

PLANNING, ORGANIZATION, AND ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATION

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Contents

1. Planning
 - 1.1. Unity in Strategic Planning
2. Organization
 - 2.1. Curriculum
 - 2.2. Out of School Education
 - 2.3. Climate and Ethos
 - 2.4. Evaluation of Activities
 - 2.5. Quality Assurance Arrangements
 - 2.6. Accountability
 - 2.7. Management Style and Evaluation
 - 2.8. Structural Arrangements
 - 2.9. Mobility
 - 2.10. The Permeation of Administrative Systems
 - 2.11. Concern of Economy, Environment, and Culture
3. Administration
 - 3.1. Technology
4. Trends
 - 4.1. External Accountability
 - 4.2. Research-Led Environments
5. Climate and Ethos
- Glossary
- Bibliography
- Biographical Sketch

Summary

The planning, organization, and administration of education often reflect local circumstances and the stage of development of education in a society. Planning is undertaken across different time horizons and is implemented through organizational structures that support education as a social process. Education related to the environment takes place through the formal curriculum, through the climate and ethos of the school, and in the wider educational domains. Current trends often focus on the measured outcomes of education and seek efficiency and effectiveness. The trends towards greater external accountability and research-led education affect the ways in which education for environmental improvement are considered.

The planning, organization, and administration of education are very much based on the purposes and the mission of the educational system of a country. The vision of education is not only determined by the traditions and philosophy of a country, but also by the economic and social conditions of that country. The variety of ways of planning and organizing education derive from those traditions and economics, social, and political circumstances of a country and are normally developed centrally and put into action locally. Education is not only orientated towards the individual and the formation and development of that individual, but also has a very important role to play in developing the social policy of a country. The planning and organization of education is related to those purposes.

1. Planning

The purposes of planning of education vary considerably from country to country and there are different purposes at different levels in each education system. Planning is normally based on a clear vision of the purpose of the educational enterprise as well as an understanding of the future needs of a society and of the individuals who comprise that society. The ways planning takes place should be based on the effective use of the available resources, both “human resources” and financial resources. It is also a purpose of planning in education to bring about the harmonization of society with the kind of culture that has influenced and formed that society. The effective planning of education brings about this harmony in a number of ways but particularly by the appropriate “horizontal integration” of financial, human, political, environmental, and other social conditions of a country. The effective management of education must demonstrate an interrelatedness between international, national, and local policies and practices in the field of education. At the end of this chain influence, education is very much engaged in local practice and that practice has to pay attention to the local environment in which it must operate.

1.1. Unity in Strategic Planning

For effective educational planning there needs to be a vision that incorporates a wide range of concerns. This may include a global vision encompassing the ethical, moral, and environmental leadership that affects citizens locally as well as globally. There also needs to be in place a set of strategies that effectively utilizes resources in the interests of the society and its communities. This includes aspects of policy making that is related to social conditions, the legal and judicial arrangements of a country, and the ways policies are put into practice. Practices and operational issues often relate to the distinctive cultural conditions of a country and to the traditions of that country. These traditions are often to be found in the activities that may be related to wider communities, to professional activities, and to the personal aspirations and values of the citizens of a particular country. Plans need to be developed with a purpose in mind, and should relate to the concern of the country for the environment, its use and its development. This will also take account of the economic and cultural development of the country.

Planning needs to take place in such ways as to lead to the effectiveness of learning and to give life to individuals, to the environment of which they are part, and to

communities they form. It is therefore important that one sees planning as a rational process of harmonizing and supporting all the work of a community in the interests of that entire community. The importance is often in the planning process itself, rather than in the production of a tangible plan. Of course, plans have an importance in that they are the vehicle for communicating the vision, the mission, and the ways of achieving that vision in a society. Communities therefore are increasingly inclined to engage in a degree of planning that communicates the vision and mission and that achieves change in a way that is more democratic.

Planning, of course, will take place with different timescales in mind. In the field of education it is important to engage in long-range planning in which there is a view of the educational contribution to society that is concerned with, say, a 25-year time horizon. While it is not possible to have a clear idea of what society might be like in 25 years, without some kind of notion of the nature of society in 25 years it does become difficult to know how planning should take place for the next five years, or for the one year.

More commonly, plans in education are laid out for a period of around five years. This medium-term planning often allows a vision of the curriculum, the personnel, and the institutions to develop in a harmonized way over that relatively brief period of time. For major plans to come to fruition much longer timescales are needed. Institutions often operate on five-year time plans and these are a means of directing and supporting change in organizations or in systems more generally.

More immediate annual planning is often undertaken, not only by government, but by institutions, and by individuals within institutions. This is a very helpful approach to looking at planning processes and gives a degree of operational planning that is essential in the field of education.

It is important to distinguish between long-term, medium-term and short-term planning arrangements although it is also crucial for there to be a relationship between one and the other. In the field of environmental education this is particularly important since often immediate action is needed in order to achieve longer-term aims and objectives for a society and for education to be effective within that society.

2. Organization

The organization of education in different countries varies considerably. There are certain areas of education that are organized in specific kinds of ways.

2.1. Curriculum

Curriculum organization varies considerably from country to country but normally countries have some kind of national view about what ought to be learned by the citizens of that country. This will incorporate the importance of “core skills” or knowledge or values that the education system of a country support.

The curriculum is often organized in terms of disciplines or subjects and these normally

include matters such as mathematics, language, environmental education, expressive arts, and religious education. The particular expression of these will vary considerably from country to country and in certain cases there is a more integrated approach to looking at how young people will learn. The curriculum differs in its expression at the different stages of education so that in the younger stages of education there is an emphasis on language and mathematics whereas in the later stages of formal education there is often a vocational kind of orientation to the organization of the curriculum.

The different ways of expressing the descriptions of the curriculum will be of some significance in different countries. In some countries this is a highly disciplined approach whereas in others there is a much more liberal and unstructured approach to looking at the curriculum. The difference between countries may be associated more with the economic well-being or status of the country, rather than with any deeper philosophical orientation. Of particular significance in recent years has been the place of personal and social education and “citizenship” within the curriculum. This concern for the education of citizens has been variously interpreted as including either a narrow description of political literacy or much wider description of all those core skills that make people more suited for life.

The particular orientation towards expressing the curriculum and looking at how it is organized often then determines the way in which schools and other institutions are themselves organized. The pattern of organization in schools will vary depending on the age range of children in that school, and the way in which the teaching and learning processes are organized and supported by the school. The particular kind of organization will demonstrate the different climate and ethos of the particular school. There is a clear interaction between the organization of learning and teaching that takes place in a school and its organization. These interact with one another and are supportive of each other.

Schools are organized in many different ways in different countries. It may be generally thought that schools are organized largely by age and stage. That is to say, all children of the same age are placed in the same class with children only of that general age. This may reflect the socializing function of schooling, and the ways in which schools form an important social function in society. Some school systems also pay attention to specialist schools, for example, for “gifted children”; those with special needs in their learning; those who seek a particular provision such as through a religious tradition; etc. In certain countries some or all of these kinds of schools are provided by the state, whereas in others these are considered to be outside this provision and are offered by independent agencies and organizations.

There are also schools that are considered to be “international schools.” These include those who follow an international curriculum, perhaps leading to an international award such as the International Baccalaureate. Others such as the Steiner schools are part of international movements with a particular mission or vision.

The internal organization of schools also offers many different models of practice. Generally, primary or elementary schools have relatively simple forms of organization. This is normally designed by putting all children of the same age in a class together.

The class sizes will vary from country to country, but usually they fall within the general limits of around 20 to 40 children per class. Though it is difficult to generalize, normally the more affluent the country the lower the class size, probably reflecting the ability of governments to pay for teachers, and indeed to have enough educated in the country.

In the area of environmental education or sustainable development, primary schools are normally organized in a way that incorporates this element of the curriculum within the normal day-to-day learning of the student. In some countries there are specialist staff who may be directly or indirectly involved with this area of study, and these may have academic backgrounds in the natural sciences or in the earth or life sciences.

Secondary schools, or high schools, are normally much more complex in their organization, and this reflects the growing specialization of the curriculum and the other needs of students in these schools. Often they are organized by departments that, up to a point, match the curriculum specification of the school. In many countries, in addition there are staff who are engaged in the specialist functions of guidance and counseling, health education, and other aspects of personal and social education. Towards the later stages of the secondary schools, there are definite areas of specialization and these articulate with provision in tertiary education, where there are opportunities for even greater specialization. At these levels class sizes may reduce to relatively small numbers (e.g. 6 to 20 students).

Normally in secondary schools there are specialist staff who are involved with environmental education or issues to do with the environment, and these usually have academic backgrounds in biology or ecology or other natural sciences, or in geography, or earth or life sciences. In many countries these are organized as a cluster of “faculty” in areas such as “the sciences,” although it is normally possible to discern them as individual specialist subjects.

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Biographical Sketch

Bartholomew J. McGettrick, OBE, KCHS, Dhliitt, FRSA, FRSAMd, B.Sc., M.Ed., Dip.Ed., PGCE, is professor of education at University of Glasgow, and dean, Faculty of Education, University of Glasgow. In 1985 Professor McGettrick was appointed principal of St. Andrew's College, the National Catholic College for the Education of Teachers. He was formerly assistant principal (1975) and vice-principal (1980) of Notre Dame College of Education. On April 1, 1999 he was appointed dean of the Faculty of Education of the University of Glasgow.

He holds a number of prominent positions in national and international committees such as president of ACISE; chairman of the Schools Commission for The Holy Land; vice chairman of the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum; chairman of the Catholic Union, Scotland; chairman of Governors of Independent Schools, and chairman of Scottish Council on Independent Schools in Scotland; chairman of The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments. He is also involved in British broadcasting and education; and educational consultant to many organizations and institutions. Professor McGettrick chaired the Secretary of State's Committee on Education for sustainable development. He has been involved in various research projects, and in curriculum development in Scottish education, and has also acted as external examiner on a number of occasions. Professor McGettrick has contributed to international conferences, and worked in different international settings with research, consultancies and lecturing commitments.

His main areas of interest are sustainable development and education; values in education; educational management and administration; assessment. He also holds responsibilities in wider areas of public life, e.g. advising government and Church authorities on political and social issues.