily handle truly creative ideas". A conflict lies with a desire to "retain the stability that planning brings to an organization ... while enabling it to respond quickly to external changes in the environment" (Mintzberg 1994: 184).

Opportunistic planning allows organizations to be flexible and open to making changes to the strategic planning process, if it becomes necessary in the face of unexpected events and changes in the initial assumptions. Organizations need a good combination of formal and opportunistic planning. Organizations that rely exclusively on formal planning could trap themselves in unmanageable rigidities. Those whose decision-making capability is entirely opportunistic will be constantly reacting to external forces, without a clear sense of direction. Organizations should encourage active participation of as many people as possible, engaging them in the ongoing dialogue, and involving them in the strategic planning process, to generate a feeling of ownership of the process and the outcomes throughout the organization.

Using a series of incremental steps that build strategies and integrating them into the entire organization will help to adjusting the course of action of strategic planning with overall organizational vision and strategic issues, while allowing for creativity and flexibility for change. Strategic tasks should be interpreted not as rigid hierarchical sequences of actions, but as a useful conceptual framework for addressing issues essential to the successful operation of the organization.

Therefore, almost every organization, be it regional education bureau, or what ever its types and purpose, needs to plan in order to make a responsible decisions on how to achieve the general/specific objectives by making a wise allocation of the available resources; to compete in the world of dynamics; and survive in competitive world.

2.2 Types of Planning

Most scholars share common understandings on what planning is and how it contributes to a given organization's success. But, when it comes to types, they differ based on various aspects. For instance, Jain (1999) and Kumar (2002) classified planning types into: i) single – use plans which incorporates objectives, strategies, programs, projects, and budgets; and ii) standing plans which includes policies, procedures, methods, and rules. On the other hand, Lewis, et al. (1995) grouped planning types in to strategic and operational planning based on the time range and content they contain.

Further more, many scholars classified it in a more comprehensive way as: Strategic Planning, tactical planning, and Operational planning (Black & Porter, 2000; Koory & Medley, 1987). Although experiencing the above variations of plan classifications could broaden our knowledge of planning types, the major ones that there are to discussed in the following sections are the Strategic planning in detail and Operational Planning which is common to different institutions including educational organizations.

2.2.1 Strategic Planning

Strategic planning has been defined differently by various scholars. For instance, Peace and Robinson (2003:6) defined, it as "...the set of decisions and actions resulting formulation and implementation of the strategies design to achieve the objectives of the organization." O'Brien (1999) and Griffin (2000) on the other hand, describe it as a general plan outlining decisions of resource allocation, priorities, and action steps necessary to reach strategic goals. Its application to the education system seems to foster the emergence within the strategies of autonomous action making it possible to narrow the gap between the procedures and the consumers of education or training products (UNESCO, 1989).Generally speaking, strategic planning is a type of planning which is set by the broad of directors, stakeholders, and top management which has an extended time horizon; addresses questions of scope, resource development, and competitive advantage of the organizations.

2.2.1.1 Characteristics of Strategic Planning

The basic aim of strategic planning is to actively determine the nature of the character of the organization and to guide its directions. It identifies the mission and mandates of the organization and devises strategies for fulfilling its purposes. Educators discussed on the different features of strategic planning. EKU (2005) elaborated the following characteristics that are commonly associated with strategic planning:

First, strategic planning emphasizes looking from the out side in identifying and understanding conditions in the environment over which the institution may have little control, but which may have an impact on its nature and vitality. Since many of the challenges and changes experienced by institutions are triggered by out side forces this emphasis on the external environment is a fundamental characteristic. Thus, strategic planning looks outward at the external environment, monitoring major demographic, social, economic, political, and technological trends that may hold opportunities or threads for institution. While strategic planning also considers internal factors, it requires that they be balanced by an assessment of external realities.

Second, acknowledging the changeability of the external environment and the rapid growth of knowledge, strategic planning uses a 3-5 planning time frame.

Third, because of the external environment undergoes continues and often rapid change and because it is impossible to predict future conditions with certainty, strategic planning is a dynamic, continuing process in which adoptions and/or devotions from the plan will be required and should be expected. For this reason, plans are reviewed and updated regularly.

Fourth, it stresses the importance of achieving a position for the institution as a whole as well as for specific programs. Through strategic planning, an institution strives to distinguish itself from its competition so that people inside and out side the institution will recognize its special identity, character, and areas of expertise. Finally, to be effective, strategic planning must be integrated with budgeting so that the allocation of resources reflects the priorities that have been established, thus moving the institution in the direction it has charted.

2.2.1.2 Importance of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning provides paramount advantages to the organizations. It enables better decisions as a result the group decision making process, an increased likelihood of identifying organizational and environmental conditions that they create problems in the long run, and members who participated in the planning process understand the plan and are more willing to change (Lewis, et al.,1995). Additionally, (Smith, et al.;1991) suggested that the potential benefits of strategic planning as: it provides organizations with clear goals and direction; reduces the risks associated with environmental threats; helps relate a firm's decision making process to relevant environmental conditions; reduces resistance to change; enhance problem prevention capabilities; and helps to outperform; it makes you realize your objective; it makes your goal easier to achieve; better control of your life ; it makes you plan for future objectives .

Strategic planning in education has several benefits: A strategic plan establishes a vision, mission, and beliefs for the school district; the plan establishes the path to accomplish its desired future; the plan provides for a path which allows the community to work together to accomplish these goals, objectives, and activities that constitute the strategic plan; it allows for an understanding of how a school district works, how finances are spent, and identifies the needs of the school district; and allows the school district to set a specific data-driven priorities.

All of these supporters of strategic planning pointed out the many possible benefits of strategic planning. However, they all noted that it is a complex process that requires leadership to ensure that it is carried out effectively. Herman and Kaufman (1991:9) conceded that

> *''Most (strategic) planners encounter pitfalls; perhaps a word to the wise can prepare those new to the process to sidestep such errors. Avoiding major mistakes can mean the difference between creating just another dusty document and creating a revitalized educational system.''*

In general, strategic planning is a far reaching guideline in which organizations operate and move forward in order to attain their vision, mission, and objectives successfully.

2.2.2 Operational Planning

Operational planning, as its name implies, is t he most specific and detailed activity which is made at the operational level of the organization, and concerned with the routine activities of the institution. It is concerned with the physical implementation of plans. Operational Planning is, in short, a process by which administrators ensure that resources are obtained and used effectively and efficiently in the accomplishment of the strategic objectives (Cunningham, 1982). It focuses on establishing specific and detailed procedures, budgets, and schedules of plan execution.
Operational Planning is usually narrower in scope. Thus an organization's operating plan should help to explain how the organization will contribute to achieving the organization's over all strategic plan. Generally, operational planning is an expanded version of strategic planning and is generally more tangible and less conceptual.

2.3 The Relation Between Strategic and Operational Planning

Operational planning consists of making specific commitments to implement the objectives and policies established by strategic planning (Hampton, 1981). He continued saying that if strategic planning provides the ''big picture'', operational planning provides the details without which the big picture would remain a blank outline. In here, from Hampton's words, one can easily understand that operational planning is the final phase of planning process which is mainly put in the place as a strategy to successfully implements the strategic plan piece- by –piece.
Cunningham (1982:147) elaborated the two main types of planning as:

> *''Strategic planning is seeing that the organization is doing the right thing; operational planning is ensuring that the organization is doing things right. Strategic planning is defined as the process of deciding on objectives for the organization, on changes in those objectives, on the resources used to obtain objectives, and on the polices that are to govern the acquisition, use and disposition of the resources. Strategic objectives are directed toward long-term survival, future resources, future potential, and flexibility and adaptability to changing conditions. Strategic objectives are future directed, usually are client oriented, and are directed at external needs. Strategic plans determine the character and direction of organization and are often based on value systems. Operational planning is the process by which administrators ensure that resources are obtained and used effectively and efficiently in the accomplishment of the strategic objectives''.*

He further noted that for the planning process to work appropriately, strategic plans must be developed and made final preceding to developing and implementing operational plans. That means, the developing and implementing of operational planning should based on the strategic planning. In relation to this, Judson (1996:29) stated that operating plans should be formulated immediately following the validation of the strategic plan. Cunningham (1982:149) also said that operational plans should not be developed first with the intent of imposing strategic plans on top. He argued that the best approach is first to develop strategic plan under the direction of top level administrators and then use these strategic plans to guide the efforts of operational personnel in the development of operational plans.

Despite of the interconnected relationships, they also differ based on various dimensions like the time they cover, the content they contain, their objectives, focuses, ... Strategic Planning focuses on ''Doing the Right Things'' while operational planning deals with ''Doing Things Right'' (Cunningham, 1982). Generally the major differences between the strategic and operational planning are summarized as follows:

Table 1: The Relation Between Strategic Planning and Operational Planning

	Operational Planning	Strategic Planning
Purpose	- Achieving the best use of available resources	-Planning the best courses of action -Long term survival and development
Focus	- Operating problems and realities	
Objectives	-Present performance	-Future school system success, future resources/desired system wide environment
Constraints	-Present resources/school environment	
Rewards	-Efficiency, Stability	- Effectiveness, impact
Information	-Present Situation	-Future opportunities
Organization	- Bureaucratic / stable	-Entrepreneurial/ Flexible
Level of Risk	-Low Risk	-High Risk
Leader Ship	-Conserve that which succeeded in the past.	-Inspire change for future needs -Anticipate; find new approaches, creative ideas to meet future challenges.
Problem Solving	-React, Standard operating procedures, relies on past experience	

Source: Modified from Chang (2008: 4); Cunningham (1982)

2.4 Problems of Educational Strategic Plan

Planning problems are easily left every where in the organization and distort organizational status quo. Problems in plan preparation highly affect successful plan execution. Educational strategic planning in developing nations is constrained by various factors which hold its success back. Farrel (1997) and Forojella (1993) identified the major problems of educational strategic planning as highly centralized (not participative), lack of healthy communication, command oriented , lack of knowledge and understanding of planning by most of the officials, limited and short time given to prepare plans, lack of adequate experiences, and inadequate arrangement for coordination.

Moreover, other researchers (Kumar, 2002; Terry & Franklin,2002) found that the main obstacles of planning like inflexibility of the plans, lack of accurate information, resistance to change, lack of commitment, ambiguous objectives, reliance on the past happenings, lack of management

support, lack of controlling techniques, and time and cost factors as the major factors to effective educational strategic planning. In the same manner, Griffin(2000) and Koory and Medley (1987) discovered the major drawback of strategic planning as: it fails to anticipate emergencies, unexpected conditions may inhibit plan implementation, it can be so theoretical that practical values are lost, reluctance to establish appropriate goals, less qualification of the implementing bodies, improper reward system, and dynamic and complex environment which they thought are planning problems of affecting quality of strategic planning and education in general.

More comprehensively, problems of educational strategic planning as Dixon (1993) can be the result of lack of commitment to the planning process particularly among an organization's senior management; failure to set meaningful, verifiable targets band absence of clear aims for the organization as a whole; resistance to change among middle and junior management and among the ordinary workforce; over-reliance on past experiences; poor and inflexible control techniques, lack of clear delegation in the organization ; and lack of clear lines of authority which makes decision making difficult.

Problems in Strategic Plan preparation, which is the primary, set up of strategic planning process, is immediately felt in the subsequent phases of planning process. Hence, identifying the most common and frequently appearing problems will help to take immediate actions to minimize the risks from the successive stages. Problems in this area are of multi in nature. For instance, economic, political, and administrative problems are the major factors affecting strategic plan preparation (Forrojalla, 1993). In addition to this, Mussazi (1998) in Berara (2008) forwarded the main strategic planning problems as lack of skilled man power; attitudinal problem; inadequate and unreliable statistical data, and tendencies toward inflexibility and pressure of other works on the planners in addition to the priory mentioned problems. their To wind up, lack of in strategic planning, and the amount and kind of training that the planners have received have strong bearing on the strategic plan preparation. Thus, although strategic planning problems are not limited only to these aforementioned ones, they are believed to be commonly felt problems particularly in educational organizations. Hence, the fact that identifying the symptom is part of healing the diseases, taking intervention mechanisms to the already spelled out problems will highly simplify the consequences that could be brought about as a result of problems in strategic plan preparation.

The fact that implementation phase of strategic planning process is the hardest step which deals with change; it is likely to meet a lot of constraints which hold the successful implementation of the plans back. Hence, it can be said that there could be as many problems as possible which might affect effective and efficient strategic plan execution.

In this regard, Smith,et al.(1991) found out the major problems which tackle the smooth implementation of strategic plan as; implementation usually takes more time than originally allocated; implementation activities are often poorly coordinated; major problems that surface are not anticipated; competing activities and crises distract attention from implementing decisions; lower-level employees are not adequately trained and instructed; uncontrollable factors in the external environment have adverse impacts; developmental managers may not provide adequate leadership and direction; key implementation tasks and activities may not be defined in sufficient detail; and information systems used to monitor implementation may not be adequate. To this effect, all the above mentioned problems of educational strategic plan can, directly or indirectly, be categorized under political, administrative and economic constraints which will almost certainly ensure failure.

2.5. Making Strategic Planning Effective

Planning is the primary managerial function on which the successive managerial functions are built. Moreover, it is a tool which shows how, when, and why organizations operate. Hence, to ensure the effectiveness of this decision making process, various scholars have suggested ways to make it effective. Among these Chandan(1997) identified the major principles of effective strategic planning as: Keeping aims crystallized, developing accurate forecasts involving subordinates in the planning process , the plan must be sound one, do not be overoptimistic, deciding in advance the criteria for abandoning a project, keeping plan flexible, and fit the plan to the environment.

Like the above one, Kumar (2002); Kumar and Mittal (2001) suggested the following important steps for making strategic planning effective: establish better climate for planning, setting clear-cut objectives , installation of sufficient information system, participation in planning, integration

of long term plans and short term plans, economical (time and cost), installation of management, communication of planning elements (Goals and Planning premises), dynamic planning, and careful premising. Smith, et al. (1991) added the following measures to ensure the effectiveness of planning process: review objectives, environments; evaluate, adjust, and commit resources; develop organizational structure; introduce the changes; and re-evaluate the plan.

Generally, one must keep in mind that various limitations strategic planning should not lead one believe that strategic planning is unnecessary in the organization, or it is the luxury that only few large organizations can afford. It must be accepted that planning is an essential managerial function and should be given special attention. The question here is that not whether or not to plan; it is how to plan the strategy. Therefore, managers should take great care to make strategic planning activities more effective to gain its real contribution in realizing organizational missions and visions. However, it is not enough to say that managers should take action to make strategic planning effective, but they should be clear about what actions should be taken in this regard.

2.6 Process (Steps) of Strategic Planning

The process of strategic planning indicates the major steps that are undergone in strategic planning. The steps that strategic planning process follows can be shortened or extended depending on the size of the organization, complexity of the programs, budget, time, capability of the staff, availability of information, e.t.c. Based on the specific planning frame work, some steps could be skipped or shorted or else added, if necessary, with out eliminating the fundamental planning questions. It is important to choose the right level of intensity for the planning questions facing the organization (CRDA, 2001:12). Hellriegel, et al.(2002) recommended the steps that tend to be followed while preparing plans with particular reference to strategic plan. Hence , their models incorporates steps like developing mission and goals; assessing opportunities and threats ; identifying strengths and weaknesses, developing strategies; preparing strategic plan; preparing tactical plans; controlling and assessing results; and continuing planning. Forrojalla (1993) condensed the strategic planning process (steps) in to three broad categories namely; Formulation, Implementation, and evaluation. Therefore, however

divers' models of strategic planning process exist, treating Forrojalla's planning process would be more manageable and common to all.

Planning in general and strategic planning in particular is not the end by themselves not a one shot activity. It is a continuous process where a lot of procedures are undergone. Thus, although different scholars have slightly different approaches to planning process, they all agree that the process is cyclical and never ending process. For instance, first, we establish mission, then formulate goals and objectives, finally prepare plan (Chandan, 1997).

On the other, Napuk (1993) described the major planning procedures mainly strategic as i)we look at how you arrived at this point in your company history, identifying what made you successful and what requires more attention; ii) we deal with where you want to go from here by creating your vision, listening your objectives, conducting an internal evaluation of strengths and weaknesses and setting your goals; iii) we determine how to get where you want to go, devising strategies and dealing with external opportunities and threats; iv) we look at how to make the plan work in your company, reviewing structure and implementation and concentrating on action programs.

Kufman and Herman (1991:41) categorized the essential steps of educational strategic planning under four major clusters; Scoping, Data collecting, Planning and Implementation and evaluation. In addition, they describe the steps of the planning process which are included under each cluster. They also noted that each of the four clusters of strategic planning relates to the basic themes of strategic planning. The discussion they made on themes of strategic planning, clusters and steps of the educational strategic planning process is summarized in the table below.

Table 2: Steps of Educational Strategic Planning

Themes of Educational strategic Planning	Clusters	Steps of the educational strategic planning process
Rethinking	Scope	1. Select the type and scope of strategic planning from three alternatives (Mega. Macro, Micro) 2. Identify benefits and Values
	Data collecting	1. Identify visions 2. Identify current visions 3. Identify needs
Restructuring	Planning	1. Identify match and mismatches; integrating visions, beliefs, needs and current missions. 2. Reconcile differences 3. Identify and select preferred future 4. Identify missions 5. Identify SWOTs 6. Derive decision rules 7. Develop strategic action plan
Revitalizing	Implementation and evaluation	1. Put the strategic plan in to action.

Source; Summarized from Kaufman and Herman (1991)

However, Kaufman (1995:260) restates the issue by making some modification. He said strategic planning framework has a number of functions, or steps starting with decision concerning the primary focus, or frame of reference. The modification that he made as decreasing the clusters to three; scoping, planning, and implementation and evaluation and number of steps from thirteen to eight by merging some of them.

In addition to this, Lweis,et al.(1995) condensed the steps with almost similar ingredients with the prior models. Thus, this model involves strategic analysis (what is the current position of the organization?); strategy formulation (where is the organization want to be?); strategy implementation (how will the organization get to where wants to be?); and strategic control (how will the organization know when it has arrived?). More comprehensively, although various models differ based on their approaches, most strategic planning methodologies include SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), GTSM (Goals, Targets, Strategies, Measures), and environmental scanning of the organization. Educators developed various models of strategic planning. The following models of McNamara (2008) provide a wide range options from which organizations might select an approach and begin to develop their own strategic planning process. Such as:

Basic Strategic Planning: - this very basic process is typically followed by organizations that are extremely small, busy, and have not done much strategic planning before. The basic strategic planning includes: Identifying the purpose (mission statement), selecting the goals the organization must reach, identifying specific approaches or strategies that must be implemented to reach each goal, identifying specific action plans to implement each strategy, and monitoring updating the plan.

Alignment Model:- the overall purpose of the model is to ensure strong alignment among the organization's mission and its resources to effectively operate the institution. Overall steps include: first, the planning group outlines the organization's missions, programs, resources, and needed support. Second, identify how these adjustments should be made, and lastly include the adjustments as strategies in the strategic plan.

In general, all authorities show that planning is not an activity which is done randomly, rather it has some logical steps that planners should follow to increase its degree of efficiency and effectiveness. However, there is no consensus among authorities who write on the steps of planning process to make one and the same. There is a change and modification of steps from time to time. Therefore, educational planners may use one or the combination of the two or more classifications according to their preference.

2.6.1 Strategic Plan Formulation/Preparation

Plan formulation is the primary step in planning process. Like other planning phases, it undertakes various stapes. Hampton (1981) identified six explicit procedures for preparing plans as: development of ''Strategic Plans'' by strategic planning committee; communication of these plans to the management committee as a general guidelines; submission of proposed objectives by the department heads; review; discussion and agreement upon a set of objectives; submission of financial data; and issuance of the plan. Similarly, UNESCO (1984) forwarded planning steps as: identifying objectives; identifying needs; inventory, classifying, and measuring costs; programming; and implementing.

Unlike the above ones, strategic planning follows a different procedure. It undertakes, determining vision, mission, and objectives; analyzing the environment; analyzing and selecting strategic alternatives; implementing the strategies; and evaluating and controlling performance (Smith, et al., 1991).This does not mean that all strategic planning should necessary follow the above mentioned steps. There could as many as the planning types.

Strategic planning is a special kind of decision making which helps to bridge the gap between where we are and where we want to be in the future with limited available resources. While preparing to plan, there tend to be as many pre-conditions as possible to which will serve the planners are the threshold components. These ingredients to be sufficient level of furnish strategic planning process. Among these components serving as pre- condition, availability of and adequacy of resources such as human resources, financial and material, the support from the political figure; and adequate information are the major ones(Berara,2008). In addition to this, stakeholders' involvement should also be ensured the preparatory task since it enhances effective strategic plan preparation by incorporating local needs. To attest this , Conveys (1982) witnessed that participatory is a means of obtaining information about local conditions, needs, and attributes, without which development programs and projects are likely to fail.

Finally, logically speaking, a strategic plan to be successfully prepared, the planners should be priory review the availability and accuracy of statistical data, skilled and experienced manpower, level of commitment and other preconditions which all make up good strategic plan. Hence, a

well prepared strategic plan which considers what is on the ground, can simply the ups and downs that will be faced during the implementation period.

2.6.2 Strategic Plan Implementation

The implementation stage is vital to the process of an organization. Hunger and Wheelen(2006:260) pointed that, although implementation is usually considered after strategy has been formulated, implementation is a key part of strategic management. They continued saying that strategy formulation and strategy implementation should be considered as two sides of the same coin. Without effective implementation, the strategy may become a set of unobtainable needs rather than reality. Byars et al.(1996:432)argued that strategies that have been carefully formulated are little value if they can not be successfully implemented . Thompson and Strickland (2001:2005) also confirmed that good strategy and good strategy execution are the most truthful signs of good management. Managers do not deserve a good star for designing a potentially brilliant strategy but failing to put the organizational means in place to carry out in higher -caliber fashion –weak implementation undermines the strategy's potential and overlays the way for short fall in customers' satisfaction and organizational performance.

Once of the best available alternatives has been selected, plan implementing bodies needs to be ready to make strategic plans to cope with the requirements and problems that might be encountered in putting in to effect. While doing this, there are a number of preparatory takes that should be carried out in order to make the successive procedures as smooth as possible. These pre-conditions of strategic plan implementation vary as scholars differ, for instance, Malan (1987); Stoner, et al. (1995) identified the basic pre-conditions for implementation as: budgets, schedules, resources, and progress reports. Especially, the later scholar has emphasized that plan and budget needs to be properly articulated in order for the plan to be implemented. This shows that, budget is essential to the planning process since the objectives and programs contained in the plan can not be implemented without it.

On the other hand, Smith,et al.(1991) forwarded the following five rules or pre-conditions that organizations with successful implementation track records tend to follow: The plans must be communicated to all employees whom it will affect; the idea/concept represented by the strategic

decision must have a sound response and be a well formulated; management must obtain commitment and involvement from employees; management must provide sufficient resources for the strategic plan includes money, manpower, technical expertise, and time; and the management must develop an implementation strategic plan by setting goals and keeping a record of accomplishment.

Griffin(2000), on the other side , condensed the pre-conditions of strategic plan implementation as enhancing communication and ensuring consistency, revision, and updating; ensuring effective reward system; and understanding the purposes and goals, and planning. From this, it should be kept in mind that, every one needs to understand that implementing a strategic plan involves more than appropriate orders. Resources must be acquired and allocated as necessary before hand. Managers set up budgets and schedules for the actions they have decided up on, allowing them to measure progress in specific terms. They also assign responsibility for the specific tasks involved and set up procedure for progress reports and prepare to make corrections if deviations arise.

Implementation of the strategic plans is the most important stage in the planning process which remains the biggest challenge to the management team. The meaning and quality of the plan is in its effect after implementation. To strengthen this, Napuk(1993) confirmed saying that it does not matter how well and great a plan seems to be, it is useless if it fails to implemented. Implementing strategic plan requires logical and sequential activities to be carried out. In connection with this, Hersey, et al. (2003) identified the following three step process in plan implementation as: identifying alternative solutions and appropriate implementation strategies; anticipating the probable consequences of each of the alternative strategies; and choosing a specific strategy and implementing it.

Malan (1987) differently put the sequential steps of strategic plan implementation in a more comprehensive way. His model involves: selection of levels of objectives with their associated programs and projects, and accompanying physical and financial indicators to ensure and measure their implementation; schedules; formal approval and announcement of plans; information and regionalization of objectives and programs; annual budgetary review; inspection

of execution, and where necessary, the revision of objectives and planned resources. In general, although the process of strategic plan implementation varies from organization to organization, the above models are found to be common and easily adaptable by many organizations.

2.6.3 Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

The last step of planning process is to monitoring and evaluates the progress of the implemented plan in order to ensure that it is operating properly or not. Evaluation is defined as ''a process of analysis and control design to determine the relevance, effectiveness, significance and impact of specific activities and the degree of efficiency with which they are carried out'' (Miron & Chinapah, 1990:26). This shows that, evaluation is an exercise to assess the success and/or failure of the planned objectives, programs impact, and cost-effectiveness. Monitoring on the other hand, is ''... process where by the progress of activities is regularly and continuously observed and analyzed in order to ensure that the expected result is achieved'' (Chang, 2008:9). As a whole, one can generalize that monitoring and evaluation consists measuring the status of an object or activity against an expected target that allows judgment or comparison by continuous collection and analysis of information.

Once we have agreed upon the importance of monitoring and evaluation with the intent of assuring smooth implementation of plans by gathering empirical feedback to avoid problems that may arise latter on, the next question is who, what, how and when to evaluate and monitor plans. Accordingly, Chang (2008) recommended that monitoring and evaluation could be carried out both by insiders (those belongs to the same organizations as the program managers) and outsiders (external evaluators) in order to help decision makers and the other stakeholders to learn lessons and apply them in future programs.

Monitoring and evaluation are necessary in any educational organizations and are all the more important when they undertake change. Monitoring and evaluation are management functions through which organizations can ascertain whether or not plans meet their stated objectives. The

focusing of monitoring and evaluation is on relevance, performance, and success of plans thus ensuring the production of sustainable results that benefit the target groups.

Regular monitoring is necessary to judge progress, ensure that the strategic plan implementation is on track and to make any necessary corrections. It is rare that actual out comes are the same as those predicted when plans were made. Makridakis (1990:231) suggested that such deviations must be discovered as soon as possible through effective monitoring. The reasons causing them must be established so that corrective actions can be taken. According to him, monitoring actual results, establishing causes, and taking corrective action are indispensable planning /implementation activities. Long (2001:132) also argued that ''systematically monitoring progress of major change is essential to achieving ultimate success''.

McNamara (2008) defined monitoring as a process for checking that activities are being implemented as planed, mainly looks at inputs, process and out puts. According to him, the monitoring phase tracks and counts events, activities, peoples and objects and can consist of their periodic or continuous data collection. The information gathered in this process, such as new trends and strengths and weaknesses of the plan, should be used to improve plans.

Hence, educational administrators are obliged to monitor strategy regularly, refining and recasting it as often and as much needed to match the organization's changing external and internal circumstance. Educational organizations at any level should have monitoring and evaluation systems that ensure the effective implementation of strategic plan.

A strategy plan documents is of little use to educational organization unless there is a follow-through on the decision taken. According to Bryson (1995) there are essentially two aspects of follow- through; actions to implement the strategies and strategy reviews and updates. He noted that strategic plans are sometimes neglected; for this reason assigning responsibilities for follow – through and monitoring progress is especially important. Furthermore, in order to make the strategic control effective, educational administrators must create a link between strategic control and other organization system. In line with this, Byars et al. (1996:438) said that ''strategic control should be connected to other organizational systems, specially the culture, formal structure, the reward system, and management information system''.

In monitoring the progress of the plan reports have a significant role. In designing formal reports to monitor strategic progress Thompson and Strickland (2001:393) developed four guidelines. These includes: information a reporting system should involve no more data and reporting that is needed to give reliable picture, report and statistical data gathering have to be timely, the flow of information a statistics should be kept simple, information and reporting systems should point out clearly warning signs rather than just produce information.

From this, we can understand that an effective organization control system in educational organizations has its own consequences. Byars et al. (1996:205) forwarded the following consequences of poor controls: inflexibility, missed opportunities, loss of motivation and morale, lack of accountability and stifling creativity and innovations.

2.6.3.1 Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation

The importance of monitoring and evaluation system in educational institutions is unquestionable. McNamara (2008) argued that monitoring and evaluation helps to improve performance, to assess and enhance impact, to improve day to day decision- making, to provide early warning of the problematic activities and process those need corrective actions, to help empower stakeholders by creating opportunities to critically reflect on performance and subsequently make decisions on strategies and direction to build understanding and capacity among stakeholders, to motivate and stimulate learning among all involved, and finally to demonstrate and strengthen accountability.

2.8.2 Components of Monitoring and Evaluation System

Good monitoring and evaluation design is a much broader activities than just development of indicators. McNamara (2008) suggested that, it rather should have the following five components: clear statements of measurable goals and objectives; a structured set of indicators, covering out puts of goods and services generated by the plan and their impact on beneficiaries; provisions for collecting data and managing records so that the data required for indicators are compatible with existing statistics, and are available at reasonable cost; institutional arrangements for gathering, analyzing, and reporting data, and for investing in capacity building, to sustain the

stand, assisting people to get a head, inspiring subordinates with enthusian, building team sprit, being familiar with subordinates work, and for forward planning delegation, problem solving and trust. They also achieve high score on items of reflecting efficiency.

To this effect, in order to ensure effective and efficient practices of preparing and implementing educational strategic plan, the people who are going to be affected by a particular development project should be involved in as much as possible in the strategic planning stages, partly to ensure that detailed information on social conditions and needs is obtained: and partly to encourage a sense of involvement in, and commitment to, the project by the people. Hence, participatory strategic planning enables the planning process to focus on the commonly felt needs of the society through group involvement and eases effective strategic plan execution.

On the other hand, a strategic plan which is prepared by professional and/or highly experienced planners tends to be more successful than a strategic plan prepared by non professional and/or less experienced planners. In clear terms, highly trained and specialized planning personnel are significantly important for effective strategic plan preparation and implementation (Bharadwaj &Balchandran, 1988). In addition to this, Forrojalla (1993) witnessed that effective practice of the preparation the strategic planning require relevant knowledge and/or experiences of planners. This implies that planners who have received good amount and kind of training in planning area could design varieties of techniques in order to address the most pressing needs of the society through effective and efficient strategic planning process.

Further more, the fact that the planning process involves continuous activities, the out puts of one stage will also serve as inputs for the subsequent stages; and planners will also learn much as they spend more times in strategic planning. Logically speaking, more experienced planners know the most common and frequently felt needs which should be addressed by the plan and problems encountered in this regard. This helps them to internalize the situations and design effective intervention mechanism from the very start to the last phase of strategic planning process. Hence, effective strategic planning process needs well developed knowledge and/or experiences of planners. To wind up, strategic planning in general and educational strategic plan in particular can be come more meaningful and effective if it is participative and carried out by highly skilled and/or experienced professionals (Forrojala, 1993).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the research methodology employed, data sources, sample size and sampling techniques used, instruments and procedures of data collection, pilot test, and methods of data analysis as discussed hereunder.

3.1 Method of the Study

This study used descriptive research in order to assess the practices and problems of preparing and implementing of educational strategic plans in Amhara Region Education Bureau. Moreover, the study used descriptive survey method of research because descriptive survey method helps to gather a large variety of data related to a problem under the study. In relation to this, Seyoum and Ayalew (1989: 17) stated that the descriptive survey method of research is more appropriate to gather several kinds of data of such a broad size rather than case study (which is study in depth) and comparative study. In addition, Keeves (1990) has pointed out that descriptive method of research is a fact finding study with adequate and accurate interpretation of the findings. It describes with emphasizes what actually exists such as current conditions, practices, situations or any phenomena. Particularly, descriptive survey research method is one which is commonly used in educational research. Since this study were concerned with the current practices and problems of preparing and implementing educational strategic plans in the education sector. Besides, the qualitative approach was employed so as to obtain detailed descriptions of the phenomenon being studied through an in depth interview.

3.2 Source of Data

The major data sources of the study were primary and secondary in nature. The primary data was collected from regional educational planning experts, different work process performers of South Wollo, East Gojjam, South Gondr and Oromiya zones , Woreda education expertise and planners, principals , and department heads of schools in the sampled Woredas. The selection of these people as a source of data was based on the expectation that they would have better information and experience in relation to the study. Secondary data

were obtained from documents like; Strategic plan documents, implementation reports, operational plan documents of different units and statistical data and other related materials were the major sources of the study.

3.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

There are eleven zones in Amhara Regional state. This researcher has clustered these eleven zones in to four groups based on their geographical location, that is Awe, west Gojjam, East gojam and Bahidar Liyu Zones grouped as West Zones; South Gonder, North Gonder, and Waghemira as North Zones; North Wollo and South Wollo as East Zones; and finally Oromiya and North Shewa as South Zones. Among the eleven Zones, 4 (30%) zones were selected by using stratified sampling technique. These are; South Wollo from East Zone, East Gojjam from West Zone, South Gonder from North Zone and Oromiya from South Zones. In these four selected Zones, there are 59 Woredas and among them 12 (20%) Woredas were selected by simple random sampling technique. Which were Kelala, Tehuledere, Kutaber and Dessie Zuriya from South Wollo Zone; Hulet Ej Enese, Dejen and Gozamin from East Gojjam Zone; Woreta, Misrak Esite and Fogera from South Gonder zone and Dawe Chefa and Kemissie from Oromiya Zone. To make the study more comprehensive and gather data from different sources the study used stratified sampling technique. The first stage in the sampling process was to determine the respondents group and size from Amhara Region Education Bureau; therefore, a deputy head of region education bureau, 2 planning experts and 4 process owners and performers were selected from each region education bureau using purposive sampling method. Similarly, a deputy head of Zone education department, 5 process owners, 2 plan experts from each Zone education departments were included in the study by using purposive sampling. This is because they are the ones with better knowledge as compared with those people who are found in that institution. Thus, from four zones 20 process owners and 8 planning experts were selected; 3 process owners and performers, 2 planning and information system experts from each woreda education offices were selected by using purposive sampling technique and finally from 12 secondary schools (1secondary school from each woreda): 25 principals purposively selected, and 100 head departments out of 128 department heads were selected as respondents by simple random sampling technique. Generally, the total number of sample populations of the study were 224 (11 participate for interviewees and 213 for questionnaire).

Nº	Sample Zones	Total Nº of Woredas in the samples Zons	Nº of samples woredas	Name of samples Woredas.	No.of sample schools from each woreda	Sample of respondents from the schools	
						Sample of principals from each school	Sample of head departments from each school
1	South Wollo	22	4	Kelala	1	2	8
				Haik/Tehuledere	1	2	10
				Kutaber	1	2	8
				Dessie zuria	1	2	8
2	East Gojjam	18	3	Hulet Ej Enese	1	2	8
				Dejen	1	2	8
				Gozamin	1	2	8
3	Oromiya	7	2	Chefa Robit	1	2	8
				Kemmissie	1	2	8
4	South Gonder	12	3	Woreta	1	3	10
				Misrak Estey	1	2	8
				Fogera	1	2	8
Total	4	59	12		12	25	100

Table 3: List of sample Zones, Woredas, Schools and Sample of respondents from schools

3.4 Data Collection Tools

For this study, the data was collected from the data sources using the following data collection instruments.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

i. **For Zonal and Woreda Education Experts and Planners**:

A close-ended with a five likert-scale and a few open ended questionnaire items were prepared in order to measure the zonal and woreda education planners and experts activity and to collect data regarding in preparing and implementing educational strategic plans..

ii. **For Principals and Department Heads**:

In the same way close-ended with a five likert scale items were prepared for Principals and department heads respondents so as to collect data regarding their activity to implement the strategic plan.

3.4.2 Interview

Semi-structured interview guides were prepared to collect information about the preparation and implementation of educational strategic plan with the Heads and Deputy Heads of Amhara Region Education Bureau and Zone Education Departments, Regional planners, process owners and implementers.

3.4.3 Document Review

Strategic plan documents, annual action plans and strategic plan reports of the selected Zones and Woredas were reviewed in order to get the necessary information with regard to the respondents and regional policy about their preparation and implementation of educational plans.

3.5 Procedures of Data Collections

The question items were presented to education experts, planners, principals and department heads in a face to face situation, keeping in mind the convenient time for them as indicated in the time schedule. To help the respondents to give sufficient response and understand each and every concept of the items and to minimize other shortcomings while data collection, sufficient time was allotted for respondents to give their responses.

With regard to interview, the researcher had personally conducted it there in the selected Region, Zones and Woredas. This was done at its own scheduled time just after completion of data collection through questionnaire.

3.6 Pilot Test

Pilot test was carried out to test the degree to which instruments actually measure what they were supposed to measure (content validity), and internal consistency (reliability) of the instruments. To do this, the researcher employed two methods. First, the instruments were developed and primarily submitted to the thesis advisor for evaluation, and to 4 colleagues who are attending Masters Program in Educational Planning at AAU. Secondly after incorporating the comments given by the advisor and colleagues the draft instruments were distributed to 5 Zone and 6 Woreda educational experts and planners and to 2 Principals and 7 Department Heads in South Wollo Zone, Dessie Zuria Woreda and Kelela Secondary school.

Accordingly, in order to test the internal consistency the instruments (questionnaires), reliability test was made using estimation of Guttmann Split –half method. Thus, the result of the reliability estimate for Part I (Pre- conditions for effective plan preparation and implementation) is 0.754, part II (Availability of Resource and Competence of WEO and ZED heads for effective preparation and implementation of educational strategic plans) is 0.795, Part III (Plan Monitoring and Evaluation) is 0.842, and Part IV (Factors that affect preparing and implementing Educational Strategic Plans) is 0.911 This shows that the instruments were reliable since numbers (reliability test results) near to 1 (one) are generally considered as more reliable. To this end, though the reliability estimate results vary to some degree, both results confirmed that the instruments were highly reliable.

3.7 Methods of Data Analysis

In order to get and generate meaning from the data that were collected in this study, the results of the questionnaire was analyzed using quantitative approach linking it with qualitative data and studies obtained from interview and document review. The researcher used descriptive statistics (percentages, independent t-test, chi-square test and weighted mean) to analyze the different questions and described quantitatively using software called Statistical Package for Social Science (SPPS -15 versions) and the results were displayed using tables.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter mainly covers two major parts. The first section deals with the characteristics of the respondents; while the second part deals with the presentation and analysis of data obtained from various respondents regarding the practice and problems of preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in Amhara Region.

4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Although planning is mainly managerial activity, individuals who were assumed to have direct and/or indirect exposure to planning activities, in addition to the managers, were data sources of the study. These sources included Heads and Deputy Heads of Amhara Region Education Bureau and Zone Education Departments, Educational Planners, Experts, processors and performers of Zone and Woreda education offices, Principals and Department Heads of Secondary Schools.

In order to gather the necessary information for the study, 213 copies (125 for School Respondents (principals and department heads), and 88 for Office Respondents (Zone and Woreda educational planers, experts and performers)) of questionnaires were developed and distributed to the target respondents.

However, all the distributed questionnaires were not fully filled and returned to the researcher due to various reasons. Accordingly the rate of return was 95.77 percent. Specifically, among 125 questionnaires distributed for School respondents, 120(96.0 percent) and out of 88 questionnaire distributed for office respondents, 84(95.45 percent) were collected with unreserved efforts made by the researcher.

As can be seen from Table 4, among the total respondents included in the study 195 (95.59 percent) and 9(4.41 percent) of the respondents were males and females respectively. This shows that there is still gender gap which is common problem in almost all levels of education of most developing countries.

Table 4: Characteristics of the Respondents

No.	Items		Respondents							
			REB & WEO Heads & Performers		Office Respondents (ZED&WEO)		School Respondents			
							Principals		Department heads	
			No	Percent	No	Percent	No	Percent	No	Percent
1	Sex	Male	11	100	79	92.85	23	85.83	94	97.92
		Female	-	-	6	7.15	1	14.17	2	2.08
		Total	11	100	84	100	24	100	96	100
2	Age interval	21-25	-	-	5	5.92	-	-	7	7.29
		26-30	1	9.09	15	16.81	3	12.5	15	15.62
		31-35	1	9.09	21	25.00	7	29.12	42	43.75
		36-40	2	18.18	19	22.60	12	50.0	17	17.71
		>40	7	63.64	24	29.85	2	8.38	15	15.62
		Total	11	100	84	100	24	100	96	100
3	Educational qualification	MA/MSc/MEd	4	36.36	6	7.15	5	20.83	4	4.17
		BA/BSc/BEd	7	63.64	67	79.76	19	70.17	86	89.58
		Diploma	-	-	11	13.09	-	-	6	6.25
		Certificate	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Total	11	100	84	100	24	100	96	100
4	Specialization	Educ. Plan	3	27.27	9	10.72	-	-	-	-
		pedagogy	2	18.18	4	4.76	-	-	2	2.08
		curriculum	-	-	3	3.57	-	-	-	-
		others*	6	54.55	68	80.95	24	100	94	97.92
		Total	11	100	84	100	24	100	96	100
5	Total Years of service	1-5	-	-	14	16.68	1	4.17	13	13.54
		6-10	1	9.09	17	20.23	8	33.38	14	14.59
		11- 15	3	27.27	8	9.52	7	29.12	35	36.46
		15-20	2	18.18	26	30.95	5	20.83	21	21.87
		Above 20	5	45.46	19	22.62	3	12.5	13	13.54
		Total	11	100	84	100	24	100	96	100
6	Experience on the current position	1-5	11	100	81	96.43	24	100	96	100
		6-10	-	-	3	3.57	--	-	-	-
		Above 10	-	-	-	-	--	-	-	-
		Total	11	100	84	100	24	100	96	100

*= those who were studied in natural, languages and social science except Edpm, Pedagogy and Curriculum

It can also be observed that the degree of female participation decreases as we move up to the higher officials of the region. In other words, 2 (2.08 percent) of female respondents in the lower work forces/ Department heads and 1(14.17 percent) of principals, 6 (7.15 percent) in the middle levels (ZED and WEO planners, work process implementers and experts), and there is no female participant in the higher officials group. This shows that the participation of females was almost insignificant even in the front line implementers of plans let alone in higher officials' category.

However, lack of meaningful participation of females in various decision making positions is not a surprise in countries like Ethiopia here there has been male dominating culture, and where educational opportunities have relatively been accessible only to males. Thus it is not new finding that has been reported by this study; rather, various researchers and organizations have repeatedly illustrated before. For instance, Emebet (2003); MOE (2005) witnessed that participation of females in Ethiopian Education had been low resulting in their lower rate of employment which could be due to serious economic deprivations, unreasonable load of household chores, school distance, early marriage, marriage by abduction and pregnancy.

To this effect, since lack of female participation could result in failing to incorporate their needs in the plans that would help address the major issues of entire female population of the potential stakeholders, the region should work harder to increase their involvement in the higher officials of the region and planning activities at various levels.

Regarding the age limits of the respondents, a large proportion was found in the age interval of 30 years and above although there were few in the age below 30 years. More importantly, the specific figures in the above table showed that the age intervals where the majority of the respondents' falls differs as the respondents' group vary. Statistically, 63.64 percent of the higher officials and planning experts were found in the age limit of 40 and above years, while 1(9.09 percent), and 2 (18.18 percent) were found in between 31-35 and 36-40 years respectively. This implies that higher managerial officials in Amhara region seem to have been occupied by well experienced individuals who could do their best for the preparation and implementation of educational strategic plans; provided that they have had relevant experiences to strategic planning and/or managing education.

On the other hand, this table showed that good number of principals and department heads and region's, zones' and woredas' education planners, experts, and processors seem to fall in similar age groups. That is 7 (29.12 percent) of the principals, 42 (43.75 percent) of department heads and 21 (25 percent) of ZW planners and experts were in the age limit of 31-35 years. And 12 (50 percent) of the principals, 15(15.62 percent) of department heads and 19(22.60 percent) of ZED and WEO planners and experts were in the age limit of 36-40 years. Others, who are relatively insignificant in number, fall in the two extreme age limits (21-25, 26-30 and >40 years). From this, one can infer that the major plan implementers (principals and department heads) were found in the age group of 31-40 years which would show that the majority of the strategic plan implementers where in the productive age level that could highly help effective strategic plan preparation and implementation if properly coordinated.

On top of this, Table 4 revealed the educational qualification of respondents. Thus, 6 (7.15 percent) of higher officials of ZED and WEOs', and plan experts, 5(20.83%) secondary school principals and 4(4.17 percent) department heads were second degree (MA/MSc/MEd) holders, 76 (79.76 percent) of ZED and WEOs' planers, process owners and experts, 19(79.17%) secondary school principals and 86 (89.58 percent) of department heads were first degree (BA/BSc/BEd) holders.

Moreover 11 (13.09 percent) of ZED and WEO educational planners and experts and 6(6.25 percent) of department heads were diploma holders. From these data we can infer that the majority of the educational planners and experts did not have the qualification expected to the position. More importantly, no respondent in the study had certificate.

Besides, as shown in Table 4, the respondents were asked about their field of specialization. The data shows that 68 (80.95 percent) of ZED and WEO planners, experts and processors of respondents' field of study was not related to the position they were assigned. However, only 6 (19.05 percent) of them were studied in educational planning, pedagogical science or curriculum. Regarding the higher officials' field of study all of them did not study management related disciplines in their higher education. Furthermore, it was indicated that all school principals did not study in either educational administration or pedagogical science or curriculum. They had rather studied fields like Geography, physics, Biology, Mathematics, English, Chemistry, Amharic, History, Physical Education and Sports and so

forth. These data indicated that educational planners and experts in the zones and woredas and principals in the schools did not study related field that were closely associate with their current position. This may show that educational leaders, planners and experts did have the required knowledge and skill how to manage organizations and lead employees in preparing and implementing the strategic plans.

Besides, as shown in Table 4 item 5, the total service years of all higher officials, plan and program experts were 11 and above. More specifically, the data in the above table revealed that 17(20.23 percent), 8(9.52 percent), 26(30.95 percent) 19(22.62 percent) of the ZED and WEO officials, planners, experts and processors were in the service boundary of 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 and above 20 years respectively. From this, it can be inferred that the largest proportion fall in the, relatively, highest years of services. Similarly, 15(62.45 percent) principals and 69(71.87 percent) of head departments were in the range of 11-20 years and above 20 years of services, while 9(37.55 percent) principals and 27(28.13 percent) of department heads were found in between 1-10 years of experience. It seems that Amhara region education office has good number of well experienced principals and department heads that could have better understandings on how to effectively prepare and /or implement the educational strategic plans.

As far as the respondents' experience on their current positions are concerned, the table reported that, all regional higher officials, planners and experts, principals, department heads and most ZED and WEO officials, planners, process owners and experts have served for 1-5 years. This could be due to the fact that a term of officers changes in less than five years under normal circumstances. Thus, although the experience of respondents on their current position is so limited, their long years of total services would tell that they could have better understandings on the strategic planning practices of the region. Hence, it was believed that they were relatively, the right persons to share their views on the topic under consideration.
Here, the researcher wanted to examine the associated/relevance of the academic background or specialty areas of the higher officials whose major activity is planning, with their responsibilities. This is mainly because, it is logical that one has the tendency to be successful if he/she does a business that he/she knows very well.

4.2 Analysis of the Practice and Problems of Preparing and Implementing Educational Strategic Plan in Amhara Region

This part of the chapter presents the analysis of the data obtained from questionnaires, interview, and document inspections. The analysis has been done between two groups; Principals and department heads as one group represented by School Respondents and on the other group; Zones' and Woredas' educational planners, work process owners, implementers, officials and experts as the second group represented by Office Respondents. The analysis has been categorized under five major categories such as pre-conditions of effective strategic planning activities, adequacy and utilization of resources, competence of educational officials for effective preparation and implementation of educational strategic plans, plan monitoring and evaluation, and the major challenges encountered in strategic planning practices in AR discussed here under.

4.2.1. Pre- conditions of Effective Strategic Planning Activities

Strategic planning in general and educational strategic planning in particular is a collective activity which helps to manage the future actions and minimize uncertainties of organizations. A strategic planning activity basically undergoes preparation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation phases. In doing so, mainly to assure its successful practices, there are various basic elements that need to be put in place throughout its processes. These governing elements includes meaningful participation of stakeholders, planners' knowledge and /or experience for effective educational strategic plan practice, availability and adequacy of resources and competence and commitment of Zone and Woreda educational officials.

In order to examine the availability and adequacy of these basic pre-conditions in various levels of the region, responses were obtained using the five point likert type scale ranging as very poor(1), poor (2), medium (3), good (4) and very good (5). Following this the mean value for t-test and percentage for chi-square test for every item were calculated and made ready for interpretation.

In order to test the significant differences between the two independent groups office respondents (ZED and WEO planners, process owners, experts) and school respondents(principals and head departments) at alpha 0.05 level of significance. Accordingly, for the items analyzed by t-test, the means scores calculated from the data were

Table 5: Responses on the Stakeholders' Participation

No	Items	Respondents												t-value
		Office Res.(Planners & Expert) N=84						School Res.(Principals &Dept head N=120						
		5	4	3	2	1	$\bar{x}$	5	4	3	2	1	$\bar{x}$	
1	Principals and department heads involve in the strategic plan	7	3	11	44	19	2.23	2	8	27	40	43	2.04	1.25
2	Principals & departments are committed to effective strategic planning	13	23	31	15	2	3.36	21	19	41	20	19	3.03	2.007*
3	Principals' and dep't heads' feedbacks are taken for improvement	1	5	9	38	31	1.86	1	3	6	17	93	1.35	4.384*
4	Discussion made on the draft of the strategic plans by education sector community	2	5	17	28	32	2.01	-	3	8	23	86	1.40	4.995*
5	external stakeholders participate in the strategic plans preparation and implementation (NGOs, GOs, Private	-	2	10	48	24	1.88	-	4	8	22	86	1.42	4.489*
6	Availability of the strategic plan document at simplicity for all stakeholders	12	17	29	16	8	3.06	10	21	44	18	27	2.74	1.834

**= statistically significant at α= 0.05; $\bar{x}$ = the mean value, Df =202 P value =0.05, T-table value=1.960*

As can be observed from Table 5, all items except item 2, were rated as poor and very poor by majority of the respondents. In item 1, respondents were asked the extent of principals and department heads involvement in the educational strategic plan preparation and implementation. Based on this, both office and school respondents with mean score of 2.23 and 2.04, respectively confirmed as poor on the idea that principals and department heads involvement in the strategic plan preparation. In order to test the significance of difference between the two groups, independent t-test was applied. The calculated t-test value is 1.25,

which is less than the table value (1.960) at 0.05 alpha level and 202 degree of freedom. Which describes there is no significant difference between the mean score of the two independent groups. Active involvement of the major stakeholders is significantly important since it could create sense of belongingness in the parties, and they feel that it is their needs that are to be addressed by the strategic plans. Moreover, parties that are affected by a given plan participate in the strategic planning process; easily understand the strategic plan and become more willing for its successful accomplishment (Lewis, et al., 1995).

Despite this reality, it can be felt that the strategic planning activities in AR lacks principals' and department heads' seemingly important contributions for its effective practices because of their limited roles in the process. This implies that, principals and department heads, who are the front line plan implementers, seem to execute the strategic plans that they had not participated in its preparation. And, it is likely that such trend could discourage these major plan actors not to exert their maximum efforts, and eventually show failure.

On the other hand, with principals' and department heads' commitment to effective preparing and implementing of educational strategic plans, the respondents showed that as fair /medium with mean score 3.36 office and 3.02 school respondents. From this, it can be inferred that both categories of respondents rated it as medium although their degrees varies. However, a mean value of 3.36 could not be considered as equally fair as a mean value of 3.02, while both are found in the range of 2.5-3.49 which all describe fair /medium agreements to the items. Thus, although commitment is a vital element in order to execute the strategic plans as effectively as possible, Amhara region seems to lack it to varied degrees

On top of this, the degree that, the draft strategic plans are brought for public discussion mainly by the education sector community, and the incorporation of their feedbacks' acceptance for further improvement as poor by office respondents with mean score of 2.01 and very poor by school respondents with mean score of 1.40. This could have message that these principals and head departments are less important and their feedbacks are not valuable. Moreover, when someone is invited to comment on something and his/her feedbacks are left unused, it seems that the individuals are not as important as it should to be; and his /her idea is not considered as useful.

In Table 5 item 5 is dealing with the involvement of external stakeholders (NGOs, private investors, community) in the strategic plans preparation and implementation. The respondents confirmed as poor by office respondents with mean score of 1.88, while as very poor by school respondents with mean score of 1.42. The office respondents have supported the ideas of school respondents on the participation of external stakeholders' involvement with slight difference poor and very poor respectively. This indicates that the strategic planning practices in AR lack active involvement of external stakeholders (NGOs, Private investors, community...).

Additionally, on the above idea, interviewees have shared their views in the following ways. Most interviewees (75 percent) have stated that the role of external stakeholders in the strategic plan preparation was so high and encouraged throughout its process. But few (25 percent) of the interviewees have great complains on the participation of external stakeholders mainly NGOs, private investors, communities; the fact that their participation has almost been given less attention.

Despite this, the interviewees have recommended that participation should be to the optimum level since involvement of concerned bodies could highly facilitate strategic plan implementation. In support of this view, Parkinson et al. (1984) forwarded the following on the significance of participation in the planning process as:

> *When a person participates, when he makes suggestions, when his views are given importance, he feels important. His self respect is enhanced. He, then, naturally exerts himself in the best possible manner when members of group participate in its activities; the group drives the benefit of their combined knowledge, experiences and skills. Unnecessary conflict is avoided and the task is performed with maximum efficiency (p.46).*

Generally, in spite of the realities behind the benefits of stakeholders' participation in the strategic planning practices that have to be, it is possible to imagine that, from discussion made above, external stakeholders' involvement in the planning practices of various levels in AR has been reported poor by office with mean score of 1.88 and very poor by school respondents with mean score of 1.42. This, implies that, both the respondent groups have agreed that participation of external stakeholders in the educational strategic planning practices of AR was not to the level of expected although their views vary to some degree.

This finding is in agreement with the idea of Cunningham (1982) which stresses that there has been lesser participation of the concerned stakeholders in the educational planning practices of various levels in developing countries.

In order to test the significance of differences between the responses of the two groups (office respondents and school respondents) t- test was applied. The calculated t-test value is 2.007 for item 2, 4.384 for item 3, 4.995 for item 4 and 4.489 for item 5, all of which are greater than the table value (1.960) at 0.05 alpha level and 202 degree of freedom. Which describes there is significant difference between the mean score of the two independent groups

Finally, as can be seen from Table 5 item 6, respondents were asked the availability of the strategic plans document at simplicity for all stakeholders, the office respondents (planners, work process owners, experts…) showed that as it was fair/medium with a mean value of 3.06. Similarly, school respondents (principals and department heads) pointed out the availability of strategic plan document ease for all stakeholders also as medium with mean value of 2.74. From this, it can be inferred that both categories of respondents rated it as medium although their degrees vary. However, given the median dividing rule at 3.0 a mean value 2.74 could not be considered as equally fair as a mean value of 3.06 while both are found in the range of 2.5-3.49 which all describes fair/medium agreements to the item.

In order to test the significance of difference between the two groups, independent t-test was applied. The calculated t-test value is 1.834, which is less than the table value (1.960) at 0.05 alpha level and 202 degree of freedom. Which describes there is no a statistical significant difference between the mean score of the two independent groups. From this, we can imply that the opinions of the two group respondents are the same regarding the accessibility of the strategic plans as needed by concerned bodies.

Furthermore, the interviewees confirmed that, the orientations were provided for stakeholders to make clear all this issues. The researcher also observed the vision, mission and goals of the region and each sample zones' and woredas' education offices posted in the place where any one interested can read. This shows that an effort was made to introduce the strategic plans to the different stakeholders. This may bring some contribution in the effective implementation of the strategic plans. More over, the response of the interviewees and analysis of the strategic

plan document revealed that all organizations have developed five years strategic plans for their organizations

4.2.1.2 Planners' Knowledge and/or Experience

Planning is not a one shot activity. It is a continuous exercise that requires collective knowledge and /experiences of the plan actors. By knowledge, it means that the planners should necessary be equipped with the required planning know how and skills which could make the strategic plans effective and achievable. In other words, planners who have received good amount and kind of trainings in planning field could design varieties of techniques in order to address the most pressing needs of the society using the knowledge and skills they have. Similarly, planning experiences is significantly important for effective strategic plan preparation and implementation. In other words, the fact that strategic involving a continuous activities, the outputs of one stage could serve as inputs for the subsequent stage; and individuals who are taking part in the strategic planning process could learn much as they spend more times in these activities. Moreover, experience is a school by it self.

In the table below (Table 6), data with regarding the knowledge and/or experiences of the currently existing practice and problems of preparing and implementing educational strategic plans in Amhara region are presented; and consequently, discussions were made accordingly following the procedures undergone in previous section.

As shown in Table 6 of item1, the majority 27(32.1 percent) and 26(31.0 percent) of office respondents were agreed as poor and medium respectively. Besides, 27(23.3 percent) and 33(27.5 percent) of school respondents had responded as very poor and poor respectively. Accordingly, the chi-square test (x^2) is applied to test the significance of respondents' response regarding availability of qualified personnel in the strategic planning team. The chi square (x^2) result is 12.152 which are greater than the table value at 0.05 levels (X^2_{cv}=9.49). The difference of the response among each options of the variable (item) is significant. Therefore the response regarding the issue is accepted. How ever, it is believed that strategic plans can function so successfully if prepared by planners who have relevant and adequate planning knowledge.

Table 6: Responses on Planners' Knowledge and/or Experiences

No	Items	Respondents	Rating Scale										X^2
			VG		G		M		P		VP		
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	Availability of qualified personal in educational strategic planning practice	Office (N=84)	4	4.8	17	20.2	26	19.4	27	32.1	10	11.9	12.15*
		School (N=120)	17	14.2	21	17.5	21	17.5	33	27.5	28	23.3	
2	Availability of continuous trainings for the educational strategic planners	Office (N=84)	9	10.7	10	11.9	22	26.2	35	41.7	8	9.5	1.750
		School (N=120)	16	13.3	12	10.0	26	28.2	49	40.8	17	14.2	
3	Adequate years of experiences of planners on strategic plan practices	Office (N=84)	6	7.1	7	8.3	32	38.1	33	39.3	6	7.1	5.048*
		School (N=120)	9	7.5	16	13.3	30	25.0	51	42.5	14	11.7	
4	The degree to which the planners are sent for further upgrading in educational planning	Office (N=84)	3	6.2	16	19.4	21	25.0	30	35.7	14	16.7	10.91*
		School (N=120)	12	10.	11	9.2	26	21.7	35	29.2	36	30.0	
5	The relevance of planners' academic background to the strategic planning practices	Offices' (N=84)	3	3.6	13	15.5	26	31.0	32	38.1	10	11.9	11.145 *
		Schools (N=120)	10	8.3	28	23.3	23	19.2	37	30.8	22	18.3	

**= statistically significant at α= 0.05; x^2 = chi-square Df=4 P value =0.05 x^2 table value=9.49*

As can be seen from table 4 item 2, 35(41.7 percent) and 22(26.2 percent) of office respondents confirmed that the availability of continuous training is very poor and medium respectively. On the other side, 49(40.8 percent) and 26(21.7 percent) of school respondents regarding the availability of continues trainings responded as very poor and medium respectively. The chi-square test (x^2) is applied to test the significance of respondents' response regarding availability of continuous trainings. The calculated value of x^2 is 1.75 which is less than the table value at 0.05 levels. Hence, the difference of the response among each option of the variables is not significant.

In Table 6 item 3, regarding the adequacy years of planners experiences in the strategic planning team was vied as poor by 33(39.3 percent) of office and 51(42.5 percent) of school respondents. Not only this (lack of planning experience), they are not also seen while trying to share planning experiences with other regions, zones and woredas. The calculated value (x^2)

of the respondents is 5.048, which is less than the table value at alpha 0.05 level (X^2_{cv}= 9.49). The difference of the responses among each option of the variables is not significant.

However, most literatures repeatedly suggests that strategic plans which are practiced by experienced planners in relevant areas could result better outcomes than strategic plans prepared by non-professionals practitioners with less or no strategic planning experiences. Moreover, experience is a school by itself where individuals can accumulate good amount and kind of operating skills. Furthermore, skilled, relevant and adequate academic knowledge in strategic planning /managing education with vast planning experiences help the planners internalize the common needs of the society and design effective involvement mechanisms from the very start to the last phase of the strategic planning processes. Stressing, this, Forrojalla (1993) has illustrated that effective strategic planning practices require relevant and adequate planning knowledge and/or experience ; and hence, the educational strategic plans would result in desired outcomes if prepared by professional planners with special skills.

In item 6, regarding planners sent for further upgrading in educational planning the majority of 32(38.1 percent) office and 37(30.8 percent) school respondents confirmed as poor. To test the significance of difference chi-square was applied. The calculated chi –square value (X^2) 11.145, which is greater the table value (X^2_{cv}=9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. So the difference of responses among the respondents is significant.

In table 6 item 5, the calculated chi-square value (X^2) is 10.909, which is greater than the table value (X^2_{cv} =9.49). So the difference of responses among each group is significant. Therefore, the response regarding the relevance of planners' academic background to the strategic planning practices is accepted. Among the very pressing issues that various scholars recommended as significant factors for successful strategic planning activities, the adequacy and relevance of planners' academic background and/or experiences in the related field (planning and managing education) is the major one. As can be seen from the table, most items dealing with planners knowledge and experiences in the educational planning teams were identified as poor and medium by both categories of respondents (office and school) with 30(35.7 percent) offices' and 36(30.0 percent) schools' , and 21(25.0 percent) offices' and 26(21.6 percent) schools' respectively.

Besides, responses obtained from the interviewees have also confirmed that the qualification of the strategic planners mainly at center is far to the planning and managing education. For instance, most interviewees specially stressed that the education plans and resource mobilization program officers in most zones and woredas were qualified in geography, mathematics, chemistry and so on who have no relevant trainings on educational strategic planning. Thus, this could be the case why both office and school respondents complained on the relevance of strategic planners' academic background as very poor and poor.

In summery, the discussions made above have brought the researcher to say that, the educational strategic planners; knowledge and experience in the planning and managing education was poor. That seems that strategic planning responsibilities in Amhara region education bureau remain the tasks of individuals. This is in accordance the finding of Bharadwaj and Balchandran (1988) saying that educational strategic planning in educational institutions of developing countries generally lack highly trained, specialized and well experienced personnel of higher administrative levels which is a must for economically efficient management.

4.2.2 Adequacy and Utilization of Resources

Nowadays, all most all governments of developing nations have prioritized the education sector believing that it could bring over all nations' socio- economic developments. A brilliant strategic plan that is not supported by adequate and relevant resources may not be implemented at the expected quality and time frame. Likewise, the current Ethiopian government has given greater to the education sector. In order to run this prioritized program as effectively as possible, the necessary resources should adequately by available for their successful implementation. Resources in this context refer to the human resource, financial resource, and material resources which all together push the program forward.

Thus, this section presents whether or not the required resources were available both in quality and quantity and utilize properly for the smooth functioning of the strategic plans. It also tries to identify which resources were to the optimum level and which was not. Therefore, Table 7 revealed the data obtained from various responsibilities.

Table 7: Responses on the adequacy and utilization of Resources

No	Items	Respondents	Rating Scale										X^2
			VG		G		M		P		VP		
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	Adequacy qualified manpower resource	Office (N=84)	4	4.8	23	27.4	26	31.0	24	26.8	7	8.3	17.89*
		School(N=120)	3	2.5	21	17.5	18	15.0	49	40.8	29	24.2	
2	Availability of effective planning team	Office (N=84)	2	2.4	15	17.9	45	53.6	18	21.4	4	4.8	16.99*
		School(N=120)	3	2.9	16	13.3	37	30.8	43	35.8	21	17.5	
3	equally distributes financial and human resources to each Zones and Woredas	Office (N=84)	9	10.7	30	35.7	31	36.9	11	13.1	3	3.6	17.98*
		School(N=120)	7	5.8	18	15.0	52	43.3	29	23.5	14	11.7	
4	allocated budget is released exactly on time	Office (N=84)	3	3.6	15	17.9	30	35.7	27	3.1	9	10.7	1 3.64*
		School(N=120)	19	15.8	23	19.2	24	20.0	33	27.5	21	17.1	
5	Availability necessary material resources	Offices' (N=84)	2	2.5	6	7.1	36	42.9	31	36.9	9	10.7	8.98
		Schools'(N=120	4	3.5	20	16.7	35	29.2	38	31.7	23	19.2	
6	budgets are approved based on the strategies of the plan	Office (N=84)	2	2.5	15	17.9	35	41.7	19	22.6	13	15.5	19.70*
		School(N=120)	4	3.3	6	5.0	31	25.8	54	45.0	25	20.8	
7	effective utilization of available resources	Offices' (N=84)	3	3.6	16	19.0	26	31.0	30	35.7	9	10.7	5.999
		Schools(N=120)	7	5.8	13	10.8	48	40.0	33	27.5	19	15.8	
8	availability of adequate amount of fund (budget)	Offices' (N=84)	2	2.4	6	7.1	21	25.0	36	42.9	19	22.6	1.270
		Schools(N=120)	1	0.8	9	7.5	27	22.5	51	42.5	32	26.7	
9	Woreda and/or zone utilizes its budget effectively and efficiently	Offices' (N=84)	6	7.1	15	17.9	25	29.8	29	34.5	9	10.7	6.488
		Schools(N=120)	2	1.7	17	14.2	35	29.2	43	19.2	23	19.2	

*= statistically significant at α= 0.05; x^2 = chi-square Df=4 P value =0.05 x^2 table value=9.49

In table 7 of item 1, regarding the availability of qualified manpower resource 26(31.0 percent) of office respondents and 18(15.0 percent) of school respondents revealed that the availability of qualified manpower resources are medium. On the contrary, 24(28.6 percent) of office and 49(40.8 percent) of school respondents confirmed that, the availability of qualified manpower resource is medium. Chi-square test (X^2) was applied to test the

significance difference of the variables. Since the calculated chi-square value (X^2) is 17.899, which is greater than the table value (X^2_{cv} =9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. Hence, there is a statistical significant difference among the responses of the two groups. Therefore, the response regarding 'the adequacy of qualified manpower resource' is accepted. Hence, we can conclude that the opinions of office and school respondents are not the same regarding the existence of qualified manpower resources. From this one can infer that, with out competent and qualified manpower resources in the education system it will be very difficult to implement the strategic plans effectively and efficiently.

In item 2 of the above table, 45 (53.6 percent) of office and 37(30.8 percent) of school respondents, revealed that, the availability of effective planning team is medium. On the contrary, 18(21.4 percent) and 43(35.8 percent) of office and school respondents respectively proved that there is no effective planning team or poor. In order to test the significance difference among the responses of the respondents' chi-square test (X^2) is applied. The calculated chi- square test (X^2) is 16.99, which is greater than the critical value (X^2_{cv} =9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels, there is significance of difference between the responses of the respondents. Thus from the above findings, one can deduce that the opinions of office and school respondents are the different regarding the availability of effective planning team. Furthermore, the zone education department heads, region's planners and work process implementers in the interview session expressed that, the majority of the planning team members left their position due to different reasons. This may be slow down the preparation and implementation of strategic planning as expected.

The findings of the study is in agreement with MOE (2005:65) that at the regional level and even more so at zone and woreda level, capacity has been a serious problem, with a shortage of qualified manpower resource, and high turnover and staff posts left unfilled, and with the situation being mach more serious in the less developed regions. Efforts to develop staff capacity have meet with the problem of trained staff leaving their posts since training enabled them to secure more attractive employment to a different place. Furthermore, Thompson and Strickland (2001:256) argued that, for effective strategic plan preparation and implementation staffing the organization is paramount. This includes putting together a strong management team, and recruiting and retaining employees with the need experience, technical skills, and intellectual capital. This may affect the whole process of the strategic planning.

Item with regarding the allocated budget was released exactly on time, as can be seen the table above, 30(35.7 percent) office and 24(20.0 percent) school respondents confirmed that the timely release of the allocated budget as medium, while 27(32.1 percent) and 33(27.5 percent) of office and school respondents respectively rated it as poor. The calculated chi-square test value (X^2) is 13.45, which is greater than the critical value (X^2_{cv}=9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. Hence, there is a statistical significance difference between the responses of the respondents.

In Table 7 with regarding the availability of necessary material resources as it can be seen the above table, the majority 36(42.9 percent) and 35(29.2 percent) of office and school respondents respectively proved that the amount of availability of material resources to implement the strategies was medium. On the contrary, 31(36.9 percent) office and 38(31.7 percent) school respondents reported that availability of material resources to implement the strategic plan was poor. The calculated chi-square value (X^2) is 8.98, which is less than the critical value (X^2_{cv}=9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. Hence, there is no a statistical significant difference between the opinions of the respondents.

In reality, resources are the basic preconditions for every development project/plan and serving as a fuel for their successful accomplishments. Stressing this, Malan (1987): Smith et al. (1991) described that every development program/plan should be provided with sufficient and proper resources including budget, manpower, materials, technical assistance and time is organizations need to attain successful implementation track record for their goals and objectives. In strengthening this idea, ANRSEB (2008:85) reported that large numbers of school in the region did not have pedagogical centers, laboratories, libraries

In table 7 items 6, it is shown that, 35(41.7 percent) office and 31(25.8 percent) school respondents revealed that the budgets were approved based on the strategies of the plan (medium). On the contrary 19(22.6 percent) office and 54(45.0 percent) school respondents proved that, the budget approved were not based on the strategies of the plans. In other words, majority of planners, process owners, implementers and experts agreed with budgets approved based on the plans, while majority of principals and head departments confirmed that budgets are not approved based on the plans. The calculated chi-square test value (X^2) is 19.59, which is greater than the critical value (X^2_{cv}=9.49), there is a statistical significance difference between the opinions of the respondents. Hence, we can conclude that, the opinions

of the office and school respondents are heterogeneous regarding the budget approval to the strategies of the plans.

In substantiating the above idea, the interviewees contended that, the budget approved does not fit with the strategies being implemented. The finding of this study is against the assumptions of Thompson and Strickland (1996) and Judson (1996) that how well a strategy implementer links budget allocation to the needs of the strategy can either promote or impedes the implementation process. Too little funding slows progress and impedes the ability of the organizational units to execute their pieces of the strategic plan proficiency.

In table 7 of item 7, regarding the effective utilization of resources, 26(31.0 percent) office and 48(40.0%) school respondents respectively confirmed that resources were effectively utilized to implement the plans. On the contrary, 30(35.7 percent) and 33(27.5 percent) of office and school respondents respectively reported that, the utilization of available resources in the region were as poor. The chi-square test value (X^2) is 5.99, which is less than the critical value (X^2_{cv}=9.49), there is no significant statistical difference between the respondents. Hence, we can conclude that, the opinions of planners, process owners, experts, principals and department heads are the same regarding the effective utilization of available resources. At this point, it can be felt that, the necessary resources (human, financial, and material) are an accurate shortage although resources are the most important elements without which plans are left as on paper documents and lose their practical values. However, MOE (2005:25) promoted about financial utilization that contradicts with the findings of this study that financial planning and implementation has been improved from time to time.

In relation to resources for the preparation and implementation of the strategic plans the majority of the interviewees said that there is no provision of resources such as budgets, facilities, human resources at the expected quality and quantity; there is no serious problem in the resource allocation. They argued that is rather on the utilization of available resources efficiently.

Generally, we can understand from this study that, except the provision of teachers and teaching and learning materials, the other resources (budgets, effective planning teams) which are very essential for the effective implementation of the strategic plans were not as supposed

to be. Hence, it is less likely to realize the desired strategic goals in the region unless the required resources are provided to the implementers at the right time.

In Table 7 with regarding the availability of adequate amount of fund or budget 36 (42.9 percent) office and 51(42.5 percent) school respondents confirmed that the availability of adequacy of budgets to implement the strategy was poor. On the other hand, 19(22.6 percent) and 32(26.7 percent) of office and school respondents respectively approved that the availability of adequate budgets in the ZEDs and WEOs are very poor. in order to test the significance of difference among the responses of the respondents' with regard to the amount of budget to implement the strategies in the concerned zones and woredas, chi-square test (X^2) was applied .The calculated chi-square value (X^2) is 1.27, which is less than the critical value (X^2_{cv}= 9.49), there is no a significant statistical difference between the opinions of the respondents. Hence, from this result one can conclude that, the opinions of the office and school respondents are the same regarding the availability of adequate amount of budget. This may affect the performance of the education sector to implement the strategies of the plan. In relation to budget, Mbua (2002:143) argued that, shortage of finance is one of the causes of plan failures.

4.2.3 Competence of ZED and WEO Heads in Implementing the Strategic Plans

The competence of ZED and WEO heads and commitment in the effective implementation of strategic plans are an essential element in planning process. Educational leaders with no or little commitment to implement the strategies may not be able the organization to achieve the intended results. Furthermore, it is less likely that the educational strategic plans successfully implemented unless the educational leaders are highly committed to its implementation. This part deals with the competences and commitments of ZED and WEO heads in the implementation of the educational strategic plans. After collecting the relevant data, Chi-square test and interpretation were made accordingly.

Table 8: Responses on the competence of ZED and WEO heads

No	Items	Respondents	Rating Rate										X^2
			VG		G		M		P		VP		
			F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	Create strategically relevant measures of performance	Office (N=84)	4	4.8	21	25.0	29	34.5	18	21.4	12	14.3	4.95
		School (N=120)	10	8.3	17	14.2	40	33.3	33	27.5	20	16.7	
2	Absorb new information's	Office (N=84)	4	4.8	17	20.2	24	28.6	30	35.7	9	10.7	5.82
		School (N=120)	9	7.5	18	15.0	26	21.7	41	34.22	6	21.7	
3	The ability to think strategically	Office (N=84)	4	4.8	22	26.2	23	27.4	30	35.7	5	6.0	9.02
		School (N=120)	5	4.2	23	19.2	29	24.2	38	31.7	25	20.8	
4	The ability to create new strategies to move in new directions	Offices' (N=84)	3	3.6	15	17.9	28	33.3	33	39.3	5	6.0	11.11*
		Schools (N=120)	8	6.7	17	14.2	32	26.7	37	30.8	26	21.7	
5	The ability to align people and organizations	Office (N=84)	2	2.4	16	19.0	24	28.6	29	34.5	13	15.5	6.56
		School (N=120)	6	5.0	11	9.2	46	38.3	35	29.2	22	18.3	
6	Translate strategies in to action	Office (N=84)	4	4.8	18	21.4	24	28.6	26	31.0	12	14.3	2.90
		School (N=120)	12	10.0	28	23.3	26	21.7	35	29.2	19	15.8	
7	To define when strategically to change	Office (N=84)	2	2.4	15	17.9	23	27.4	31	36.9	13	15.5	6.92
		School (N=120)	7	5.8	9	7.5	39	32.5	41	34.2	24	20	
8	Communication in every direction: top-down, bottom-up, across department lines	Office (N=84)	3	3.6	16	19.0	27	32.1	24	28.8	14	16.7	3.38
		School (N=120)	5	4.2	20	21.2	37	30.8	26	21.7	32	26.7	

**= statistically significant at α= 0.05; X^2 = chi-square Df=4 P value =0.05 x^2_{α}=9.49*

As shown in the Table 8 item 1, the majority 29 (34.5 percent) and 40 (33.3 percent) of office and school respondents respectively agreed that the competence level of ZED and WEO heads to create strategically relevant measures performance is medium. On the contrary 18(21.4 percent) and 33(27.5 percent) office and school respondents respectively responded that the competence of ZED and WEO heads to create strategically relevant measures of performance was found to be poor. The calculated chi-square value (X^2 =4.959) does not exceed the

critical value X^2_{cv} = 9.49, there is no a statistical difference between the opinions of the two group respondents.

In Table 8 item 2, the majority 30(35.7 percent) and 41(34.5 percent) of office and school respondents respectively expressed that, ZED and WEO heads had poor competence to absorb new information. On the other hand, 24(28.6 percent) and 26(21.7 percent), 17(20.2 percent) and 18(15 percent) of office and school respondents respectively agreed that ZED and WEO heads had medium and good capability to absorb new information respectively. Since the chi-square value is less than the critical value (X^2=5.821, X^2_{cv} = 9. 49), there is no statistical difference between the opinions of the office and school respondents regarding the capability in absorbing new information. This finding is not in favor of to the assumption of Davis, Ellison and Bowring-Carr (2005:321) that strategic leadership occurs in an e nvironment embedded in ambiguity, complexity and information over load. It is important strategic leaders to recognize new information analyze it and apply it to new out comes; leaders need the ability to learn.

In item 3, 30(35.7 percent) planners and experts and 38(31.7 percent) principals and department heads of the respondents agreed that the WEO heads had poor ability to think strategically for the institutions advantages. Only 22(26.2 percent) office and 23 (19.2 percent) school respondents agreed that they have good competence to think strategically. This implies that, the WEO heads give more attention to their daily managerial activities than being strategic. The chi-square test (X^2=9.028, X^2_{cv} = 9.49) result shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinion of office and school respondents. The finding of this research contradicts to the beliefs of Davis, Ellison and Bowring –Carr (2005:345) that strategic orientation can be considered to be establishment of out ward-looking organization which builds an understanding of possible future direction and involves engaging in strategic conversations and debate to focus on the most appropriate direction and approach.

In Table 8 of item 4, it shows that the majority 29(34.5 percent) and 41(34.3 percent) of office and school respondents respectively reported that ZED and WEO heads had poor competence to create new strategies to move in new directions. On the contrary 21(25.0 percent) office and 28(23.3 percent) school respondents have reported that their competence is medium. Since the calculated chi –square value does not exceeds the critical value (X^2=7.052, X^2cv= 9.49), there is no significance of difference conserved from the data. Hence, we

conclude that the opinions of office respondents (planners and experts) and school respondents (principals and department heads) are the same regarding the competence of heads to create new strategies to move in new directions.

In item 5, respondents were asked whether the ZED and WEO heads have the competence in aligning people and organization or not. 29(34.5 percent) and 35(29.2 percent) of office and school respondents respectively revealed that ZED and WEO heads had poor competence in aligning people and organization,24(28.6 percent) and 46(38.3 percent), 16(19.0 percent) and 11(9.2 percent) of office respondents and school respondents respectively agreed that as they have medium and good competence respectively. The chi- square test (X^2=6.569, X^2_{cv}= 9.49) result shows that there is no a statistically significant difference between the opinions of office and school respondents. The findings of this study contradict with the assumption of Davis, Ellison and Bowring-Carr (2005:243) strategic leaders have the ability to align people and organizations. This means leaders should have the competence to encourage commitment through shared values need to understand themselves and the values they hold and be able to nurture quality communication.

For item 6, regarding the competence of ZED and WEO heads to translate strategies to action 26(31.0 percent) office and 35(29.2 percent) school respondents asserted that they have poor competence. On the other hand, 24(28.6 percent) and 26(21.7 percent), 18(21.4 percent) and 28(23.3 percent) office and school respondents reported that as they have medium and good competence. To test the significance of difference between the two groups chi-square test was applied. The calculate chi-square value does not exceed the critical value (X^2 =2.90,X^2_{cv}= 9. 49), there is no a statistical significance difference. Hence, we can conclude that the opinions of office and school respondents are the same regarding the competence of heads to translate strategies in to action. Therefore, the response of the respondents regarding the competence of heads to translate strategies in to action 'is rejected. The finding of this study is against the assumptions of Davis, Ellison and Bowring –Carr (2005:246) that strategic leaders need to translate strategy in to action by converting it in to operational terms. This is a process that involves identifying a series of projects that need to be undertaken to move the organization from its current to its future state.

In item 7, the majority 31(36.9 percent) and 41(34.2 percent) of office and school respondents respectively rated the competence of ZED and WEO heads to define when strategically to change as poor. On the other side, 23(27.4 percent) office and 39(32 percent) school

respondents rated as medium. Since the observed chi-square value does not exceed the critical value (X^2 =6.929, X^2_{cv}= 9. 49), there is no a statistical significant difference among the two groups. Hence, we can conclude that the opinions of planners, experts, principals and department heads are the same regarding the competence of heads to identify when strategy is to change. The findings of this research is against the theoretical assumption of Davis, Ellison and Bowring –Carr (2005:342) that the strategic leaders should have the ability to define not only what strategically to change but also when strategically to change. From the findings of the study, it is possible to infer that the leaders of the education system were not in a position to arrive at where they want to in the future.

In item 8, the majority 27(32.1 percent) office and 37(30.8 percent) school respondents approved that communication were good in every direction. On the contrary,24(28.6 percent) and 26(21.7percent) of office and school respondents respectively expressed that the communication were poor in every direction. Since the observed chi- square value (X^2 =3.383) is not greater than the critical value (X^2_{cv}= 9.49) there is no a significant statistical difference. Therefore, the response regarding to the extent of communication in every direction: top-down, bottom-up and across each department lines is rejected. Hence, we can conclude that the opinions of office respondents and school respondents are the same regarding the existing communication at various levels of the organization. How ever by the open ended question they respond that the communication was not as expected, that mostly top- down communication is more practiced

4.2.4 Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

Plan monitoring and evaluation is a major step in strategic planning process which helps to follow the progress of the implemented strategic plan as to whether or not it is operating properly. Its purpose is mainly to follow the progress of the implemented strategic plans, to take corrective measures, and to draw lessons for the next planning period by making continuous follow up of plans before and/or after deviations occur. It can be carried out either at the preparatory phase (strategic plan preparation) or practical phase where strategic plans are put into effect (strategic plan implementation).

Hence, almost every organization needs to carry out plan monitoring and evaluation in order to evaluate the degree to which whether the basic objectives set in the strategic plans are

successfully addressed or not; and to give timely responses to stakeholders' complaints and/or satisfactions.

In order to gather the necessary information on the actual practice of strategic plan monitoring and evaluation, respondents were asked lots of questions on the availability of an independent organ that carrying out the strategic plan monitoring and evaluation, and related issues as presented in Table 9 . It was presented using the five point likert type scale from very poor (1) to very good (5). Following this, the mean scores were calculated and consequently interpreted as 0.05- 1.49 very poor, 1.5-2.49 poor, 2.5-3.49 medium, 3.5-4.49 good and above 4.5 very good.

As clearly depicted in Table 9, 4(57.14percent) items 1, 2, 3, and 5 were found in the between the mean values of 1.5 -2.49 which would best describe less agreement to the items. Specifically, as the mean scores in Table 7 showed, the above mentioned items were rated as poor. In other words, timely monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plans (mean= 1.92), less frequently that the result of plan monitoring and evaluation used to take corrective measure (mean=2.05) less involvement of external parities in plan monitoring and evaluation (mean=1.98); and monitoring and evaluation has hardly been carried out on regular bases (mean=2.38). Thus, it seems that strategic plans monitoring and evaluation has not been given the necessary attention in Amhara region.

However, plan monitoring and evaluation has been recognized as the mechanism to determine the relevance, effectiveness, and impacts of the given plan (Chang; 2008). Further more, it is recommended to be carried out both by insiders (individuals who are directly /immediately affected by the plans) and outsiders (parties that are indirectly influenced by the strategic plans) in order to help decision makers and other stakeholders learn lessons and apply them in future plans although Amhara regions' education sector seems to be seriously affected by its absence.

Table 9: Responses on Plan and Monitoring

No.	Items	Respondents					
		Office Res. (Planners, process owners & Expert) = 84					
	Plan Monitoring and Evaluation	5	4	3	2	1	Mean $(\bar{x})$
1	Timely monitoring and evaluation of educational strategic plans carried out	1	8	7	51	17	1.92
2	Result of monitoring and evaluation be used to take corrective measure	2	11	16	37	18	2.05
3	Monitoring and evaluation carried out by external evaluators	-	4	13	45	22	1.98
4	Monitoring and evaluation carried out by internal evaluators	17	25	23	11	8	3.38
5	Monitoring and evaluation be done on regular basis	2	7	27	34	13	2.38
6	The extent to which it is done after problem arise	33	28	14	5	4	3.96
7	The availability of an independent organ that monitors and evaluates the strategic planning practices	-	2	6	21	55	1.46

Worse than these, item 7 was rated as very poor. In other words, the item revealed that there is no an independent organs that monitors and evaluates the strategic plans (mean=1.46). Because of this, strategic plans are often seen while evaluated after the problems occur (mean=3.96) as to the views of the respondents. On the other hand, item 4 was rated as medium. The item revealed that the degree to which monitoring and evaluation carried out by internal evaluators is medium.

Similarly, responses obtained from interview have supported the above ideas. In other words, the majority of the interviewees have witnessed there is no independent strategic plans monitoring and evaluation unit, less/no regular plan follow up, less/no involvement of concerned parties in plan monitoring and evaluation; and they claimed that the planning team usually attempts to examine the extent of strategic plan accomplishments after plans have resulted in wider public dissatisfaction.

These interviewees have also expressed that, the major reasons that they though have been resulting in failing to have clear strategic plans monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Among these, major challenges hindering effective plan monitoring and evaluation, lack of knowledge, experiences and resources were repeatedly stressed. But, in reality, the order to the risks that might be brought about as a result of poor strategic plan preparation and implementation, periodic strategic plan monitoring and evaluation is believed to take early measures before problems happen since it enables to follow the progress of the plans at everu stage (Miron and Chinapah; 1990).

In spite of this reality, from the above discussion, it generally seems that plan monitoring and evaluation in Amhara region has been given less attention which would be due to lack of experiences and resources.

4.2.5 Major Difficulties of Preparing and Implementing Educational Strategic Plans

In order to ensure effective and efficient strategic planning practice, an intensive exploration of the major difficulties that could be speed up the process and/or hold the process back should be made at preparatory stage. This helps to take timely corrective measures and facilitate the way that brings to effective and efficient achievements of the desired results.

In this regard, Table 10, presents the major challenges that are frequently encountered in educational strategic planning activities by ragging their difficulty levels from not observed at all (1) to extremely serious (5). Thus, the respondents rated every item according to their levels of seriousness as per zones, woredas and schools' realities. Finally, for analysis purpose, the calculated mean values were categorized as 0.05 – 1.49 not observed, 1.5 -2.49 observed but not serious, 2.5 -3.49 serious, 3.5 - 4.49 very serious and 4.5 and above extremely serious.

Table 10 clearly depicted the opinion of the two categories of respondents on the existence, and degree of the major barriers that would be encountered while practicing educational strategic planning in Amhara region. Thus, according to the calculated weighted mean value for every item, 14.28 percent (items 10 and 14), 35.71 percent (items 1, 6, 7, 9 and 13), 28.57 percent (items 3, 4, 5 and 8), and 21.43 percents (items 2, 11 and 12) were identified as

extremely serious, very serious, serious, and observed but not serious respectively, and no mean for the option not observed at all.

To begin with the extremely serious ones, lack of incentives given to the workers to embrace the new strategies, and inadequate or unreliable data were categorized as extremely serious pitfalls of educational strategic planning practices in Amhara region with weighted mean values of 4.50 and 4.54 by office and 4.52 and 4.67 by school respondents respectively

Lack of incentives given to workers for motivation purpose rated as the most/extremely serious problems with mean value of 4.50 and 4.52 by office and school respondents respectively. In specific terms, when workers are provided with incentives, they tend to develop motivation and exert their seemingly important potentials for successful strategic planning activities. Moreover, as communication is the life blood of an organization, it highly helps workers to concentrate on the common goals of the organization and new strategies can effectively be executed since it creates smooth relationships in between and /or among workers and /or officials at various levels of the organization. Despite of this realities Amhara region seems to have given extremely less attention to the above issue which would certainly ensure failure.

Other important problems identified as extremely serious difficulties including inadequate and/or unreliable data with weighted mean values of 4.54 and 4.67 by office and school respondents respectively. The adequacy and reliability of data is a major prerequisite for successful strategic planning activities. Unless the data we have adequate and reliable, it is extremely difficult to set achievable targets that could be addressed by the strategic plan, and the organizations would certainly face resource scarcity. Therefore, every development project/ strategic plan should necessarily base its activities on adequate and reliable data. If not, over-planning or under-planning may happen which would definitely entail failure. Thus, to conclude, this problem was reported as extremely serious barriers to the educational strategic planning activities in Amhara region.

Table 10: Responses on Factors Affecting the Preparation and Implementation of Educational Strategic Planning

No	Items	Respondents												t-value
		Office Res. (Planners & Expert)						SchoolRes.(Prials&Dept head						
		5	4	3	2	1	$\bar{x}$	5	4	3	2	1	$\bar{x}$	
1	Lack of meaningful participation of stakeholders	41	14	10	13	6	3.85	79	17	11	7	6	4.30	-2.55*
2	Lack of clear delegation in the region, zones, woredas and schools	6	11	8	29	30	2.21	6	5	10	27	72	1.72	2.97*
3	Failure to set meaningful, and verifiable targets	19	11	30	19	5	3.24	34	36	17	18	15	3.44	-1.09
4	Inadequate knowledge and /or experiences of the planners	11	30	29	8	6	3.39	13	39	42	9	17	3.18	1.31
5	Lack of clear lines of authority which makes decision making difficult	24	21	14	16	9	3.42	17	20	38	32	13	2.97	2.49*
6	Inflexible organizational structures in the Woreda and Zones	14	42	9	19	-	3.61	39	41	31	7	2	3.90	-2.06*
7	Inadequacy of monitoring and evaluation system	37	19	17	7	4	3.93	57	25	22	9	7	3.97	0.22
8	Failure to obtain sufficient resources to accomplish tasks	6	19	42	17	-	3.17	11	24	55	19	11	3.04	0.91
9	Failure to follow the plan	40	18	16	8	2	4.02	68	29	10	6	7	4.21	-1.13
10	No incentives given to workers to embrace the new strategies	59	17	5	3	-	4.50	77	32	9	2	-	4.52	-0.13
11	Lack of coordination among Regional, zone, woreda education officers and schools	4	7	13	19	41	1.99	5	8	16	53	38	2.11	0.77
12	Over-dependence on past experience	9	6	17	17	35	2.25	3	7	28	52	30	2.18	0.46
13	Lack of budget to implement the strategies	48	14	15	7	-	4.23	79	21	13	7	-	4.43	-1.53
14	Inadequate or unreliable data	57	20	5	3	-	4.54	93	19	4	3	1	4.67	-1.23

**= Statistically significant at α= 0.05 Df =202 P value =0.05 T_{cv}=1.960*

On the other hand, lack of stakeholders' participation, inflexible organizational structures, inadequacy of monitoring and evaluation system, failure to follow the plans, and lack of budget to implement the strategies identified as very series problem for the preparing and implementing of educational strategic plans with weighted mean of 3.85 and 4.30, 3.61 and 3.90, 3.93 and 3.97, 4.02 and 4.21, and 4.23 and 4.43 by office and school respondents respectively. Rigid organizational structure increases unnecessary bureaucracy and delays decision making process in the strategic planning activities. Thus, organizations with successful strategic planning track record tend to fulfill the required resources and lessen the rigidity of its organizational structures. Planning process basically undergoes preparation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation which all require higher attention. More importantly, plan monitoring and evaluation is the major step which helps to assess the progress and impacts that have been brought about as a result of the strategic plans. Hence, it is in this phase where evaluation with regard to whether or not objectives in the strategic plans have successfully been achieved and responses to stakeholders' satisfaction would be made. However, it seems that the educational strategic plan of AR lacks monitoring and evaluation which results failing to control whether or not its objectives are addressed. This might have possibly resulted in failing to follow the out comes of their strategic plans.

In relation to the monitoring and evaluations systems, the interviewees assured the existence of the system. They believed that the system was providing information for stakeholders regarding the strategic plan implementation. However, according to them it was challenged by lack of professionals who can process the data and facilities. Finally, they argued even though the monitoring and evaluation system has its own problems they were providing the necessary data that shows the status of the strategic plans. In addition from the interview the researcher understood that, there is lack budget and poor utilization of available funds and budgets efficiently. The finding of this study is against to the assumptions of Cunningham (1982:124) that states, if the budget does not support the plan the system has little chance of accomplishing it- the planning effort becomes a paper system lacking both subordinates' respect and effort.

On top of this, failure to set meaning full and verifiable targets, lack of clear lines of delegation, inadequate knowledge and/or experience of the plan actors, failure to obtain sufficient resources to accomplish the tasks, and lack of clear lines of authority which makes decision making difficult were rated as serious problems in the strategic planning activities of

AR with weighted mean of 3.24 and 3.44, 3.39 and 3.18, 3.17 and 3.04, and 3.42 and 2.97 by office and school respondents respectively. Strategic planning highly helps organizations achieve the commonly felt needs of the service users. This can be done through setting clear and achievable targets. Effective and efficient strategic planning practices basically require adequate and relevant planning knowledge and/or experiences of the plan actors. In other words, well experienced and knowledgeable know the most commonly felt needs of the society that can be addressed by plans and they could design verities' of techniques to address. Resources (human, financial, material, time…) are basic preconditions for effective strategic planning practices without which plans lose their practical values. If the regions education sectors fail to do this, failure could be their immediate fates. This can, however, describe the realities in Amhara region.

The items lack of clear delegation in the region, zones, woredas and schools, lack of coordination among the workers of region, zone, woreda and schools; and over-dependence on the past experience have been reported as observed but not serious with weighted mean scores of 2.21 and 1.72, 1.99 and 2.11, and 2.25 and 2.18 by office and school respondents respectively. This implies that, these barriers are not seen while hindering the system although they are widely observed in different zones and woredas of the region.

Generally, magnifying the aforementioned difficulties, Griffin (2000); McNamara (2008) witnessed the above mentioned difficulties as major barriers to successful strategic planning practices. More over, the interview conducted with the higher officials, planners and document inspections have generally strengthened these difficulties as the most commonly felt barriers across zones and woredas of the region.

In order to test the significance differences between the responses of the two groups (office respondents and school respondents) t- test was applied. Thus, calculated t-test value is -2.55 for item 1, 2.97 for item 2, 2.489 for item 5, and -2.065 for item 6; which all have been found greater than t-table value (1.960), which implies that there is a statistical significant difference between the respondents of the two groups al alpha 0.05 level of significance and df=202. On the other hand, the calculated t-value for the items 3, 4, 7, 8, 9,10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 are -1.086, 1.308, 0.221, 0.910, -1.131, -0.132, 0.771, 0.464, -1.525 and -1.228 respectively; all of which are less than the t-critical value (1.960); which implies that there is no statistically

significance between the opinions of the two groups of respondents (df = 202, ά =0.05, two tailed).

Therefore, it seems that the practice of preparing and implementing educational strategic planning in Amhara region have been confronted with as many problems as discussed above however their degrees vary.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This is the last chapter of the study where the summery, conclusions and recommendations are presented. Before arriving at this point, the study has passed through various steps. In the process, the study was guided by a core purpose of examining the current practices and problems of preparing and implementing educational strategic plans in AR with the following five basic research questions in mind.

- What is the degree of stakeholders' involvement in the current educational strategic plan preparation and implementation in Amhara region?
- To what extent the resources required for putting strategic plans into practice in the region been adequate and utilized effectively?
- To what extents are the WEO and ZED heads are competent enough in implementing the strategic plans?
- To what extent monitoring and evaluation systems been instituted for tracking implementation progress, to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses and for making corrections?
- What are the major challenges encountered while implementing the strategic plan in the region?

To answer the above research questions, the study had employed descriptive survey method by which four Zones with their respective woredas were selected. Thus, the zones were selected by stratified random sampling techniques, the woredas were chosen by simple random sampling and schools were included in the study based on availability of sampling techniques. In order to select respondents from the sample areas, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were applied.

As data gathering tools, questionnaires, interview, and document analyses were employed. The total numbers of sample respondents involved in the study were 215. In specific term, there were 120 school respondents (24 principals and 96 department heads), 84 office respondents (58 woredas' and 26 zones' educational planers, experts and work process owners) and 11 higher officials (one deputy heads of region education bureau, 4 ZED heads, 2

regional educational planers, 4 regional experts, work process owners and performers) included in the study.

The data obtained, mainly from questionnaires, were analyzed using percentage, weighted mean values, chi-square, and t-test. At last, the analysis employed has resulted in the following major findings.

5.1 Summery of the Major Findings

Following the analysis made in the preceding chapter, the major findings of the study have been summarized under five basic categories as presented here under:

Regarding the characteristics of respondents, it was shown that 92.85 percent of office and 97.50 percent of school respondents were belonged to the male category. From these data, one can observe that there were more planners, experts, principals and department heads than their counterparts in professional and leadership positions. In addition to this majority of the school and office respondents were in age limit of 31-35 and above 40, respectively. Concerning educational qualification 7.15 percent and 7.5 percent of office and school respondents respectively were masters degree holders and 79.76 percent of office and 87.50 percent of school respondents were degree holders while the others are diploma holders.

Among the major preconditions for successful strategic planning activities that most literatures commonly suggest, participation of potential stakeholders, planners' knowledge and/or experiences, availability of resources were systematically treated in the study. Accordingly, the study showed that degree of stakeholders' involvement in preparing educational strategic planning was poor. In other words, the majority of the office and school respondents responded that the extent to which discussion was made on the draft of the strategic plans by the education sector communities and the extent of external stakeholders participation in the educational strategic plan preparation and implementation were poor and very poor with mean value of 2.01 and 1.88, and 1.40 and 1.42 by office and school respondents, respectively.

Besides, most (75 percent) of the interviewees have witnessed that the participation of the concerned external stakeholders in the strategic plan preparation was so high and encouraged throughout its process. But few (25 percent) of the interviewees together with large number of school and office respondents have great complains on the participation of external stakeholders mainly NGOs, private investors, communities; the fact that their participation has almost been given less attention. Generally, it seems there have been great complaints on the stakeholders' involvement in the strategic planning practices of AR which all justify weak strategic planning trend.

On the other hand, the finding also proved that both categories of respondents together with interviewees commonly agreed that availability of qualified personal in educational strategic planning practice in AR have been less adequate. This was attested by 27(32.1 percent) office and 33 (27.5 percent) school respondents. The adequate years of experiences of planners on strategic planning practices was also proved as poor by 33 (39.3 percent) office and 51(42.5 percent) school respondents. Thus, it can be inferred that, the strategic planning practices in AR seem to highly affected; and the major planning posts seem to have been occupied by individuals whose academic know-how/ experiences are far to the strategic planning activities.

Regarding the adequacy and utilization of resources, it has been found that the necessary resources (human, financial, material,) for successful planning practices in AR have generally have been medium and poor by office and school respondents, respectively. This was confirmed by office and school respondents respectively as 36(42.9 percent) and 49(40.8 percent) for the availability of adequacy of qualified manpower resources, 36(42.9 percent) and 38(31.7 percent) for availability of material resources, and 54(45.0 percent) and 26(31.0 percent) and 33(27.5 percent) for the effective utilization of available resources. Thus, it seems that the scarcity of the available resources has been seriously challenging the smooth functioning of the educational strategic planning activities, without which the strategic plans lose their practical values.

Concerning the competence of ZED and WEO heads, it has been reported that the competence of ZED and WEO heads in implementing the educational strategic plans were as somewhat poor by both group of respondents. The existence of poor competence has been identified by both office and school respondents respectively as with 30(35.7 percent) and 41(34.2 percent)

for the ability to absorb new information's', 30(35.7 percent) and 38(31.7 percent) for the ability to think strategically, 33(31.7 percent) and 37(30.8 percent) for the ability to create new strategies to move in new directions , and 29(34.5 percent) and 35(29.2 percent) for the ability to align people and organizations. While the way of communication in every direction: top-down, bottom-up, across department lines was confirmed as medium by both respondent groups by 27(32.1 percent) of office and 37(30.8 percent) of school respondents.

Regarding plan monitoring and evaluation, the majority of the respondents have seriously complained that there has not been an independent organ that carries out regular plan monitoring and evaluation or adequacy of plan monitoring and evaluation system in AR. In other words, the respondents have rated the existence of an independent organ that carries out plan monitoring and evaluation as very poor with an average mean value of 1.46 and on the other hand, the existence to which timely monitoring and evaluation of educational strategic plans carried out as poor with mean value of 1.92. Because of these, plan monitoring and evaluation has been on and off, and very often, there are times when it occurs to be carried out after the problems happen and plans have resulted in wider stakeholders unhappiness.

Concerning the major difficulties of preparing and implementing educational strategic plans, among 14 possible major problems to the practice of preparing and implementing educational strategic plans in AR, 2 were identified as extremely serious with weighted mean scores 4.50 and 4.54 by office, and 4.52 and 4.67 by school respondents. These, difficulties were: no incentives given to the workers to embrace the new strategies and inadequate or unreliable data.

Furthermore, 5 were identified as very serious problems encountered the educational strategic planning practices in AR with weighted mean ranging from 3.61 to 4.43.These were lack of stakeholders' participation, inflexible organizational structures, inadequacy of monitoring and evaluation system, failure to follow the plans, and lack of budget to implement the strategies

Additionally, 4 were identified as serious difficulties facing the educational strategic planning activities of AR with weighted mean scores between 2.97– 3.44. These include: failure to set meaning full and verifiable targets, lack of clear lines of delegation, inadequate knowledge and/or experience of the plan actors, failure to obtain sufficient resources to accomplish the tasks, and lack of clear lines of authority which makes decision making difficult.

Finally, 3 were reported as observed but not serious problems with weighted mean scores ranging between 1.72 -2.25. These were: lack of clear delegation in the region, zones, woredas and schools, lack of coordination among the workers of region, zone, woreda and schools; and over-dependence on the past experience.

5.2 Conclusions

Strategic planning is the cornerstone of every organization. Without strategic planning, the organization will never know where it is going. Therefore, this study was discussed on the practices and problems of preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in Amhara region. Based on the findings, the following conclusions have been developed.

The basic preconditions for successful strategic planning activities such as meaningful participation of stakeholders, and relevant planners' knowledge and/or experiences were found to be weak across zones and woredas of the region. Any plan to be successful in its implementation, the provision of resources with the right kind and number is mandatory. In this study, it was found that there were shortage of adequate facilities and qualified manpower in educational planning. Furthermore, the study indicated that not only the budget approved based on the strategies of the plan but there was also delay to release the allocated budget. This make it less likely to move in the new strategic directions successfully and realize the strategic goals as expected in the educational strategic planning process in AR.

Furthermore, the study found out that, the competence of ZED and WEO heads to carry out their obligations in implementing the strategic plans was poor. They were responding to a day- to-day problems than focusing on how to create a better future by being proactive. Thus, in this case the attainment of long term strategic goals in the zones and Woredas was not as expected. The monitoring progress towards the achievements of goals is important and valuable. In the findings it is indicated that, there was inadequacy of plan monitoring and evaluation system in the zones and Woredas. From this, one can infer that relevant and timely data was hard to find to the decision makers and implementers. From this, it is possible to imply that the monitoring system may not in a position to judge progress, to ensure the strategic plan implementation is on the track and to make any necessary corrections.

5.3 Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations have been forwarded accordingly with the objective of improving the existing situations.

5.3.1 Increasing Stakeholders' Participation

Among the major findings made in the study, lack of meaningful participation of the potential stakeholders in the educational strategic planning practices is the first one. Thus, it is logical to recommend that developing /enhancing the stakeholders' involvement in various decision making areas affecting to the strategic planning activities, and giving appropriate attention to the feedbacks of these stakeholders is timely response to the existing situations of strategic planning practices in AR. This can be made through two-way public discussions across the organizations hierarchies before the strategic plans are put into practice.

5.3.2 Expanding Sources of Resources

As indicated in the finding, scarcity of resources for effective strategic planning activities has been reported as sensitive problem. Hence, to overcome this difficulty, various units in the region, zones and woredas need to develop as many income generation sources as possible in order to fulfill the gap resulting from scarce resources distributed predominately by the government (MOE). This could be made through creating links with local and international NGOs, GOs, collaborators, creating relationship with funding agencies, donors, etc. In addition, educational institutions need sufficient budget and resources to carry out their parts of the strategic plan effectively and efficiently. However, it is recommended that the finding of the study indicated that the woredas were faced with lack of resources in implementing strategies. Hence, the planning team and higher educational officials design strategies that are compatible with the budget and other resources available in the institutions, mobilize the communities to contribute and generate additional income besides the budget approved from the government and if not at least to utilize the available resources efficiently.

5.3.3 Providing Sustainable Capacity Building Trainings for ZED and WEO heads

An effective educational strategic leader ensures the organization has clear purpose and direction and the means to achieve the purpose. Planning and change are the primary jobs of

the leaders today, and strategic thinking is the way to do this. However, the study indicated that the ZED and WEO heads lacks thinking strategically. Hence, it is suggested that leadership development may be the best way to develop strategic thinking by providing deep and need based short- term and long-term capacity building trainings in educational planning and creating conducive environment for educational leaders to become and remain strategic thinkers in creating an ideal futures by defining and achieving results that add value. Furthermore, professional development for experts should be provided through capacity trainings.

5.3.4 Creating an Independent Organ for Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

Plan monitoring and evaluation was one of the major variables treated in this study. And it has been found out that there was no independent organ that carries out plan monitoring and evaluation. It seems that its absence has been hindering the zones and woredas of the region not to assess, regularly, their planning performances and accordingly to take early corrective measures before differences occur. Thus, it is recommended that the region should establish an in dependent body having teams across the zones and woredas in order to follow the progress of the strategic plans and their level of execution so as to give timely strategic solutions. In doing so, it is also recommended that the various units of zones' and woredas' in the region should have uniform monitoring and evaluation technique since the plans of these units device towards achieving the common goals of the institution.

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APPENDICES

Appendix -A

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate Studies

College of Education

Department of Educational Planning and Management

Educational Policy and Planning Stream

A Questionnaire Filled by **School Respondents** (Principals and Department Heads)

A questionnaire has been prepared to collect relevant information for a thesis entitled ''***The Practice and Problems of preparing and implementing Educational Strategic Plans in Amhara Region***''. Thus, it mainly focuses on examining the current practice of educational strategic plan in Amhara region.

Considering that you are one of the responsible professionals in finding solutions to the problems of the preparation and implementation of educational strategic plans in Amhara Region, this researcher has chosen you as one of the resourceful respondents for this study.

The study is purely academic and it never credits against the individual respondents. Thus, the success of this study highly depends on your genuine, accurate, and timely response to the questions provided hereunder. Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer all the questions honestly and patiently.

Thank you in advance

1. General Direction

   1.1 No need to write your Name

   1.2 Please, follow the instruction provided for each part

2. Personal information

   2.1 Name of your Woreda ----------

   2.2 Name of your School ----------

   2.3 A. Sex M F

   B. Age ----------

   2.4 Educational qualification

   A. MA/MSc B. BA/BED/BSc

   C. Diploma D. Certificate E. Other ----------

   2.5 Field of Specialization ----------

   2.6 Total years of Service ----------

   2.7 Year of service on current position ----------

PART I

Pre-conditions for effective preparation, implementation of educational strategic plans

INSTRUCTION: Show your agreements and /or disagreements by putting (X) in the space provided here under. While rating, use (5- Very Good, 4- Good; 3-medium; 2-poor; 1- very poor).

No.	Items	Rating scales				
	Meaningful participation in preparing and implementing strategic Plans at your zone or woreda or school level.	5	4	3	2	1
1	The extent to which principals and department heads involve in the strategic plan					
2	The degree to which principals and dep't heads are committed to effective strategic planning					
3	The degree to which principals and dep't heads' feedbacks are taken for improvement					
4	The degree to which discussion made on the draft of the strategic plan by the education sector community					
5	The degree to which external stakeholders participate in the strategic plans preparation and implementation (NGOs, GOs, Private Investors, Community, etc)					
6	The extent to which you have been given training on how to prepare educational strategic plan					
7	Availability of the strategic plan document at ease for all stakeholders					
Planners' Knowledge and /or experience for effective educational strategic plan practice in your zone or woreda or school.						
1	Availability of qualified personal in educational strategic planning practice					
2	Availability of continuous trainings for the educational strategic planners					
3	Adequate years of experiences of planners on strategic plan practices					
4	The degree to which the planners are sent for further upgrading in educational planning					
5	The relevance of planners' academic background to the strategic planning practices					

PART II

Adequacy and utilization of resource for effective preparation and implementation of educational strategic plans

INSTRUCTION: Show your agreements and /or disagreements by putting (X) in the space provided here under. While rating, use V.G-Very Good, G- Good, M-Medium, P-Poor and V.P-Very Poor).

No.	Items	Rating scales				
	The Adequacy and Utilization of Resources	V.G	G	M	P	V.P
1	Adequacy qualified manpower resource in zone, woreda, and school level					
2	Availability of effective planning team in Zones, Woredas and/or schools					
3	The extent to which the region equally distributes financial resources to each Zones and Woredas					
4	The extent to which the allocated budget is released exactly on time					
5	Availability of the necessary material resources					
6	The budgets approved is based on the strategies of the plan					
7	The extent to which an effective utilization of available resources					
8	The extent to which adequate amount of fund (budget) to implement the plans					
9	The extent to which each woreda and/or zone utilizes its budget efficiently and effectively					

PART III

Competence of WEO and ZED heads for effective implementation of educational strategic plans

INSTRUCTION: Show your agreements and /or disagreements by putting (X) in the space provided here under. While rating, use (V.G-Very Good, G- Good, M-Medium, P-Poor and V.P-Very Poor).

No	**Items**	Rating scales				
	Competence of ZED and WEO heads for effective preparation and implementation of educational strategic plans	V.G	G	M	P	V.P
1	The extent to create strategically relevant measures of performance					
2	The ability to absorb new informations'					
3	The ability to think strategically					
4	The ability to create new strategies to move in new directions					
6	The ability to align people and organizations					
7	The ability to translate strategies in to action					
8	The ability to define when strategically to change					
9	The extent to which communications in every direction: top-down, bottom-up, across each Woreda /department/ lines					

PART IV

Factors that Affecting in Preparing and Implementing Educational Strategic Plans

INSTRUCTION: Show your agreements and /or disagreements by putting (X) in the space provided here under. While rating, use (5- Extremely serious, 4- Very serious, 3-Serious, 2-Observed but not serious, 1- Not observed at all).

No.	Items	Rating scales				
	Problems of Preparing and Implementing Educational Strategic Plans	5	4	3	2	1
1	Lack of meaningful participation of stakeholders					
2	Lack of clear delegation in the region, zones , woredas, and schools					
3	Failure to set meaningful, and verifiable targets					
4	Inadequate knowledge and/or experiences of the plan actors					
5	Lack of clear lines of authority which makes decision making difficult					
6	Inflexible organizational structures in the Zones and Woredas					
7	Inadequacy of monitoring and evaluation system					
8	Failure to obtain sufficient resources to accomplish tasks					
9	Failure to follow the plan					
10	No incentives given to workers to embrace the new strategies					
11	Lack of coordination among Regional, zone, woreda education officers and schools					
12	Over-dependence on past experience					
13	Lack of budget to implement the strategies					
14	Inadequate or unreliable data					

6. What are the major challenges that you encountered while implementing the strategic plan in your school?
   a. ----------
   b. ----------
   c. ----------
7. What solutions can you forward for these problems?
   a.----------
   ----
   b.----------
   ----
   c.----------

Appendix - B

Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies

College of Education

Department of Educational Planning and Management

Educational Policy and Planning Stream

A Questionnaire Filled by **Office Respondents** (Woreda and Zone Education Planners and Experts)

A questionnaire has been prepared to collect relevant information for a thesis entitled ''***The Practice and Problems of preparing and implementing Educational Strategic Plans in Amhara Region''.*** Thus, it mainly focuses on examining the current practice of educational strategic plan in Amhara region.

Considering that you are one of the responsible professionals in finding solutions to the problems of the preparation and implementation of educational strategic plans in Amhara Region, this researcher has chosen you as one of the resourceful respondents for this study.

The study is purely academic and it never credits against the individual respondents. Thus, the success of this study highly depends on your genuine, accurate, and timely response to the questions provided hereunder. Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer all the questions honestly and patiently.

Thank you in advance

1. General Direction

   1.1 No need to write your Name

   1.2 Please, follow the instruction provided for each part

2. Personal information

   2.1 Name of your Zone ----------

   2.2 Woreda ----------

   2.3 A. Sex M F

   B. Age ----------

   2.4 Educational qualification

   A. MA/MSc B. BA/BED/BSc

   C. Diploma D. Certificate E. Other ----------

   2.5 Field of Specialization ----------

   2.6 Total Year of Service ----------

   2.6.1 Year of Service on the current position ----------

PART I

Pre-conditions for effective preparation, implementation of educational strategic plans

INSTRUCTION: Show your agreements and /or disagreements by putting (X) in the space provided here under. While rating, use (5- Very Good, 4- Good; 3-medium; 2-poor; 1- very poor).

No.	Items	Rating scales				
	Meaningful participation in preparing and implementing strategic Plans at your zone, woreda and school level.	5	4	3	2	1
1	The extent to which principals and department heads involve in the strategic plan preparation					
2	The degree to which principals and dep't heads are committed to effective strategic planning Preparation					
3	The degree to which principals and dep't heads' feedbacks are taken for improvement					
4	The degree to which discussion made on the draft of the strategic plan by the education sector community					
5	The degree to which external stakeholders participate in the strategic plans preparation and implementation (NGOs, GOs, Private Investors, Community, etc)					
6	The extent to which you have been given training on how to prepare educational strategic plan					
7	Availability of the strategic plan document at ease for all stakeholders					
Planners' Knowledge and /or experience for effective educational strategic plan practice in your Zone, Woreda, and school.						
1	Availability of qualified personal in educational strategic planning practice					
2	Availability of continuous trainings for the educational strategic planners					
3	Adequate years of experiences of planners on strategic plan practices					
4	The degree to which the planners are sent for further upgrading in educational planning					
5	The relevance of planners' academic background to the strategic planning practices					

PART II

Adequacy and utilization of resource for effective preparation and implementation of educational strategic plans

INSTRUCTION: Show your agreements and /or disagreements by putting (X) in the space provided here under. While rating, use V.G-Very Good, G- Good, M-Medium, P-Poor and V.P-Very Poor).

No.	Items	Rating scales				
	The Adequacy and Utilization of Resources	V.G	G	M	P	V.P
1	Adequacy qualified manpower resource in zone, woreda, and school level					
2	Availability of effective planning team in Zones ,Woredas and/or schools					
3	The extent to which the region equally distributes financial resources to each Zones and Woredas					
4	The extent to which the allocated budget is released exactly on time					
5	Availability of the necessary material resources					
6	The budgets approved is based on the strategies of the plan					
7	The extent to which an effective utilization of available resources					
8	The extent to which adequate amount of fund (budget) to implement the plans					
9	The extent to which each woreda and/or zone utilizes its budget efficiently and effectively					

PART III

Competence of WEO and ZED heads for effective implementation of educational strategic plans

INSTRUCTION: Show your agreements and /or disagreements by putting (X) in the space provided here under. While rating, use (V.G-Very Good, G- Good, M-Medium, P-Poor and V.P-Very Poor).

No	**Items**	V.G	G	M	P	V.P
1	The extent to create strategically relevant measures of performance					
2	The ability to absorb new information's					
3	The ability to think strategically					
4	The ability to create new strategies to move in new directions					
6	The ability to align people and organizations					
7	The ability to translate strategies in to action					
8	The ability to define when strategically to change					
9	The extent to which communications in every direction: top-down, bottom-up, across each Woreda /department/ lines					

PART IV

Plan monitoring and evaluation in order to follow the Success and Failure of the Objectives against the Present Targets

INSTRUCTION: Show your agreements and /or disagreements by putting (X) in the space provided here under. While rating, use (5- Very Good, 4- Good; 3-medium; 2-poor; 1- very poor).

No.	Items	Rating scales				
	Plan Monitoring and Evaluation	5	4	3	2	1
1	The extent to which timely monitoring and evaluation of educational strategic plans carried out					
2	The degree to which the result of monitoring and evaluation be used to take corrective measure					
3	The extent to which monitoring and evaluation carried out by external evaluators					
4	The degree to which monitoring and evaluation carried out by internal evaluators					
5	The extent to which monitoring and evaluation be done on regular basis					
6	The degree to which it is carried out before deviations occur					
7	The extent to which it is done after problem arise					
8	The degree to which it is made to assess the process strategic planning exercises					
9	The extent to which it is carried out to evaluate the impact that the strategic plan has brought					
10	The degree to which it monitors the whole system of the educational strategic planning practices					
11	The availability of an independent organ that monitors and evaluates the strategic planning practices					

PART V

Factors that Affecting in Preparing and Implementing Educational Strategic Plans

INSTRUCTION: Show your agreements and /or disagreements by putting (X) in the space provided here under. While rating, use (5- Extremely serious, 4- Very serious, 3-Serious, 2-Observed but not serious, 1- Not observed at all).

No.	Items	Rating scales				
	Problems of Preparing and Implementing Educational Strategic Plans	5	4	3	2	1
1	Lack of meaningful participation of stakeholders					
2	Lack of clear delegation in the region, zones , woredas, and schools					
3	Failure to set meaningful, and verifiable targets					
4	Inadequate knowledge and/or experiences of the plan actors					
5	Lack of clear lines of authority which makes decision making difficult					
6	Inflexible organizational structures in the Zones and Woredas					
7	Inadequacy of monitoring and evaluation system					
8	Failure to obtain sufficient resources to accomplish tasks					
9	Failure to follow the plan					
10	No incentives given to workers to embrace the new strategies					
11	Lack of coordination among Regional, zone, woreda education officers and schools					
12	Over-dependence on past experience					
13	Lack of budget to implement the strategies					
14	Inadequate or unreliable data					

7. What are the major challenges that you encountered while implementing the strategic plan in your Zone / woreda?
   a. ----------
   b. ----------
   c. ----------
8. What solutions can you forward for these problems?
   a.----------
   ----
   b.----------
   ----
   c.----------

Appendix -C

Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies
College of Education
Department of Educational Planning and Management
Educational Policy and Planning Stream

An Interview Guide for Regional and Zonal Educational Planners and Higher Officials

This interview guide has been developed in order to gather relevant data from higher educational officials of Zones and Region on the practice and problems of preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in Amhara Region; considering that you are one of the responsible professionals in finding the solutions to the problems of the preparation and implementation of educational strategic plans in Amhara Region , this researcher has chosen you as one of the resourceful respondent for this study. Therefore, you are kindly requested to give your genuine and truthful opinion based on the following questions.

Thank you in advance

1. Personal information

1.1 Your current position ----------

1.2 A. Sex M F

B. Age ----------

2.4 Educational qualification

A. MA/MSc B. BA/BED/BSc

C. Diploma D. Certificate E. Other ----------

2.5 Field of Specialization ----------

2.6 Year of Service ----------

2.6.1 Year of service on the current position ----------

1. Questions related to the stakeholders involvements in the current practices of preparing and implementing educational strategic plan

a. Who are they?

b. In what way they involve

c. what do you expect from these stakeholders involvement

d. do you incorporate their feedbacks to in the final strategic plan document

2. How does the regional strategic plan evolve itself?

3. Who takes the prime initiative in developing the regional educational strategic plan?

4. How is the communication taking place during formulation, implementation and evaluation of strategic plan among regional, zonal, woreda and school-level offices?

5. Do you think that the strategic planning team has adequate planning skills and/or experiences?

What attempts has to be made to equip them with the necessary planning skills?

6. What is the capacity of the adequacy and utilization resources that the region has, to prepare and implement the strategic plan (man power, material, financial, etc.)

a. what are the sources of the budget

b. how are the resources utilized

7. How is the monitoring and evaluation system takes place in the AREB?

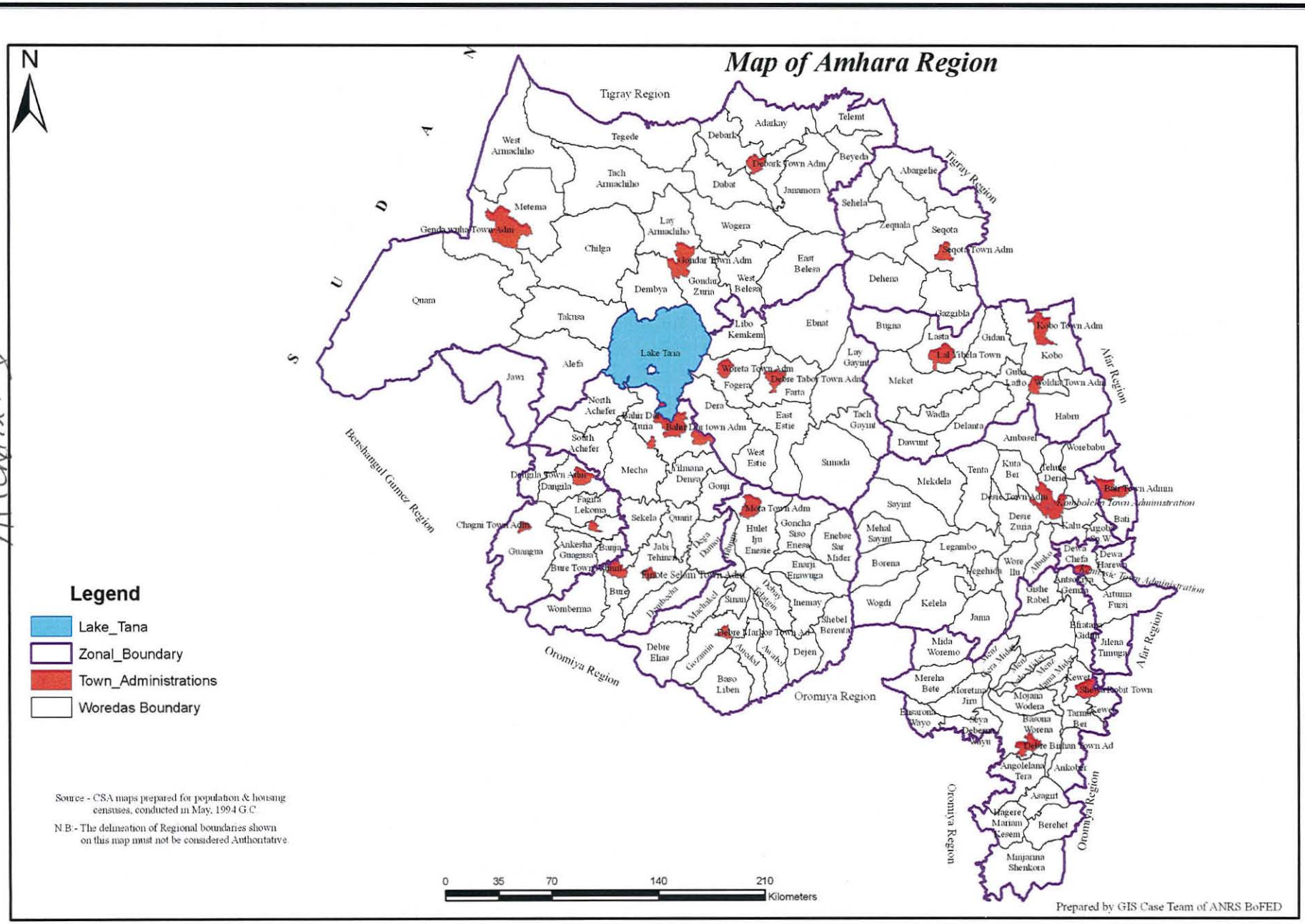
8. What are the major and most frequently occurring problems in the preparing and implementing educational strategic plan?

8.1 What attempts have been made to over come these problems?

8.2 What changes have been achieved as a result of interventions made?

9. What are your over all comments on the practice and problems of preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in Amhara Region?

Appendix - D


Map of Amhara Region
N
SUDAN
Tigray Region
Afar Region
Oromiya Region
Benshangul Gumez Region
Legend
Lake_Tana
Zonal_Boundary
Town_Administrations
Woredas Boundary
Source - CSA maps prepared for population & housing censuses, conducted in May, 1994 G.C.
N.B.- The delineation of Regional boundaries shown on this map must not be considered Authoritative.
0 35 70 140 210
Kilometers
Prepared by GIS Case Team of ANRS BoFED

I, THE UNDERSINED, DECLARE THAT THIS THESIS IS MY ORIGINAL WORK, HAS NOT BEEN PRESENT FOR DEGREE IN ANY OTHER UNIVERSITY AND THAT ALL SOURCES `OF THE MATERIALS USED FOR THE THESIS HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY ACKNOWLEDGED.

NAME: ABAWEY YOHANNES

SIGNATURE: ----------

DATE: JUNE 25, 2010

THIS THESIS HAS BEEN SUMITED FOR EXAMINATIONWITH MY APPROVAL AS UNIVSERSITY ADVISOR.

NAME: TILAYE KASSAHUN (PhD)

SIGNITURE: ----------

DATE : 28/06/10

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