Educational planning

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ABSTRACT: Educational planning in its new con concept is a new branch of educational science and about one century it has been used. This new knowledge had wide application in the recent decades in education all around the world. Now, it is an inseparable part of formal education management. On one hand, Educational planning helps managers and authorities of educational systems in management of education system and on the other hand presents some models regarding education development to provide required human resources in society. The present study aimed to evaluate educational planning levels at macro, mega and micro, institutional, plan or projects levels as the managers and experts of education can think deeply in their judgment and decisions in various stages of planning and educational services.

INTRODUCTION

Most experts believe that planning has various levels and we can provide this plan at various levels for education and higher education and promote the activities in each decision making level based on planning. Some authors consider planning levels as macro, medium, micro and institutional. Others add mega level to them. For example, Jerye Kaufman and Jery Herman believe regarding educational planning levels: Based on questions and goals in strategic planning, we can select different levels. Here, we propose three strategic planning levels. This proposition is based on beneficiary organization as micro, macro and mega (strategic planning in educational system , reconstruction of structures, recreation, Jerry Kaufman, Jerry Herman, p.40).

Arthur J. Davis classified planning levels as followings:
a. Planning educational systems at national, state and provincial levels
b. Institutional planning at wide scale in units of educational complexes in average and high levels.
c. Planning project (Davis, Arthur J. Educational planning: Models and Methods, p.219).

There are some differences regarding planning levels but in this study, such differences are ignored and planning at mega, macro and micro, institutional and project are investigated.

Theoretical basics of study
Planning definition
There are various definitions for planning and each of them indicates specific view of his dependence to science and knowledge or special social groups. **Three definitions of planning are used:**

1. Planning is raising the strategies as existing resources are used well to achieve goals (Rasekh, Shapour, education in the world, p.25).
2. Planning is continuous activity that considers not only the goal, but also the methods to achieve the goal and determination of the best path (Koms, Philip, what is educational planning, p.47).
3. Planning is a continuous and organized process, directed to guide collective activities to achieve good goals (Foyuzat, Yahya, educational planning basics, p.17).

Definition of plan
Different definitions of plan are presented and two of them are referred as:
1. Plan is the result of planning process, "the document including a set of figures as predicting the best development in a definite period in future"(Tin Bergen, Yan, central planning, p.39).
2. Plan is a formal document as being applied as a source to perform the works, evaluation of activities at a definite period of time (Taqipour Zahir, an introduction to educational and textbook planning, p.67).

Definition of educational planning
Various definitions of educational planning are presented arising from different interpretation of experts to educational planning. Some people consider educational planning as futurism and planning for future of education. Others consider it prediction of needs and estimation of resources to fulfill pre-defined goals. Others believe that educational planning is decision making about the future of education.

In the terminology of educational data resources: educational planning is the process of determining goals, methods, activities and educational institution plans (UNESCO consultant group, educational planning process, p.38).

Philip Kombez, the ex-managing director of UNESCO considers educational planning as application of analytical methods regarding each of components of educational system to create an efficient educational system.

Educational planning at mega level

The long-term or mid-term plans as provided by international organizations as UNESCO and regional organizations as ISESCO (educational, scientific, cultural and Islamic organization) are called planning at mega level. Most countries have common goals in some issues and to fulfill these goals, they need collaboration and they need some plans at mega level.

Important goals at mega level

1. Development of science borders
2. Generalizing and improving quality of education
3. Environment protection
4. Peace protection
5. Achieving international understanding and peaceful principles
6. Exchanging experience in industry and technology of prevention of natural disasters

Thus, educational planning and high education have received much attention from global community and different international and regional organizations have the responsibility of providing these plans. Today, based on global and regional problems, it seems that these plans don't achieve required goals and they need much supervision in all stages of these plans.

Educational planning at macro level

Planning at macro level is the one performed at national or country level. Educational and high education planning is performed at macro level in economic, social and cultural development planning. Based on such trend, the designers of social, economic and cultural development present such guidance to providers of these plans in different socio-economic and cultural sectors as education and high education. This guidance includes planning stages and methods. The guidance includes planning stages. The expectation of economic, social and cultural plans is that planners in various sections provide their developing plan to combine various plans and create economic, social and cultural development plan in the country.

Stages of educational planning at macro level

Arthur Davis classifies planning activities as followings:

1. The analysis and evaluation of political, economic and cultural expectations and the goals of the society to which educational system belongs

2. Providing a set of general and partial goals
3. Evaluation of present situation and past changes of educational system
4. The design of policies, plans and allocation of resources based on future goals and present capacity to achieve an efficient educational system and its goals should be fulfilled in a definite period (Educational planning: models and methods, Vol. 2, p. 219).

Thus, we can say planning for this educational system has various stages:

First stage: Explaining the existing condition in order that planners have clear image of existing condition of educational system. First, the required data should be collected regarding educational system. Then by evaluation of past performance and analysis of problems, weaknesses and strengths, existing condition is explained. For example, if the planner field, education is general, they should collect information about inputs, processes and outputs of primary, guidance and high school as followings:

a. The information of inputs: In custom of educational planning, students, teachers, financial resources and facilities are inputs of educational system. Thus, planners should collect information about these input factors.

b. Information of processes: The data about acceptance rate, base repetition, academic failure, suitability of teaching methods of teachers, quality of management in various managerial levels, optimized use of resources as educational spaces, laboratory equipment, tendency to educational innovation, research in education and application of study findings are the information drawing an image of education process for planners.

c. The information of curriculum: The process of design, production and execution of textbooks is in textbook planners field as curriculum is a part of educational planning process. Thus, by accepting the assumption that educational planners and textbook planners with each other can formulate the plans. Educational planners should be informed of the results of evaluaiton of textbooks that by having access to the data have clear image of educational system. The information of educational planners regarding curriculum is as followings:

1. How much the predicted goals are followed in curriculums?
2. How much the curriculum is executed by teachers and students?
3. How much the teachers apply learning-teaching methods in curriculum?

d. The information of educational outputs, educational planners should collect information about outputs or educational efficiency.

The outputs can be considered from two aspects: First, the outputs that are emerged at the end of each year or academic level as knowledge, attitude and skill in behavior and acts of students.

Next, the outputs that their emergence is delayed to the end of education and is the sum of outputs of academic years. The collection and analysis of outputs alone is not the responsibility of educational planners, the institutions as dealing with education system graduates should have required cooperation in this regard to present clear image of product of educational system to planners.

Second stage: Recognition of weaknesses and strengths: After planners collect data about existing condition of educational system by collecting the data and their analysis should draw a clear image of existing condition of educational system. Then, they should distinguish weaknesses and strengths of existing system. It can be said, judgment about strength or weakness of each dimension of educational system needs selection of criterion for good limit. Also, we shouldn't forget that judgment about weaknesses and strengths of some educational affairs as teaching desirability or management method is not simple due to qualitative nature of these affairs. By their analysis from different aspects, relevant components should be identified and by combining the values, general judgment should be achieved.

Third stage: Plan formulation: After educational planners collect required data about educational system, by criteria, they can achieve clear image of education performance and can start their activity to prove a development plan or existing condition and achieving good condition. The formulation of development plan is a complex process and includes various measurements and the most important items are as followings:

a. Selection of goals: Defining goals is the basic step in planning, it means that planners should define the goals achievement is considered and then fulfill them. The educational system of each nation has final and ideal goals (qualitative goals) and at specific time can achieve definite qualitative goals.

b. Selection of policy: Policy is comparison and selection of a path among the paths providing achieving required goals.

To determine policy in educational issues, development of Persian language in bilingual areas of country as one of the educational goals, the following policies are considered:

Formation of one month preparation classes before primary education for new learning children of bilingual areasEstablishment of kindergarten in bilingual areas with emphasis on Persian language training.

c. Determining priorities, achieving educational goals requires various resources as materialistic and human resources. Thus, any society as rich has some limitations in facilities and can not achieve all goals at the same time. Thus, planners are obliged to determine priority and give priority to achieving some goals than other items.

Fredrick Harbisen believes that educational planners with financial limitations and during educational development should select in six fields and determine priorities of educational plans as:

1. Selection between educational levels: During investment in education, at first we should determine the relative importance of each of primary, high school and higher education levels before, whether we should put on priority the generalization of primary education or we should develop high education or we should consider higher education development?

2. Selection between quality and quantity: Determining the relative importance between quality and quantity is other fields that should be decided in planning, for example at primary education, between various issues as development without quality of primary education against quality improvement of this level but limitation of its quantitative development, one should be selected.

3. Selection between basic sciences and technical sciences against humanistic sciences: In this section as relevant with higher education, planner should select between development of basic and technical sciences against development of humanistic sciences. Here, it is assumed that the industrializing communities need basic sciences and technical sciences more than humanistic sciences but if the graduates of these fields to total students are increased, due to costly price of these fields, the number of graduates is less than the volunteers of higher education. Thus, people demand for high education is not fulfilled and this creates political pressures. Thus, balance between the need of society to specialized force in technical and basic sciences on one hand and fulfilling the people demand for higher education is difficult.

4. School education against education outside school: This type of selection refers to preparing the youth to enter labor market and educational policies at higher education level. It means that education of the youth to enter labor market should be given to formal education or professional education should be delegated to the section outside formal education as at work training.

5. Selection of motivations: Tendency to some jobs in some communities due to some specific reasons is very low. Thus, some educational majors don't have many volunteers and educational planners should use some entices as increasing wage of relevant jobs to create motivation in less-interested majors or they should be dependent upon labor market.

6. The goal of education: Educational planners should select between fulfilling the needs of society to human forces against fulfilling the requests of people for education.

Fourth stage: Providing plan: The executional plan is the map of measurements and operation that should be done in future.

In this stage, general goals of plan are defined based on policies in the form of partial goals as quantitative. IN this stage, by considering existing facilities, activities execution is defined. Thus, to provide development plan of primary education, based on the required goals, the number of students covered for education in each academic year, number of teachers and educational and administrative employees, space and educational equipment and required financial resources should be estimated for execution of plans.

Fifth stage is approving the designed plan: After providing the plan, authorities of educational planning should give their plan for approval to high level authorities of education. To defend the plan, the planners should give adequate reasons and to eliminate the problems, they should accept the criticism on their plan and modify their plans.

Sixth stage: Execution, supervision, evaluation and correction of plan.

When a plan is designed, regulated and executed, this is probable that all or some parts of plan are not executed due to economic problems, political changes, administrative barriers and unexpected events or their execution is problematic. Thus, planners should consider the supervision on execution of plans and by considering required measurements, the barriers of plans execution should be identified and they should be eliminated. In addition, if the problems are eliminated, the plans execution is performed at common conditions. We can determine the success of plans and their progress. Normally, evaluation in terms of execution time is divided into three stages: evaluation before execution, at-execution and after execution. In pre-execution stage, feasibility studies are performed. During these studies, plans execution is investigated. At execution stage, feasibility studies are performed, It means that during the studies, execution of plans is investigated. In at-execution stage, progress of plan execution is evaluated and if the plans are reviewed, in after execution stage, evaluation of fulfillment of predicted goals is performed.

Evaluation of internal efficiency: Internal efficiency is that based on facilities, resources and duration for education of students in each academic level, in each year and academic base, which percent of students of each base is failed or leaves the school and this repletion of base and leave has any effect on educational system return from economic aspects? To determine internal efficiency of an educational system, some indices as leaving school, base repetition, loss, durability rate and average academic length are used.

Evaluation of external efficiency: Based on educational plans, some goals are defined later and it is expected after execution of plans, students achieve knowledge, skills and definite habits and tendencies and the effects of learning are manifested in their behavior. Thus, we can say the changes after execution of educational activities and plans in various dimensions of behavior of students indicate the external efficiency of educational plans. Thus, the more the changes in behavior and action of students at the end of educational activities are consistent with the pre-defined goals, we can say that plans have high external efficiency.

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Educational planning at micro level
Micro planning can be an educational region, a section or some villages. In micro educational planning, namely if the planning is rural areas, educational issues of region are associated with some affairs as economic, social, cultural issues and planning of agriculture growth, progress of health, improvement of local industries and cultural development are regarding educational planning. Normally, the curriculum and learning activities are designed as these plans can fulfill the expectations of rural people.

Stages of micro educational planning
First stage: Activities before planning: This stage includes some steps, first step is collection of data, it means that the information about features, situation of groups and groups living in the region is collected. Need assessment is another step and in this stage, needs of different groups are evaluated. After need assessment, situation of education of region is evaluated based on people needs and expectations. The final step is establishment and creation of organizational group and the goal is having relationship with local authorities and get help of local forces.

Second stage of planning activities: In this stage by considering major goals and macro policies of education at national level and based on the field for micro educational planning, practice plan is provided. In the framework of practice, the needs and expectations of people are regulated in the form of educational projects. After implementation of plans, feasibility study is performed. These studies can define the implementation of plans and projects. Finally, some solutions should be considered for the barriers of plans execution. After feasibility studies, the plans should be implemented. The organizational formations as created, are used for execution, supervision and evaluation of plans and projects and finally the fulfillment of goals is evaluated.

Educational planning at institution level
Planning at institution level is one of the planning types as not considered in our educational system. We can use concentration as one of the major reasons of ignoring these planning. According to Nafisi, planning at institution level is equal to planning at university level.

This activity in education is not grown, when education in Iran is organized by new method, schools as administrative unit in education ministry can be used by main office of province or ministry units of establishment and their development. Thus, planning at institutions level is limited with this feature to the distribution of students in existing classes and allocation of teachers to classes.

(Abdolhossein Nafisi, review of experience of education planning in Iran, second section of education journal, p.22).

Stages of educational planning at institution level

First stage. *The activities before planning:* In stage of before planning, the chief of center or manager of educational institute by participation of parents and educational and administrative staffs of their center can form a planning group and can have the supervision of this group. After the members of planning group were justified about their duties, they can start the activity by data collection as by the data and analysis of information, we can have a clear image of limitations and potential facilities and education process in institution.

Second stage. *Planning activities:* After the information planning center collected the data about existing condition of students, employees, financial resources, facilities and quality of educational activities, there should be an image of good condition of educational institution. Then to achieve good condition, some plans are provided. Fulfilling such desire, moving from existing condition to good condition depends upon providing a practical plan, performing some measurements as determining goals, selection of strategies, providing facilities and execution and evaluation of plans.

Educational planning at plan or project level

Our aim of planning at plan or project is planning for change, modification or innovation in education.

The various changes in science and technology, labor work and employment and changes in social, cultural, political fields can make revision in formal education system as unavoidable and educational planners are invited to innovations. Applying innovations as well requires formulation of plans or projects based on planning methods. In order to formulate modification plans or innovative projects based on planning principles, it is better to consider the items as a part of principles and methods. At first, we should analyze the educational system and identify the problems and apply the study findings. After the recognition of shortcomings, we should determine the modification of educational system or improvement of some aspects. Then, we should define the reforms. Thus, based on reforms, we should define the studies for providing innovative projects and reforming policies and then we should define the map of innovative projects or new policy framework.

Planning stages at plan or project level

As it was said, we can summarize planning stages at plan or project level as followings:

First stage, Analysis of exiting condition and recognition of shortcoming of educational system.

Second stage. Explanation of reforms and formation of plan or project.

Third stage. The required studies for providing plan or project.

Fourth stage: Evaluation of plan or project by authorities.

Fifth stage: Providing the facilities and resources for plan or project

Sixth stage: Execution and evaluation of plan or project.

CONCLUSION

Educational planning is using analytical methods regarding each of educational system components and its aim is establishing an efficient educational system. Educational planning has different levels as there is difference among the authorities in this regard. One of divisions of educational planning levels is planning at mega, micro and macro, institution, plan or project levels. Planning at mega level is long-term or mid-term plans as designed by international organizations. Planning at macro level is the planning considered at national or country level. In micro planning, activity includes education of district 1, some sections or some rural areas. In institutional planning, planning unit is a university, a school, an educational complex, etc. In planning at project level, planning is for change, reformation and innovation in education.

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