

### Strategic Planning in Education: Some Concepts and Methods

In the context of national education development, the term of strategic planning is increasingly referred to. Countries and agencies have been engaged in planning and managing the development of education systems more and more strategically, due to various reasons, including the following:

- f* First, one may wish to plan all the activities deemed needed, but without necessarily achieving the expected results and ultimate goals.
- f* Secondly, more resources do not necessarily stand for better results. The way one uses these resources also matters.
- f* Thirdly, it has become difficult to plan everything one would wish to do. One ought to make choices through a balanced decision-making process.

One cannot say that there is a “perfect way” to conduct strategic planning. However, what is generic to strategic planning and management are certain typical stages involving similar activities carried out in a similar sequence. Any management involves four basic stages: analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation. In the education sector, the management operations related to “upstream”, planning work consist of: (i) system analysis; (ii) policy formulation; (iii) action planning.

*Sector analysis* consists of conducting data collection on and critical analysis of how the education system functions (internal dynamics) and examining various contextual factors (the environment of the system).

*Critical analysis* of the educational system undertaken during the sector analysis leads to questions about what the education sector must do in order to address the major issues, challenges and opportunities. These questions include what overall results (strategic goals) the system should achieve and the overall methods (or strategies) to implement policies.

*Action planning* is a process whereby one translates the policy directions into executable, measurable and accountable actions. In a broader sense, action planning includes specifying objectives, outputs, strategies, responsibilities and timelines (what, what for, how, who and when).

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