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**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

* 1. **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Among other things, the development of world economy and society at present is 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 had 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 of the realities, educators sometimes fail to reach the desired purposes, due to 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 a day’s 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 plannin****6*** *|**Pageg, as the way 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.*’’

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.

Nowadays, based on the New Educational and Training Policy (April: 1994), to create the necessary conditions to expand, enrich and improve the relevance, quality, accessibility and equity of education and training, Ethiopia follows decentralized educational management.

**1.2 Statement of the problems**

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. .

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 soul 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 route. 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.’’ 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 for 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 difficulty with most of these plans is that they too seldom get of paper and into action. According to him, implementation has become the number one problem of educational plan.

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 data, 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.

Strategic planning is one tool of strategic management, and like any management tools it is used to help an organization do better job, to help an organization to focus its mission, vision and priorities in response to a changing environment and insure the members of the organizations are working towards the same goal. . Strategic planning process can be shortened or extended depending on the size of the organizations, complexity of the programs, budget, time, availability of the staff, etc.t therefore, the main purpose of this study is to assess the practice and problems in preparing and implementing educational strategic plans in rural woradas of Bale zone, Oromia region in relation to their practice, problems and prospects in terms of the implementation strategies and the results that gained.

1.3 **Basic Research Questions**

In order to achieve the above objectives, the researcher raises the following basic research questions:

1. . How stakeholders involve in the current practice of strategic educational plan preparation and implementation in rural woreda (Jara, Goba, Dinsho, Ginnir and Sinana) of Bale Zone?
2. Have monitoring and evaluation systems been instituted for tracking implementation progress, to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses and for making correction?
3. . Have the resources required to put educational strategic plans into practice in the rural woreda of the zone been provided?
4. **.** How the ZED and WEO heads are devoted in implementing the strategic plans?
5. **.** What are the major challenges encountered while implementing the strategic plan in the rural Woreda of the Zone?

**1.4 Objective of the study**

The major objective of the study is to assess the practice and problems of preparing and implementing education plans in rural Woreda education office of Bale Zone, Specifically, the study is to assess the involvement of stake holders in the current practices of educational strategic planning, to pin point the weakness and strengths of the strategic plan of rural woreda, to examine the adequacy and utilization of the required resources for successful strategic plan execution in woreda and to identify the possible challenges confronting the implantation of the strategic plan.

**1.5 Significance of the study**

This study has the following contribution:

* It will provide a better understanding and awareness on the problem related to the practice of preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in rural woreda of Bale Zone;
* It may contribute the efforts being made to strengthen the quality of the practice in preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in rural Woreda of Zone;
* It may add some new information in relation to the preparation and implementation of educational plane at woreda level of zone to the already existing ones;
* It helps to examine how much plans can be prepared and implemented at the lower levels of the education system;
* It may provide suggestions to the concerned bodies on the practice and problem in preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in rural Woreda.

1.6 **Delimitation of the study**

Preparing and implementing educational plan is a broad issue which is difficult to deal with in such time bounded study. Because of this delimiting the scope of the study become essential. Thus, the spatial boundary (Space) of the study is delimited to bale Zone, of which five woredas, namely:-Sinana Woreda, Goba Woreda, Jara Woreda, Ginner and Dinsho Woreda are included in the study. Additionally, five secondary schools (One school from each Woreda) are also included in the study.

**1.7 Organization of the Study**

This study will be organized in to five major chapters. Each contains further sub division. According to the first chapter, deals with back ground of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, operational definition of key terms and organization of the study. The second chapter focuses on review of related literature and chapter three contains research design and methodology. Chapter four focuses on result discussion. While chapter five covers the summery, conclusion and recommendations. Finally, reference, questionnaires, interview guide and other important document 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 problem of papering and implementing educational strategic planning. Primarily, concepts related with planning, type of planning ,Steps of Strategic planning, Characteristics of Strategic Planning, Problems of Educational Strategic Plan, Making Strategic planning effective, Planners’ Knowledge, Experiences, and Meaningful Participation, Strategic Plan Implementation, Why Strategic Plans Fail?, and Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

**2.1 concepts related with planning**

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, 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,.

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, anticipate events, prepare for contingencies, formulate directions map out activities, and provide an orderly sequence for achieving goals through planning (Morphet,et al., 1982). Therefore, almost every organization, be it regional education bureau, or whatever 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.

Furthermore, 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 Operational Planning**

Operational planning, as its name implies, it is the 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 overall strategic plan. Generally, operational planning is an expanded version of strategic planning and is generally more tangible and less conceptual.

**2.2.2 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.

**2.2.2.1 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 outside 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 outside 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 outside 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.

**2.2.2.2 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, etc. Based on the specific planning frame work, some steps could be skipped or shorted or else added, if necessary, without 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.

However, Kaufman (1995:260) reiterates 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 of 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.

**2.3 Problems of Educational Strategic Plan**

Planning problems are easily left everywhere 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 Abdu (2005) 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.

**2.4 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.

**2.5 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 desires rather than reality. Byars et al.(1996:432)argued that strategies that have been carefully formulated are little value if they cannot 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 -calibre fashion –weak implementation undermines the strategy’s potential and paves 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 cannot 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, everyone 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 Plan Monitoring and Evaluation**

The last step of planning processis to monitoring and evaluatestheprogress 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 whereby 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 outcomes 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.

**2.7 Why Strategic Plans Fail?**

All organizations strategic plans may not be implemented as expected due to various reasons. A numbers of educators recognized different reasons for the failure of strategic plan. McNamara (2008) identified the following reasons that organizational strategic plans fail: failure to understand the clients, inability to predict environment reaction, failure to develop new employee and management skills, failure to coordinate, inadequate reporting and control relationships, organizational structure not flexible enough, failure to obtain management and employee commitment, failure to obtain to sufficient resources to accomplish tasks, under-estimation of time requirement, failure to manage, poor communication, arbitrarily selecting planning team members, not educating the planning team members to the strategic planning process, putting the plan on the shelf and keeping it there, reluctance to revise the strategic plan, resistance to change, and keeping the strategy secrete.

Mbua (2002:83) also argued that the failure to implement plans can result from variety of causes. These includes: shortage of financial resources, unanticipated bottlenecks in teacher supply or facilities, unforeseen imbalances between the flow of students and the educational capacity at different levels, and lack of political commitment will to implement the plan.Byrson (1995) and Roering cited in Vinzant J. and Vinzant D.(1996) suggested that a government unit, wishing to implement a strategic planning process, should have the following in place prior to attempt implementation: i) a powerful process sponsor; ii) an effective process champion; iii) a strategies team; iv) an expectation of disruptions and delays; v) a willingness to be flexible concerning what constitutes a strategic plan; vi) an ability to think junctures a key temporal metric; and vii) a willingness to construct and consider arguments geared to many different criteria.Therefore, we can conclude that, lack of commitment, shortage of resources, pressure of external environment, capacity to implement the given tasks and absence of monitoring and evaluation systems are commonly identified as reasons for the failure of the implementation of the strategic plan.

* 1. **Meaningful Participation and Planners’ Knowledge and Experiences**

Among the various issues requiring higher attention and which are believed to enhance the effectiveness of strategic plan preparation and implementation , creating conducive environment to the different stakeholders take part in the process, and the strategic plan to be prepared by professionals with special skills and their experiences have strong bearing on the quality of strategic plans (Bharadwaj & Balchandran, 1988). By participation, we mean that, the lower level implementers could effectively incorporate their needs in the plan and commit them for its successful implementation. Parkinson,et al.(1984:46) expressed the importance of participation in the strategic planning practices 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 devices the benefit of their combined knowledge, experience and skill. Unnecessary conflict is avoided and the task is performed with maximum efficiency*.

From this, one can logically understand that participatory planning can be performed with fewer resources but maximum efficiency since it creates democratic environment and we naturally like democratic situations. In short, the planning system comes to life when members of the group become involved in the strategic planning process (Cunningham 1982). More convincingly, Cunningham (1982) proven that participatory planning process encourages managers to consult their subordinates and potential stakeholders which result in effective strategic planning and decision making process. He has stated the findings of his study as follows

*--- administrators who consult their subordinates during the planning process receive the highest ratings for being helpful, letting people who know where they 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.

Furthermore, 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 become 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** **Methodologies**

**3.1 method of the study**

The study will be carried out through descriptive survey method. It is the appropriate method to gather information regarding current and required skill of local educational authority. Descriptive survey method helps in picturing the existing situation, in addition it allows gathering of necessary information using data collecting instrument and document analysis (Seyoum and Ayalew, 1989)

3.2 **Source of Data**

The major data sources of the study were of primary and secondary in nature. The primary data is collected from zonal and woreda educational planner, experts, and Principals of school in the sampled woreda. The selection of these people as a source of data was based on the expectation that they will have better information and experience in relation to the study. Secondary data were obtained from documents such as, strategic plan 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**

The study will be carried out in Bale Zone. The total number of rural woreds education offices in the zone is twenty one. Out of which, the researcher takes a sample of five Woredas(27) education offices.

The researcher will purposely divide the zone into two strata. Each stratum has the chance to be sampled in the survey. In the zone, there are 7 woredas in the lowland and 14 in the highland. Using simple random sampling techniques 2and 3 woredas will be selected as representatives. Secondary school available in sampled woreda will be selected purposefully. This is due to the fact that secondary schools have proximity with woreda education office so that they may have more information about them that may be 0f value to the study.

**3.4 Data Collection Tools**

Data will be collected using the following data collection instruments. For zonal and woreda educational planners, experts and principal of sampled high schools, a close- ended questionnaire with a five likert scale and a few open ended questionnaire will be prepared in order to get information on preparing and implementing educational strategic plan.

**Interview**

Semi-structured interview guides are prepared to collect information about the preparation and implementation of educational strategic plan with the heads and vice heads of zonal and selected woredas education office.

**Document Review**

Necessary document of the selected Woreda and Schools were reviewed in order to get the necessary information with regard to the respondents and zonal preparation and implementation of strategic plan.

**3.5 Procedure of Data Collection**

The questionnaire will be presented to educational experts, planners and principals by physically present at appropriate time , keeping in mind the convenient time for them as indicated in the time schedule. To help the respondents to provide genuine response, sufficient time will be allotted to respondents. With regard to interview the researcher will personally conduct the session at his own scheduled time.

3.6 **Method of Data Analysis**

The data analysis part considers all collected primary and secondary as well as quantitative and qualitative data. The collected raw data will be carefully organized and tabulated according to similarity of the issue raisd. Each major issue will be analyzed by using frequency count, parentage, mean, weighted mean and ANOVA. Data analysis is also carried out by SPSS using excel. The information obtained through document analysis will be given meaning that may support points collected through questionnaire.

**Planning Frame woke for ones year Research Study**

**Task/Activity**  **Key dates**

**1 Defining Problem**

1st draft on the proposal February 5

Last draft on the proposal March 1

**2 Review of Research**

Drafting on review 1st November 10

Last drafting on review November 30

**3 Methodologies**

Methodology section first draft on December10

Methodology section last draft on December 20

4 Conducting **Research**

Preliminary results drafting on April 10

writing result 1st on

Revising result for the last on April 27

report preparation

Editing and checking each part of research May 18

Thesis submitted on

Jun 3

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE  of 

AYELE KEBEDE

JUNE 2011

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Approved by board of examiners

Chairman, Dep graduate

Committee

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Date signature

Mengistu (Ph.D) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Advisor Date signature

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**Abbreviations**

MOE-ministry of education

WED-woreda educational department

ZED-zone educational department

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 BAGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Among other things, the development of world economy and society at present is 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 had 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 of the realities, educators sometimes fail to reach the desired purposes, due to 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 adays 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 the way 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.*’’

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.

Nowadays, based on the New Educational and Training Policy (April: 1994), to create the necessary conditions to expand, enrich and improve the relevance, quality, accessibility and equity of education and training, Ethiopia follows decentralized educational management.

* 1. **Statement of the problems**

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. .

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 soul 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 route. 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.’’

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 for 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 difficulty with most of these plans is that they too seldom get of paper and into action. According to him, implementation has become the number one problem of educational plan.

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 data, 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.

Strategic planning is one tool of strategic management, and like any management tools it is used to help an organization do better job, to help an organization to focus its mission, vision and priorities in response to a changing environment and insure the members of the organizations are working towards the same goal. . Strategic planning process can be shortened or extended depending on the size of the organizations, complexity of the programs, budget, time, availability of the staff, etc.therefore, the main purpose of this study is to assess the practice and problems in preparing and implementing educational strategic plans in rural woradas of Bale zone, Oromia region in relation to their practice, problems and prospects in terms of the implementation strategies and the results that gained.

1.3 **Basic Research Questions**

In order to achieve the above objectives, the researcher raised the following basic research questions:

1. . How stakeholders involve in the current practice of strategic educational plan preparation and implementation in rural woreda( Jara,Goba,Dinsho,Ginnir and Sinana)of Bale Zone?
2. Have monitoring and evaluation systems been instituted for tracking implementation progress, to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses and for making correction?
3. . Have the resources required to put educational strategic plans into practice in the rural woreda of the zone been provided?
4. **.** How the WEO heads are devoted in implementing the strategic plans?
5. **.** What are the major challenges encountered while implementing the strategic plan in the rural Woreda of the Zone?

**1.4 Objective of the study**

The major objective of the study is to assessed the practice and problems of preparing and implementing educational plans in rural Woreda education office of Bale Zone, Specifically, the study is to assessed the involvement of stake holders in the current practices of educational strategic planning, to pin point the weakness and strengths of the strategic plan of rural woreda, to examine the adequacy and utilization of the required resources for successful strategic plan execution in woreda and to identify the possible challenges confronting the implantation of the strategic plan.

**1.5 Significance of the study**

This study has the following contribution:

* It would provide a better understanding and awareness on the problem related to the practice of preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in rural woreda of Bale Zone;
* It might contribute the efforts being made to strengthen the quality of the practice in preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in rural Woreda of Zone;
* It might add some new information in relation to the preparation and implementation of educational plane at woreda level of zone to the already existing ones;
* It helps to examine how much plans can be prepared and implemented at the lower levels of the education system;
* It might provide suggestions to the concerned bodies on the practice and problem in preparing and implementing educational strategic plan in rural Woreda;
* It would forward research issues that seek further study and strategic invention.

1.6 **Delimitation of the study**

Preparing and implementing educational plan is a broad issue which is difficult to deal with in such time bounded study. Because of this delimited the scope of the study become essential. Thus, the spatial boundary (Space) of the study is delimited to bale Zone, of which five woredas, namely:-Sinana Woreda, Goba Woreda, Jara Woreda, Ginner and Dinsho Woreda are included in the study. Additionally, five secondary schools (One school from each Woreda) are also included in the study.

**1.7 Limitation of the study**

Research undertaking is not an easy task that can be carried with a lot of ups and *downs. The most serious limitation and tedious to the researcher was getting* volunteer respondent for both questionnaire and interview. The majority was not willing to cooperate as needed, and some filled the questionnaires carelessly. Additionally, getting the ZED and WED heads to conduct interview was much challenged to the researcher. The last but not the least is shortage of budget to undertake different activities.

**1.8 Organization of the Study**

This study would be organized in to five major chapters. Each containing further sub division. According to the first chapter, deals with back ground of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, operational definition of key terms and organization of the study. The second chapter focused on review of related literature and chapter three contains research design and methodology. Chapter four focuses on result discussion. While chapter five covers the summery, conclusion and recommendations. Finally, reference, questionnaires, interview guide and other important document 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 problem of papering and implementing educational strategic planning. Primarily, concepts related with planning, type of planning ,Steps of Strategic planning, Characteristics of Strategic Planning, Problems of Educational Strategic Plan, Making Strategic planning effective, Planners’ Knowledge, Experiences, and Meaningful Participation, Strategic Plan Implementation, Why Strategic Plans Fail?, and Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

**2.1 concepts related with planning**

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, 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,.

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, anticipate events, prepare for contingencies, formulate directions map out activities, and provide an orderly sequence for achieving goals through planning (Morphet,et al., 1982). Therefore, almost every organization, be it regional education bureau, or whatever 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.

Furthermore, 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 Operational Planning**

Operational planning, as its name implies, it is the 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 overall strategic plan. Generally, operational planning is an expanded version of strategic planning and is generally more tangible and less conceptual.

**2.2.2 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.

**2.2.2.1 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 outside 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.

**2.2.2.2 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, without 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.

However, Kaufman (1995:260) reiterates 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, implementation, 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 of 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.

**2.3 Problems of Educational Strategic Plan**

Planning problems are easily left everywhere 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 Abdu (2005) 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.

**2.4 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.

**2.5 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 desires rather than reality. Byars et al.(1996:432)argued that strategies that have been carefully formulated are little value if they cannot 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 -calibre fashion –weak implementation undermines the strategy’s potential and paves 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 cannot 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, everyone 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 Plan Monitoring and Evaluation**

The last step of planning processis to monitoring and evaluatestheprogress 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 whereby 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 outcomes 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 planned, 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.

**2.7 Why Strategic Plans Fail?**

All organizations strategic plans may not be implemented as expected due to various reasons. A numbers of educators recognized different reasons for the failure of strategic plan. McNamara (2008) identified the following reasons that organizational strategic plans fail: failure to understand the clients, inability to predict environment reaction, failure to develop new employee and management skills, failure to coordinate, inadequate reporting and control relationships, organizational structure not flexible enough, failure to obtain management and employee commitment, failure to obtain to sufficient resources to accomplish tasks, under-estimation of time requirement, failure to manage, poor communication, arbitrarily selecting planning team members, not educating the planning team members to the strategic planning process, putting the plan on the shelf and keeping it there, reluctance to revise the strategic plan, resistance to change, and keeping the strategy secrete.

Mbua (2002:83) also argued that the failure to implement plans can result from variety of causes. These includes: shortage of financial resources, unanticipated bottlenecks in teacher supply or facilities, unforeseen imbalances between the flow of students and the educational capacity at different levels, and lack of political commitment will to implement the plan.Byrson (1995) and Roering cited in Vinzant J. and Vinzant D.(1996) suggested that a government unit, wishing to implement a strategic planning process, should have the following in place prior to attempt implementation: i) a powerful process sponsor; ii) an effective process champion; iii) a strategies team; iv) an expectation of disruptions and delays; v) a willingness to be flexible concerning what constitutes a strategic plan; vi) an ability to think junctures a key temporal metric; and vii) a willingness to construct and consider arguments geared to many different criteria. Therefore, we can conclude that, lack of commitment, shortage of resources, pressure of external environment, capacity to implement the given tasks and absence of monitoring and evaluation systems are commonly identified as reasons for the failure of the implementation of the strategic plan.

* 1. **Meaningful Participation and Planners’ Knowledge and Experiences**

Among the various issues requiring higher attention and which are believed to enhance the effectiveness of strategic plan preparation and implementation , creating conducive environment to the different stakeholders take part in the process, and the strategic plan to be prepared by professionals with special skills and their experiences have strong bearing on the quality of strategic plans (Bharadwaj & Balchandran, 1988). By participation, we mean that, the lower level implementers could effectively incorporate their needs in the plan and commit them for its successful implementation. Parkinson,et al.(1984:46) expressed the importance of participation in the strategic planning practices 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 devices the benefit of their combined knowledge, experience and skill. Unnecessary conflict is avoided and the task is performed with maximum efficiency*.

From this, one can logically understand that participatory planning can be performed with fewer resources but maximum efficiency since it creates democratic environment and we naturally like democratic situations. In short, the planning system comes to life when members of the group become involved in the strategic planning process (Cunningham 1982). More convincingly, Cunningham (1982) proven that participatory planning process encourages managers to consult their subordinates and potential stakeholders which result in effective strategic planning and decision making process. He has stated the findings of his study as follows

*--- administrators who consult their subordinates during the planning process receive the highest ratings for being helpful, letting people who know where they stand, assisting people to get a head, inspiring subordinates with enthusian, building team spirit, 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.

Furthermore, 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 become 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** **Methodologies**

**3.1 method of the study**

The study would be carried out through descriptive survey method. It is the appropriate method to gather information regarding current and required skill of local educational authority. Descriptive survey method helps in picturing the existing situation, in addition it allows gathering of necessary information using data collecting instrument and document analysis (Seyoum and Ayalew, 1989)

3.2 **Source of Data**

The major data sources of the study were of primary and secondary in nature. The primary data is collected from zonal and woreda educational planner, experts, and Principals of school in the sampled woreda. 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 such as, strategic plan 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**

The study would be carried out in Bale Zone. The total number of rural woreds education offices in the zone is twenty one. Out of which, the researcher takes a sample of five Woredas(27%) education offices.

The researcher would purposely divide the zone into two strata. Each stratum had the chance to be sampled in the survey. In the zone, there are 7 woredas in the low land

and 14 in the highland. Using simple random sampling techniques 2and 3 woredas would be selected as representatives. Secondary school available in sampled woreda would be selected purposefully. This is due to the fact that secondary schools have proximity with woreda education office so that they may have more information about them that may be 0f value to the study.

**3.4 Variables of the study**

The major variables that studied here is that, the extent of how the strategic plan is built on a systematic analysis of Bale zone existing structure, governance, staff, programs or service mix, collaborations, effectiveness, resources ( financial , human, technical and material).

**3.5 Data Collection Tools**

Data would be collected using the following data collection instruments. For zonal and woreda educational planners, experts and principal of sampled high schools, a close- ended questionnaire with a five likert scale and a few open ended questionnaire would be prepared in order to get information on preparing and implementing educational strategic plan.

**Interview**

Semi-structured interview guides were prepared to collect information about the preparation and implementation of educational strategic plan with the heads and vice heads of zonal and selected woredas education office.

**Document Review**

Necessary document of the selected Woreda and Schools were reviewed in order to get the necessary information with regard to the respondents and zonal preparation and implementation of strategic plan.

**3.6 Procedure of Data Collection**

The questionnaire would be presented to educational experts, planners and principals by physically present at appropriate time, keeping in mind the convenient time for them as indicated in the time schedule. To help the respondents to provide genuine response, sufficient time would be allotted to respondents. With regard to interview the researcher will personally conduct the session at his own scheduled time.

3.7 **Method of Data Analysis**

The data analysis part considers all collected primary and secondary as well as quantitative and qualitative data. The collected raw data would be carefully organized and tabulated according to similarity of the issue raised. Each major issue would be analyzed by using frequency count, parentage, mean, weighted mean and ANOVA. Data analysis is also carried out by SPSS using excel. The information obtained through document analysis would be given meaning that might support points collected through questionnaire.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

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

**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 Vice Heads of Bale zone and Woreda Education department, ZED and WED Educational Planners, Experts, and Principals.

In order to gather the necessary information for the study, 55 copies (5 for Principals,6 for zonal and woreda planners,44 for Zone and Woreda educational heads/vice heads and experts), questionnaires were developed and distributed to the target respondents. All distributed questionnaires were fully filled and returned to the researcher with unreserved efforts made by the researcher.

Table 1: Classification of the Respondents

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Items | |
| Zonal and Word higher official | | Office Respondents (ZW planers, experts) | | Principals | |
| No | % | No | % | No | % | |
| 1 | Sex | Male | 6 | 100 | 42 | 95.45 | 5 | 100 | |
| Female | - | - | 2 | 4.5 | - | - | |
| Total | 6 | 100 | 44 | 100 | 5 | 100 | |
| 2 | Age interval | 21-25 | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| 26-30 | - | - | 4 | 9 | - | - | |
| 31-35 | 3 | 50 | 15 | 34.9 | 5 | 100 | |
| 36-40 | 3 | 50 | 16 | 36.3 | - | - | |
| >40 | - | - | 9 | 20.4 | - | - | |
| Total | 6 | 100 | 44 | 100 | 5 | 100 | |
| 3 | Educational qualification | MA/MSc/MEd | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| BA/BSc/BEd/ | 6 | 100 | 33 | 75 | 5 | 100 | |
| Diploma | - | - | 11 | 25 | - | - | |
| Certificate | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Total | 6 | 100 | 44 | 100 | 5 | 100 | |
| 4 | Specialization | Educ. Plan | 3 | 50 | 2 | 4.5 | - | - | |
| pedagogy | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| curriculum | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| others\* | 3 | 50 | 42 | 95.45 | 5 | 100 | |
| Total | 6 | 100 | 44 | 100 | 5 | 100 | |
| 5 | Total Years of service | 1-5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| 6-10 | - | - | 10 | 22.72 | 1 | 20 | |
| 11- 15 | 5 | 83.3 | 8 | 18.1 | 4 | 66.6 | |
| 15-20 | - | - | 23 | 52.2 | - | - | |
| Above 20 | 1 | 16.6 | 3 | 6.8 | - | - | |
| Total | 6 | 100 | 44 | 100 | 5 | 100 | |

* Those who were studied in natural, languages and social science.

As can be seen from Table 1, among the total respondents included in the study 53 (96.36%) and 2(3.61%) 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.

It can also be observed that the degree of female participation decreases as we move up to the higher officials of the zone and in the lower work force. In other words, where is no female respondents in the lower work forces, principals and the higher officials of the zone, and 2 (4.5%) in the middle levels (ZW planners, and experts). This shows that the participation of females was almost insignificant even in the front line implementers of plans let alone in higher officials.

However, lack of meaningful participation of females in various decision making positions is not a surprise in countries like Ethiopia were there has been male dominating culture, and where educational opportunities have relatively 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 Ethiopia 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 zone should work harder to increase their involvement in the higher officials and in lower work force of the zone and planning activities at various levels.

Regarding the age limits of the respondents, a large proportion was found in the age interval of 31 years and above. Although, there wer1 e 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, 50% of the higher officials were found in between 31-35 and 36-40 years. This implies that higher managerial officials in Bale zone 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 zones’ and woredas’ education planners, experts, and principals seem to fall in similar age groups. That is 5 (100%) of the principal and15 (34.9%) of ZW planners and experts were in the age limit of 31-35 years respectively. 16(36.3%) of ZW planners and experts were in the age limit of 36-40 years. Others, who are relatively small in number, fall in the extreme age limits ( >40 years). From this, one can infer that the major plan implementers and principal’s 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 2 revealed the educational qualification of respondents. Thus, 6 (100%) of higher officials, 33(75%) of ZW planners and experts, and 5(100%) 0f secondary school principals were first degree (BA/BSc/BEd ) holders. 11 (25%) of ZW planers and experts were diploma holders.

From these data we can infer that the majority of the educational planners, experts and principal did not have the qualification expected to the position.

More importantly, no respondent in the study had certificate. This has an implication that a further educational opportunity had been existed.

Besides, as shown in Table 2, the respondents were asked about their field of specialization. The data shows that 42(95.4) of ZED and WEO planners, experts of respondents’ field of study was not related to the position they were assigned. However, only 2 (4.5%) of them were studied in educational planning. Regarding the higher officials’ field of study, 50% of them study management related disciplines in their higher education. Furthermore, it was indicated that, all school principals did not study in educational planning, pedagogical science and curriculum. They were rather studied fields like Geography, physics, Biology, Mathematics, English Chemistry, Amharic, History, Physical Education and Sports and etc. These data indicated that, educational planners and experts in the zones and woredas and principals in the schools did not study related field related to the current position they held. This may not 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.

More specifically, the data in the above table revealed that 5(83.3%), 23(52.2%), 4(66.6%) of the ZED and WEO officials, ZED and WED planners and experts and principal were in the service boundary 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 and above 20 years respectively. From this, it can be inferred that the largest proportion fall in the comparatively, highest years of services. Similarly 15(62.45%) principals and 69(71.87%) of head departments were in the range of 11-20 years and above 20 years of services, while 9(37.55%) principals and 27(28.13%) 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 education strategic plans.

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.

Accordingly, as to be the data in the Table 3, --(%) of higher officials included in the study were from ------------- field of specialization with no trainings given on educational planning and management. Similarly, ---- (%), ------ (%),, and -----(%) of these higher officials have specialized in ------, ----------- and ----------- of fields of studies with no trainings given on strategic planning and managing education.

But, differently, there were – (%) that have specialized in education serving as regional education bureau vice heads and Zone education Department Heads; not in planning and managing education. Thus, it can be felt that the right persons were not put on the right positions. In other words, particularly, individuals who were in planning and programming office were far-off to the planning activities that they were regularly carrying out. Hence the researcher, believed that the organization of top level management of the sample zones and Woredas in the region, particularly, offices carrying out educational strategic planning activities need further capacity building either by putting the right persons on the right positions or by giving relevant and adequate trainings on strategic planning and managing education to the available personnel if needed to plan effectively and efficiently.

**4.2 Analysis of the Practice and Problems of Preparing and Implementing Educational Strategic Plan in Bale zone.**

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 as one group represented by School Respondents and on the other group Zones’ and Woredas’ educational planners, officials and experts as the second group represented by Office Respondents. The analysis has been categorized under five major categories such as pr-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 Bale zone 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 Bale, 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 decided to be used for interpretation as 0.05-1.49 very poor, 1.5- 2.49 poor, 2.5-3.49 medium, 3.5-4.49 good and above 4.49 very good. Additionally, the main value for every item was interpreted using the median dividing line at 3.0. Thus, mean score below 3.0 were taken as weakness /or threats; while above 3.0 were interpreted as opportunities / strengths.

**4.2.1.1 Meaningful Participation of Stakeholders**

In order to ensure effective and efficient strategic planning practices, the parties that are basically affected by a particular development project/plan should be involved in the strategic planning activities in as much as possible, partly to ensure that detained information on social conditions and needs is obtained; and partly to encourage a sense of involvement in, and commitment to the strategic plan by the people.

Major importantly, meaningful participation of the concerned stakeholders in the strategic planning enables the planning processes to focus on the commonly felt needs of the stakeholders through group involvement, and facilities smooth strategic plan implementation with fewer resources but maximum efficiency.

Thus, under this section, discussion regarding the trend of meaningful involvement of potential stakeholders in the practice of preparing and implementing educational strategic planning, by attaching the literary works of various scholars and studies made before in similar area were made as follows.

As can be observed from table 3, all items except item 2, were rated as poor and very poor. In item 1 above, 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 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 more willing for its successful accomplishment (Lewis; et al. 1995).

Despite of 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 have not taken 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.

Table 3: 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 |  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |  |
| f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f |
| a | 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 |
| b | Principals & departments are committed to effective strategic planning | 13 | 23 | 31 | 15 | 2 | 3.36 | 21 | 19 | 41 | 20 | 19 | 3.03 | 2.007 |
| c | your feedbacks are taken for improvement | 1 | 5 | 9 | 38 | 31 | 1.86 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 17 | 93 | 1.35 | 4.384 |
| d | 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 |
| e | 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 |
| f | 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 |

*Df =202 P value =0.05 T-table value=1.960*

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 describes fair /medium agreements to the items. Thus, although commitment is a vital element in order to execute the strategic plans as effectively as possible, AR 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 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 3 item 5, 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 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 of 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 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 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 3 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 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 anyone 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. Moreover, 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 4), 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 (Table 4).

Table 4: Ratings on Planners’ Knowledge and/or Experiences

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | **Items** | Respondents | Rating Scale | | | | | | | | | | *X2* |
| 5 | | 4 | | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| 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 | 10.909 |
| 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=12) | 10 | 8.3 | 28 | 23.3 | 23 | 19.2 | 37 | 30.8 | 22 | 18.3 |

*Df=4 P value =0.05 x2 table value=9.49*

In table 4 of item1, the chi-square test (x2) is applied to test the significance of respondents’ response regarding availability of qualified personnel in the strategic planning team. The chi square (x2) result is 12.152 which are greater than the table value at 0.05 levels (X2cv=9.49). The difference of the response among each options of the variable (item) is significant. Therefore the response regarding the issue is accepted. Accordingly, 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 were respond as very poor and poor respectively. How ever, it is believed that strategic plans can function so successfully if prepared by planners who have relevant and adequate planning knowledge.

As can be seen from table 4 item2, 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. Therefore, the statement ‘availability of continuous trainings for strategic planners is not accepted. According to the analysis result, 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 agreed also as very poor and medium respectively.

In table 4 item 3, the calculated value (*x*2) of the respondents is 5.048, which is less than the table value at alpha 0.05 level (*X*2cv= 9.49). The difference of the responses among each option of the variables is not significant. Therefore, the respondents’ response regarding the adequate years of experience of strategic planners is rejected. In other words, the adequacy years of planners experiences in the strategic planning team as poor by 33(39.3 percent) of office and 51(42.5 percent) of school respondents. Not only this (lack planning experience), they are not also seen while trying to share planning experiences with other regions, zones and woredas.

However, most literatures repeatedly suggests that strategic plans which are practiced by experienced planners in relevant areas could result better out comes than strategic plans prepared by non-professionals practitioners with less or no strategic planning experiences. Moreover, experience is a school by it self where individuals can accumulate good amount and kind of operating skills.

In item 4, the calculated chi –square value (*X2*) 11.145, which is greater the table value (*X2*cv=9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. So the difference of responses among the respondents is significant. Therefore, the responses regarding ‘the degree to which planners are sent for further upgrading in educational plans’ are accepted. Consequently, the majority 32(38.1 percent) office and 37(30.8 percent) school respondents confirmed as poor.

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 out comes if prepared by professional planners with special skills.

In table 4 item 5, the calculated chi-square value (*X2*) is 10.909, which is greater than the table value (*X2*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.

**4.2.1.3 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 5 revealed the data obtained from various responsibilities.

In table 5 of item 1, regarding the availability of qualified manpower resource, Chi-square test (*X2*) was applied to test the significance difference of the variables. Since the calculated chi-square value (*X2*) is 17.899, which is greater than the table value (*X2*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. Accordingly, 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. 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.

**Table 5: Responses on the adequacy and utilization of Resources**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | **Items** | Respondents | Rating Scale | | | | | | | | | | *X2* |
| 5 | | 4 | | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| 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 capacity building training for the existing man power | 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 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 4.64 |
| 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 | 8.981 |
| 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 | 9.700 |
| 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 |

*Df=4 P value =0.05 x2 table value=9.49*

In item 2 of the above table, in order to test the significance difference among the responses of the respondents’ chi-square test (*X2*) is applied. The calculated chi- square test (*X2*) is 7.23, which is less than the critical value (*X2*cv =9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels, there is no significant difference between the responses of the respondents. Therefore, the response regarding ‘effective planning team in zone and/or woreda level’ is rejected. Accordingly, 29 (34.5percent) of office and 39(32.5 percent) of school respondents, revealed that, there is no effective planning team or poor. On the contrary, 27(32.1 percent) and 24(20 percent) of office and school respondents respectively proved that the availability of effective planning team is medium. Thus from the above findings, one can deduce that the opinions of office and school respondents are the same 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.

In table 5 of item 8, in order to test the significance 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 (*X2*) was applied .The calculated chi-square value (*X2*) is 1.27, which is less than the critical value (*X2*cv= 9.49), there is no a significant statistical difference between the opinions of the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding the availability of adequate amount of budget to implement the strategies are rejected. On the other hand, 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. 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.

In table 5 of item 7, regarding the effective utilization of resources, the chi-square test value (*X2*) is 5.99, which is less than the critical value (*X2*cv=9.49), there is no significant statistical difference between the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding ‘effective utilization of available resources’ is rejected. Accordingly, 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. 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 5 items 6, it is shown that, the calculated chi-square test value (*X2*) is 19.59, which is greater than the critical value (*X2*cv=9.49), there is a statistical significance difference between the opinions of the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding ‘the extent to which budgets were approved based on the strategies of the plans’ is accepted. Accordingly, 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. 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 5 of item 5, regarding the availability of necessary material resources, chi-square test was applied. The calculated chi-square value (*X2*) is 8.98, which is less than the critical value (*X2*cv=9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. Hence, there is no a statistical significant difference between the opinions of the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding ‘the availability of necessary resources’ are rejected. 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.

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

Item 4,with regarding the allocated budget was released exactly on time, the calculated chi-square test value (*X2*) is 13.45, which is greater than the critical value(*X2*cv=9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. Hence, there is a statistical significance difference between the responses of the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding to ‘the on time of releasing allocated budget’ is accepted. Additionally, 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.

**4.2.1.4 Competence and commitment of ZED and WED 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 competence 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 6: Responses on the competence and commitment of RZW heads

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | **Items** | Respondents | Rating Rate | | | | | | | | | | *X2* |
| 5 | | 4 | | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| a | 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 |
| b | 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 | 34.2 | 26 | 21.7 |
| c | 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 |
| e | 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=12) | 8 | 6.7 | 17 | 14.2 | 32 | 26.7 | 37 | 30.8 | 26 | 21.7 |
| f | 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 |
| g | 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 |
| h | 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 |
| i | 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 |

*Df=4 P value =0.05 x2 table value=9.49*

As shown in the table 7 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 is poor. Since chi-square value (X2 =4.959, which does not exceed the critical value X2cv = 9.49), there is no a statistical difference between the opinions of the two group respondents.

In table 7 item2, 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 (X2=5.821, X2cv = 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 environment 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 (X2=9.028, X2cv = 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 7 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 (X2=7.052, X2cv= 9.49), there is no statistical significant difference. 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 (X2=6.569, X2cv= 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, chi-square test was applied. The calculate chi-square value does not exceed the critical value (X2 =2.90,X2cv= 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. On the other hand, 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. 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 (X2 =6.929, X2cv= 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 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 (X2 =3.383) is not greater than the critical value (X2cv= 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

**4.3 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 in to 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 6 . 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 8, 4(57.14%) items 1, 2, 3, and 5 were found in the between the mean values of 1.5 -2.49 which would best describe low (less) agreement to the items. Specifically, as the mean scores in Table 8 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.

Table 6: Responses on Plan and Monitoring

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Items | Rating scales | | | | | |
| Office Res. (Planners, process owners & Expert) = 84 | | | | | |
|  | **Plan Monitoring and Evaluation** | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Mean  () |
| f | f | f | f | f |
| 1 | The extent to which timely monitoring and evaluation of educational strategic plans carried out | 1 | 8 | 7 | 51 | 17 | 1.92 |
| 2 | The degree to which the result of monitoring and evaluation be used to take corrective measure | 2 | 11 | 16 | 37 | 18 | 2.05 |
| 3 | The extent to which monitoring and evaluation carried out by external evaluators | - | 4 | 13 | 45 | 22 | 1.98 |
| 4 | The degree to which monitoring and evaluation carried out by internal evaluators | 17 | 25 | 23 | 11 | 8 | 3.38 |
| 5 | The extent to which 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 |

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.

Worse than these, 1(14.28 percent) 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, 1(14.28 percent) 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.

**4.4 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 7, 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 7 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 AR. 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 AR with weighted mean values of 4.50 and 4.54 by office and 4.52 and 4.67 by school respondents respectively

Table 7: 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 |  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |  |
| f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f |
| 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 |

*Df =202 P value =0.05 T-table value=1.960*

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 AR 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 AR.

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. But, when parities those are to be affected by the strategic plan get involved in its process, they consider it as their own business and work harder for its successful accomplishment (Cunningham; 1982).

Moreover, as planning naturally refers to the future and future is dynamic, over-reliance on the past experiences could often affect the education sector negatively. To sum up, although these elements need to be put the best level for successful strategic planning practices, AR seems to have been seriously challenged by these difficulties.

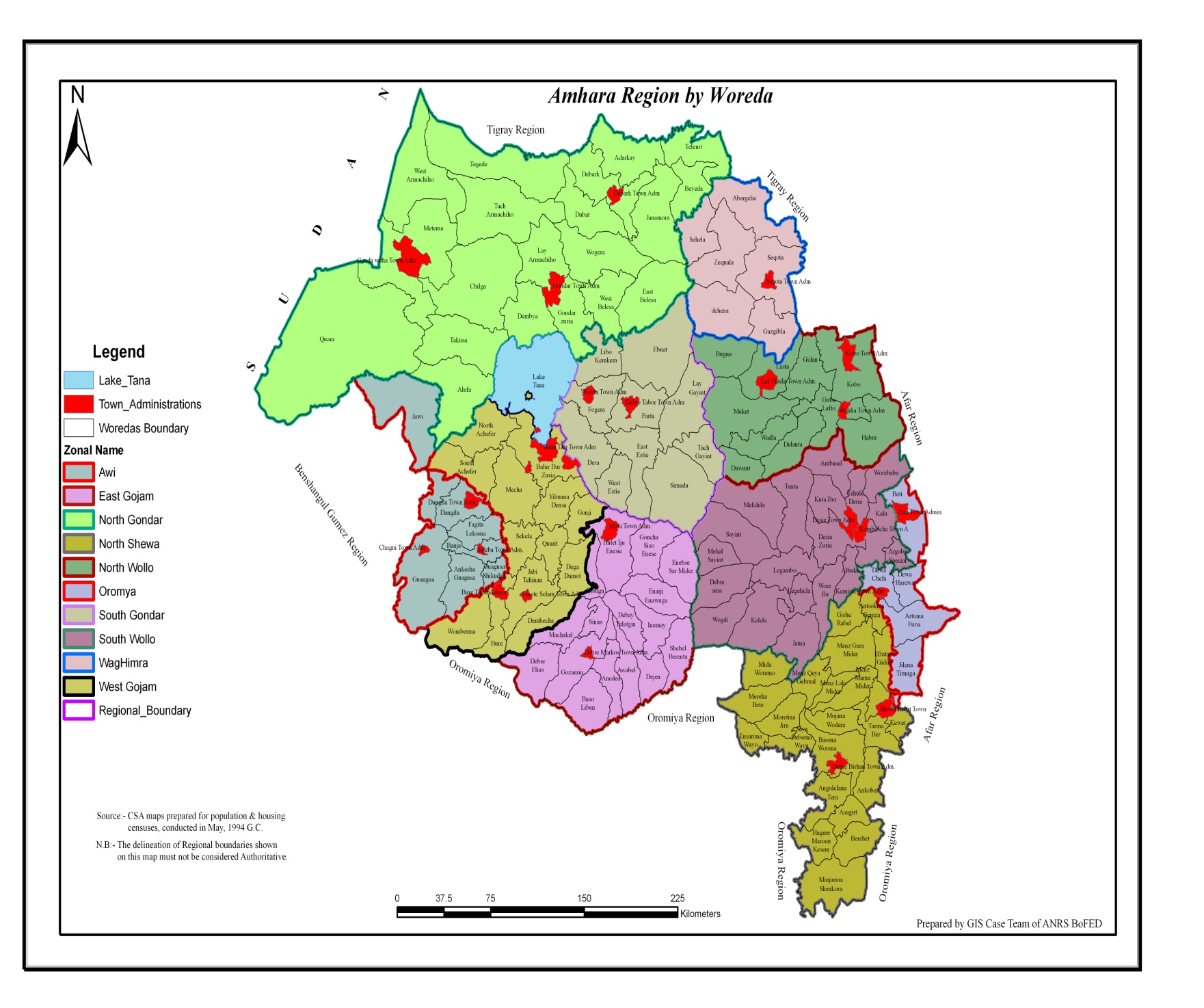
On top of this, failure to set meaning full and verifiable targets, lack of clear lines of delegation, inadequate knowledge and/or experience of the plan actors, failure to obtain sufficient resources to accomplish the tasks, and lack of clear lines of authority which makes decision making difficult 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 AR.

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 AR have been confronted with as many problems as discussed above however their degrees vary.



**CHAPTER FIVE**

**5. SUMMERY, 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 Amhara Region with the following five basic research questions in mind.

* What is the involvement of stakeholders in the current practices of strategic plan preparation and implementation in Amhara region?
* Have monitoring and evaluation systems been instituted for tracking implementation progress, to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses and for making corrections?
* Does Amhara region have adequate resources to effectively implement its strategic plans?
* How the WEO and ZED heads are devoted in implementing the strategic plans?
* What are the major challenges encountered while implementing the strategic plan in the region?

The study was carried out in Amhara region, of which four Zones with their respective woredas were selected. Thus, the zones were purposively chosen, where as the woredas and schools were included in the study based on availability of sampling techniques. --------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

As data gathering tools, questionnaires, interview, and document inspections were employed. The total number of sample respondents was 215. In specific term, there were 24 principals, 120 department heads, 48 woreda, 16 zone, and 4 regional educational Planers and experts included in the study. From among these target respondents, heads and vice heads of region education bureau and zone departments involved in the interview, while the later group responded to the questionnaires.

**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 four basic categories as presented here under:

1. **Pre-conditions for Effective strategic planning practices**

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 thoroughly treated in the study. Accordingly, the study showed that degree of stakeholders’ involvement in preparing and implementing educational strategic planning practices was poor with average mean values of -------.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**3. 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 here under.

**3.1 Method of the Study**

This study was 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 according to Keeves (1990), 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 Variables of the study**

The major variables that studied here is that, the extent of how the strategic plan is built on a systematic analysis of the region’s existing structure, governance, staff, programs or service mix, collaborations, effectiveness, resources ( financial , human, technical and material)

**3.2 Source of Data**

The major data sources of the study were of primary and secondary in nature. The primary data was be collected from regional educational planning experts, planning department officials of South Wollo, East Gojjam, South Gondr and Oromiya zones , Woreda Education expertise and planners, principals , and head departments 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 Data Collection Tools**

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

**3.3.1 Questionnaire**

1. **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 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 will be prepared for Principals and department heads respondents so as to collect data regarding their activity to implement the strategic plan.

**3.3.2 Interview**

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

**3.3.3 Document Review**

Necessary documents 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.

**3.4 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 was personally conduct 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.

**3.5 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

There are eleven zones in Amhara Regional state. This researcher has clustered these eleven zones in four groups based on their culture, socio economic background and 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 (30%) Woredas are selected by using 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, Esite and Debretabor 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, one vice heads of education bureau, 2 plan experts and 4 process owners and performers are selected from Region using purposive sampling method, one vice head of Zone education department, 4 process owners, 2 plan experts from each Zones education departments will included in the study by using availability sampling. This is because they are the one with better knowledge as compared with those people who are found in that institution. Thus, from four zones 16 process owners and 8 plan expertise will be selected; 5 process owners and performers, 2 planning and information system experts from each woreda education offices are selected by using simple random sampling technique and finally from 12 secondary schools: 24 principals, 96 head departments (8 department heads from one school) were selected as respondents by using quota sampling technique.

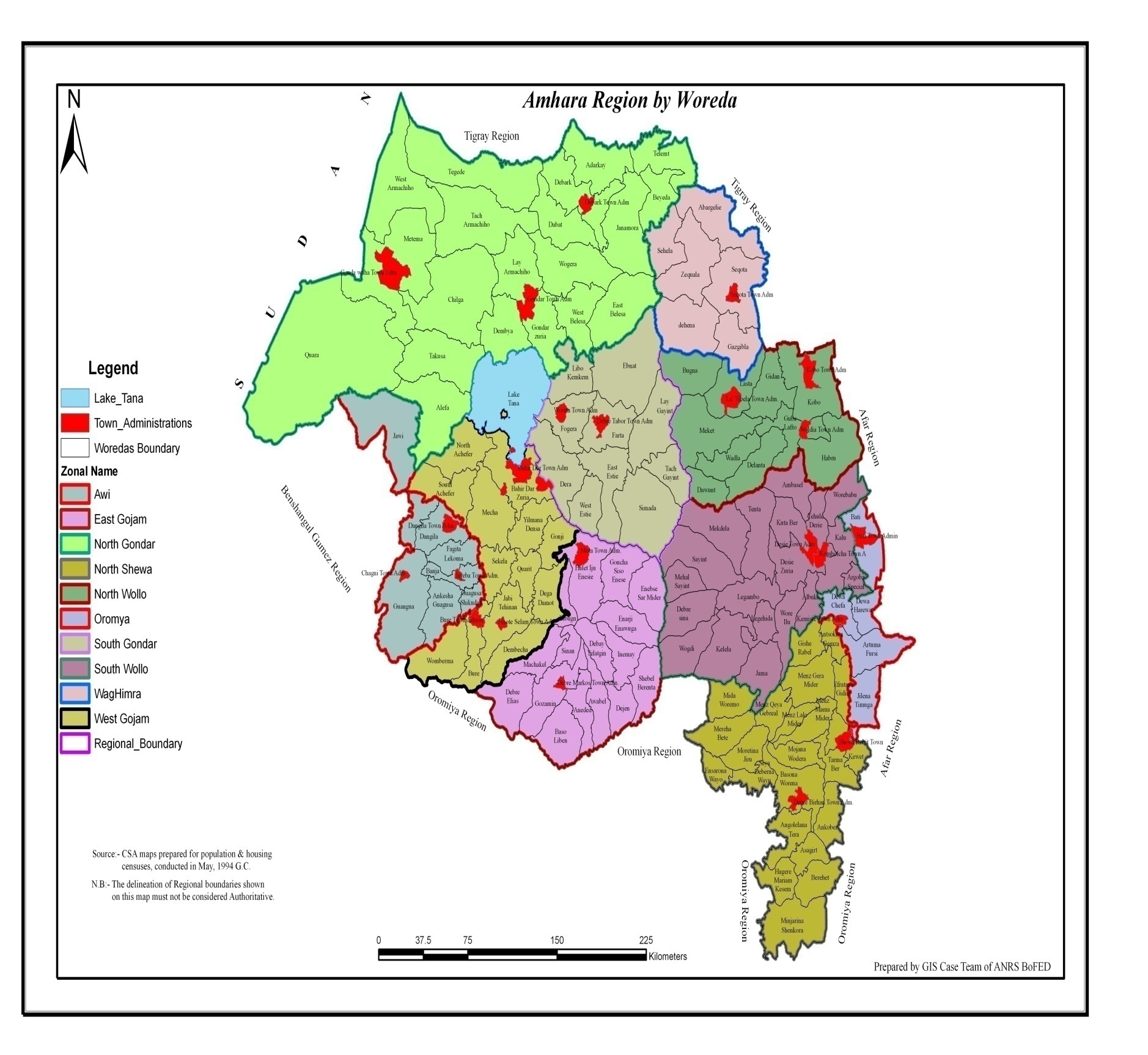


Figure 1: Map of Amhara Regional state by of Zones and Woredas

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter mainly converts two major parts. The first section deals with the characteristics of the respondents; while the second part deals on 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 Vice 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, 204 copies (120 for Principals and department heads, and 84 for Zone and Woreda educational planers, experts and performers) of questionnaires were developed and distributed to the target respondents.

However, all the distributed questionnaires were fully filled and returned to the researcher with unreserved efforts made by the researcher.

As can be seen from Table 2, among the total respondents included in the study 195 (95.59%) and 9(4.41%) 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 2: Classification of the Respondents

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Items | | Respondents | | | | | | | | | |
| RZhigher officials | | Office Respondents (ZW planers,experts) | | Principals | | Department heads | | | |
| No | % | No | % | No | % | | No | % |
| 1 | Sex | Male | 11 | 100 | 79 | 92.85 | 23 | 85.83 | | 94 | 97.92 |
| Female | - | - | 6 | 7.15 | 1 | 4.17 | | 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%) of female respondents in the lower work forces/ Department heads and 1(4.17%) of principals, 6 (7.15%) in the middle levels (ZW planners, work process implementers and experts), and where 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.

However, lack of meaningful participation of females in various decision making positions is not a surprise in countries like Ethiopia were there has been male dominating culture, and where educational opportunities have relatively 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 Ethiopia 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% of the higher officials and planning experts were found in the age limit of 40 and above years, while 1(9.09%), and 2 (18.18%) 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%) of the principals, 42 (43.75%) of department heads and 21 (25%) of ZW planners and experts were in the age limit of 31-35 years. And 12 (50%) of the principals, 15(15.62%) of department heads and 19(22.60%) of ZW 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 2 revealed the educational qualification of respondents. Thus, 6 (7.15%) of higher officials of ZW and plan experts, 5(20.83%) secondary school principals and 4(4.17%) department heads were second degree (MA/MSc/MEd) holders, 76 (79.76%) of ZW planers, process owners and experts, 19(79.17%) secondary school principals and 86 (89.58%) of department heads were first degree (BA/BSc/BEd) holders.

More over 11 (13.09%) of ZED and WEO educational planners and experts and 6(6.25%) 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. This has an implication that a further educational opportunity after first degree has been minimal.

Besides, as shown in Table 2, the respondents were asked about their field of specialization. The data shows that 68 (80.95%) 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%) 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. Further more, it was indicated that, all school principals did not study in either educational administration or pedagogical science or curriculum. They were rather studied fields like Geography, physics, Biology, Mathematics, English Chemistry, Amharic, History, Physical Education and Sports and etc. These data indicated that, educational planners and experts in the zones and woredas and principals in the schools did not study related field related to the current position they held. This may not 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 2 items 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%), 8(9.52%), 26(30.95%) 19(22.62%) of the ZED and WEO officials, planners, experts and processors were in the service boundary 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 and above 20 years respectively. From this, it can be inferred that the largest proportion fall in the comparatively, highest years of services. Similarly 15(62.45%) principals and 69(71.87%) of head departments were in the range of 11-20 years and above 20 years of services, while 9(37.55%) principals and 27(28.13%) 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 education strategic plans.

As far as the respondents’ experience on their current positions 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.

Accordingly, as to be the data in the Table 3, --(%) of higher officials included in the study were from ------------- field of specialization with no trainings given on educational planning and management. Similarly, ---- (%), ------ (%),, and -----(%) of these higher officials have specialized in ------, ----------- and ----------- of fields of studies with no trainings given on strategic planning and managing education.

But, differently, there were – (%) that have specialized in education serving as regional education bureau vice heads and Zone education Department Heads; not in planning and managing education. Thus, it can be felt that the right persons were not put on the right positions. In other words, particularly, individuals who were in planning and programming office were far-off to the planning activities that they were regularly carrying out. Hence the researcher, believed that the organization of top level management of the sample zones and Woredas in the region, particularly, offices carrying out educational strategic planning activities need further capacity building either by putting the right persons on the right positions or by giving relevant and adequate trainings on strategic planning and managing education to the available personnel if needed to plan effectively and efficiently.

**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 pr-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 decided to be used for interpretation as 0.05-1.49 very poor, 1.5- 2.49 poor, 2.5-3.49 medium, 3.5-4.49 good and above 4.49 very good. Additionally, the main value for every item was interpreted using the median dividing line at 3.0. Thus, mean score below 3.0 were taken as weakness /or threats; while above 3.0 were interpreted as opportunities / strengths.

**4.2.1.1 Meaningful Participation of Stakeholders**

In order to ensure effective and efficient strategic planning practices, the parties that are basically affected by a particular development project/plan should be involved in the strategic planning activities in as much as possible, partly to ensure that detained information on social conditions and needs is obtained; and partly to encourage a sense of involvement in, and commitment to the strategic plan by the people.

Major importantly, meaningful participation of the concerned stakeholders in the strategic planning enables the planning processes to focus on the commonly felt needs of the stakeholders through group involvement, and facilities smooth strategic plan implementation with fewer resources but maximum efficiency.

Thus, under this section, discussion regarding the trend of meaningful involvement of potential stakeholders in the practice of preparing and implementing educational strategic planning, by attaching the literary works of various scholars and studies made before in similar area were made as follows.

As can be observed from table 3, all items except item 2, were rated as poor and very poor. In item 1 above, 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 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 more willing for its successful accomplishment (Lewis; et al. 1995).

Despite of 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 have not taken 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.

Table 3: 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 |  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |  |
| f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f |
| a | 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 |
| b | Principals & departments are committed to effective strategic planning | 13 | 23 | 31 | 15 | 2 | 3.36 | 21 | 19 | 41 | 20 | 19 | 3.03 | 2.007 |
| c | your feedbacks are taken for improvement | 1 | 5 | 9 | 38 | 31 | 1.86 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 17 | 93 | 1.35 | 4.384 |
| d | 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 |
| e | 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 |
| f | 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 |

*Df =202 P value =0.05 T-table value=1.960*

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 describes fair /medium agreements to the items. Thus, although commitment is a vital element in order to execute the strategic plans as effectively as possible, AR 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 some one invited to comment on some thing 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 3 item 5, 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 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 of 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 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 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 3 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 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 4), 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 (Table 4).

Table 4: Ratings on Planners’ Knowledge and/or Experiences

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | **Items** | Respondents | Rating Scale | | | | | | | | | | *X2* |
| 5 | | 4 | | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| 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 | 10.909 |
| 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=12) | 10 | 8.3 | 28 | 23.3 | 23 | 19.2 | 37 | 30.8 | 22 | 18.3 |

*Df=4 P value =0.05 x2 table value=9.49*

In table 4 of item1, the chi-square test (x2) is applied to test the significance of respondents’ response regarding availability of qualified personnel in the strategic planning team. The chi square (x2) result is 12.152 which are greater than the table value at 0.05 levels (X2cv=9.49). The difference of the response among each options of the variable (item) is significant. Therefore the response regarding the issue is accepted. Accordingly, 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 were respond as very poor and poor respectively. How ever, it is believed that strategic plans can function so successfully if prepared by planners who have relevant and adequate planning knowledge.

As can be seen from table 4 item2, 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. Therefore, the statement ‘availability of continuous trainings for strategic planners is not accepted. According to the analysis result, 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 agreed also as very poor and medium respectively.

In table 4 item 3, the calculated value (*x*2) of the respondents is 5.048, which is less than the table value at alpha 0.05 level (*X*2cv= 9.49). The difference of the responses among each option of the variables is not significant. Therefore, the respondents’ response regarding the adequate years of experience of strategic planners is rejected. In other words, the adequacy years of planners experiences in the strategic planning team as poor by 33(39.3 percent) of office and 51(42.5 percent) of school respondents. Not only this (lack planning experience), they are not also seen while trying to share planning experiences with other regions, zones and woredas.

However, most literatures repeatedly suggests that strategic plans which are practiced by experienced planners in relevant areas could result better out comes than strategic plans prepared by non-professionals practitioners with less or no strategic planning experiences. Moreover, experience is a school by it self where individuals can accumulate good amount and kind of operating skills.

In item 4, the calculated chi –square value (*X2*) 11.145, which is greater the table value (*X2*cv=9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. So the difference of responses among the respondents is significant. Therefore, the responses regarding ‘the degree to which planners are sent for further upgrading in educational plans’ are accepted. Consequently, the majority 32(38.1 percent) office and 37(30.8 percent) school respondents confirmed as poor.

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 out comes if prepared by professional planners with special skills.

In table 4 item 5, the calculated chi-square value (*X2*) is 10.909, which is greater than the table value (*X2*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.

**4.2.1.3 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 5 revealed the data obtained from various responsibilities.

In table 5 of item 1, regarding the availability of qualified manpower resource, Chi-square test (*X2*) was applied to test the significance difference of the variables. Since the calculated chi-square value (*X2*) is 17.899, which is greater than the table value (*X2*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. Accordingly, 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. 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.

**Table 5: Responses on the adequacy and utilization of Resources**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | **Items** | Respondents | Rating Scale | | | | | | | | | | *X2* |
| 5 | | 4 | | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| 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 capacity building training for the existing man power | 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 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 4.64 |
| 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 | 8.981 |
| 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 | 9.700 |
| 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 |

*Df=4 P value =0.05 x2 table value=9.49*

In item 2 of the above table, in order to test the significance difference among the responses of the respondents’ chi-square test (*X2*) is applied. The calculated chi- square test (*X2*) is 7.23, which is less than the critical value (*X2*cv =9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels, there is no significant difference between the responses of the respondents. Therefore, the response regarding ‘effective planning team in zone and/or woreda level’ is rejected. Accordingly, 29 (34.5percent) of office and 39(32.5 percent) of school respondents, revealed that, there is no effective planning team or poor. On the contrary, 27(32.1 percent) and 24(20 percent) of office and school respondents respectively proved that the availability of effective planning team is medium. Thus from the above findings, one can deduce that the opinions of office and school respondents are the same 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.

In table 5 of item 8, in order to test the significance 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 (*X2*) was applied .The calculated chi-square value (*X2*) is 1.27, which is less than the critical value (*X2*cv= 9.49), there is no a significant statistical difference between the opinions of the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding the availability of adequate amount of budget to implement the strategies are rejected. On the other hand, 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. 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.

In table 5 of item 7, regarding the effective utilization of resources, the chi-square test value (*X2*) is 5.99, which is less than the critical value (*X2*cv=9.49), there is no significant statistical difference between the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding ‘effective utilization of available resources’ is rejected. Accordingly, 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. 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 5 items 6, it is shown that, the calculated chi-square test value (*X2*) is 19.59, which is greater than the critical value (*X2*cv=9.49), there is a statistical significance difference between the opinions of the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding ‘the extent to which budgets were approved based on the strategies of the plans’ is accepted. Accordingly, 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. 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 5 of item 5, regarding the availability of necessary material resources, chi-square test was applied. The calculated chi-square value (*X2*) is 8.98, which is less than the critical value (*X2*cv=9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. Hence, there is no a statistical significant difference between the opinions of the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding ‘the availability of necessary resources’ are rejected. 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.

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

Item 4,with regarding the allocated budget was released exactly on time, the calculated chi-square test value (*X2*) is 13.45, which is greater than the critical value(*X2*cv=9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. Hence, there is a statistical significance difference between the responses of the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding to ‘the on time of releasing allocated budget’ is accepted. Additionally, 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.

**4.2.1.4 Competence and commitment of ZED and WED 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 competence 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 6: Responses on the competence and commitment of RZW heads

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | **Items** | Respondents | Rating Rate | | | | | | | | | | *X2* |
| 5 | | 4 | | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| a | 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 |
| b | 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 | 34.2 | 26 | 21.7 |
| c | 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 |
| e | 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=12) | 8 | 6.7 | 17 | 14.2 | 32 | 26.7 | 37 | 30.8 | 26 | 21.7 |
| f | 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 |
| g | 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 |
| h | 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 |
| i | 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 |

*Df=4 P value =0.05 x2 table value=9.49*

As shown in the table 7 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 is poor. Since chi-square value (X2 =4.959, which does not exceed the critical value X2cv = 9.49), there is no a statistical difference between the opinions of the two group respondents.

In table 7 item2, 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 (X2=5.821, X2cv = 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 environment 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 (X2=9.028, X2cv = 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 7 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 (X2=7.052, X2cv= 9.49), there is no statistical significant difference. 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 (X2=6.569, X2cv= 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, chi-square test was applied. The calculate chi-square value does not exceed the critical value (X2 =2.90,X2cv= 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. On the other hand, 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. 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 (X2 =6.929, X2cv= 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 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 (X2 =3.383) is not greater than the critical value (X2cv= 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

**4.3 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 in to 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 6 . 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 8, 4(57.14%) items 1, 2, 3, and 5 were found in the between the mean values of 1.5 -2.49 which would best describe low (less) agreement to the items. Specifically, as the mean scores in Table 8 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.

Table 6: Responses on Plan and Monitoring

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Items | Rating scales | | | | | |
| Office Res. (Planners, process owners & Expert) = 84 | | | | | |
|  | **Plan Monitoring and Evaluation** | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Mean  () |
| f | f | f | f | f |
| 1 | The extent to which timely monitoring and evaluation of educational strategic plans carried out | 1 | 8 | 7 | 51 | 17 | 1.92 |
| 2 | The degree to which the result of monitoring and evaluation be used to take corrective measure | 2 | 11 | 16 | 37 | 18 | 2.05 |
| 3 | The extent to which monitoring and evaluation carried out by external evaluators | - | 4 | 13 | 45 | 22 | 1.98 |
| 4 | The degree to which monitoring and evaluation carried out by internal evaluators | 17 | 25 | 23 | 11 | 8 | 3.38 |
| 5 | The extent to which 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 |

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.

Worse than these, 1(14.28 percent) 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, 1(14.28 percent) 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.

**4.4 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 7, 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 7 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 AR. 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 AR with weighted mean values of 4.50 and 4.54 by office and 4.52 and 4.67 by school respondents respectively

Table 7: 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 |  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |  |
| f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f |
| 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 |

*Df =202 P value =0.05 T-table value=1.960*

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 AR 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 AR.

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. But, when parities those are to be affected by the strategic plan get involved in its process, they consider it as their own business and work harder for its successful accomplishment (Cunningham; 1982).

Moreover, as planning naturally refers to the future and future is dynamic, over-reliance on the past experiences could often affect the education sector negatively. To sum up, although these elements need to be put the best level for successful strategic planning practices, AR seems to have been seriously challenged by these difficulties.

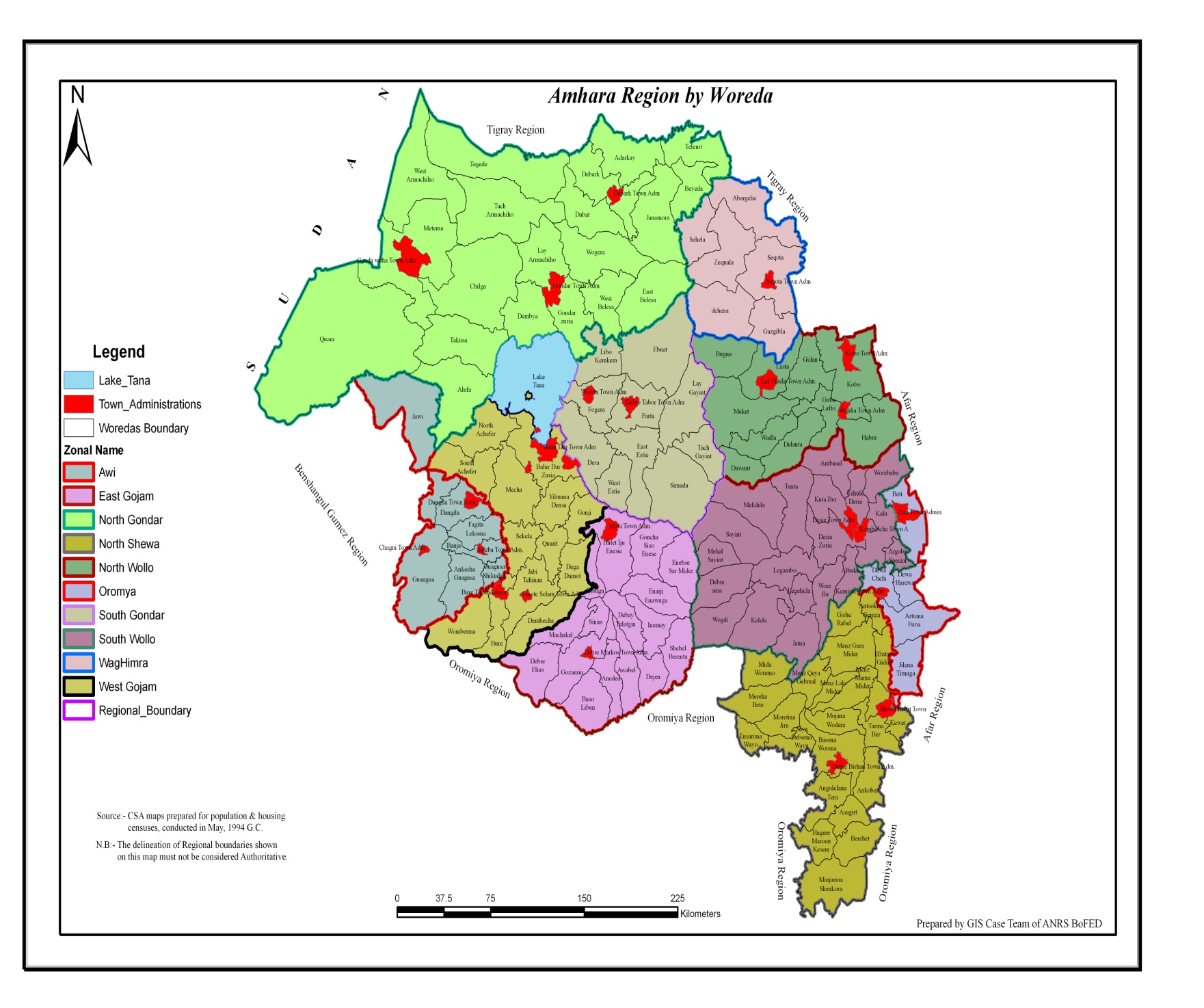
On top of this, failure to set meaning full and verifiable targets, lack of clear lines of delegation, inadequate knowledge and/or experience of the plan actors, failure to obtain sufficient resources to accomplish the tasks, and lack of clear lines of authority which makes decision making difficult 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 AR.

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 AR have been confronted with as many problems as discussed above however their degrees vary.



**CHAPTER FIVE**

**5. SUMMERY, 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 Amhara Region with the following five basic research questions in mind.

* What is the involvement of stakeholders in the current practices of strategic plan preparation and implementation in Amhara region?
* Have monitoring and evaluation systems been instituted for tracking implementation progress, to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses and for making corrections?
* Does Amhara region have adequate resources to effectively implement its strategic plans?
* How the WEO and ZED heads are devoted in implementing the strategic plans?
* What are the major challenges encountered while implementing the strategic plan in the region?

The study was carried out in Amhara region, of which four Zones with their respective woredas were selected. Thus, the zones were purposively chosen, where as the woredas and schools were included in the study based on availability of sampling techniques. --------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

As data gathering tools, questionnaires, interview, and document inspections were employed. The total number of sample respondents was 215. In specific term, there were 24 principals, 120 department heads, 48 woreda, 16 zone, and 4 regional educational Planers and experts included in the study. From among these target respondents, heads and vice heads of region education bureau and zone departments involved in the interview, while the later group responded to the questionnaires.

**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 four basic categories as presented here under:

1. **Pre-conditions for Effective strategic planning practices**

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 thoroughly treated in the study. Accordingly, the study showed that degree of stakeholders’ involvement in preparing and implementing educational strategic planning practices was poor with average mean values of -------.

**What do you understand by the process of feed back in communication? Explain its implications for rural development.**

Communication is the processes by which an idea or innovation or technology is transmitted from source to one or more receivers with an intent to change the behavior of the receivers. In the context of communication, Feed-Back is the situation where communication between two people is involved in which one is constantly communicating back to the other. The return process is called feedback. **Feedback** provided the sources with information concerning his success in accomplishing his objective and directing the future course of his action. The source or the receiver can make use of the reaction of the other, which serve as feedback. For example news paper affects its reader by selecting the news they are allowed to read. Similarly the readers also affect the news paper. If readers do not buy the paper, it may have to change its selection criteria of news and presentation of news. Person to person communication channels permit maximum feedback. The source has an opportunity to change his message immediately as a result of feedback he gets. On the other hand, mass communication channels have minimum opportunity for feed back since the sources and the receiver separated on time and space.

**Concerning its implication for rural development**

Especially in using mass communication channel the change agency reaches the urban sector and only privileged minority of the rural sector. The message is lost to those whom the government seeks most to inform and influence for the well known reason of illiteracy, Physical isolation and the lack of radio and television sets in the rural areas. Though the change agent stationed in rural area make efforts to multiply their message through way within their reach, their radius of action has limited force and stumbles against barriers of resistance.

Their limited knowledge of the characteristic of the audience and that of communication channel hamper them, even more. Therefore, the combination of mass media and inter personal channel offer several advantages over purely inter personal or mass media channel. It play role in overcoming the selectivity process and provide effective **feedback** which is very essential for the success of any rural development program me. Change agent would do well to organize small group discussions or media forum immediately after the audience has been exposed to mass media channel in order to get **feedback**, which help to see their real success.

Change agents also can use radio to reach the farmers families. This may encounters a most strong competition in the form of commercial broad casting with its entertaining program. News paper also are inspired by an urban bias with very little message pertaining to rural development. Its orientation and distribution fail to reach the majority of the rural massage who are illiterate. The knowledge of the audience as well as communication channels used may be useful expediting the communication process and in increasing the speed with which message are received by rural people and interpreted by them, in the way that the message are intended to be interpreted. This is because, the action of the source affect the reaction of the receiver and vice versa.

**2. What are the out comes and short comings and short comings of the government** policies and strategics for small scale industries in roral area of mdia?

The major out of the policies and strategies for development of small scale industries in rural india has been the tremendous growth that achived by this sector. According to former minister of industry and civil supplies, the small sector of industries has made an impressive progress after the industrial policy resolution was adopted and the second five year plan was launched. The growth has been not only on numbers, employment and production, but more importantly in sophistication and quality.

It would also fever the growth of small scale industries in that they use modern equipment and modern techniques of production and manegment. In this respect the scope of these industries has been modified from time to time to suit the changing circumstance of manufacturing in small sector. Basically after the police was adopted the small scale industries have in our development plan been assigned initial role in the development strategy on account of this the small scale industries provided employment opportunities. For surplus labour face available at are latively smaller capital cost mobilizing untapped sca re resource of capital and enterprenerial skill that may other wise remain unutilized and ensure the diffusion of productive industrial activity.

State policy should consist of well defined contracting out strategices such policy should recognize the specificitive on non profit organization and their red stributive potential of goods and services contracting out strategies should ensure continvity and development of already exisiting net work relation which generate trust and scial capital.

**1. Discuss the Future Prospects of non Profit Organization**

The existence of nonprofit organization in a market economy is undoubtedly unique phenomenon. The fundamental assumption inherent in such organization is that profit or personal economic gain is not the sole motivation for determining the economic behavior of human being. Rather people of the same interest come together and establish nonprofit organization, in order to overcome on the area ignored by state and product of goods or services of substandard and quality for the captive clients.

The formation of nonprofit organization relies heavily on a high degree of trust rather than, well defined rules, hence the organizational model remains fragile. The owners ship is either not well defined or is usually shared by large of stake holders. This advantage of democratic governance may turn out to be as tumbling block to their future transformation.

The predominant social ethos in modern so cities considers structures of state and for profit sectors having sufficient potential to satisfy the overall demand of social and community service. Such an ethos undermines the potential role of nonprofit sector, in which nonprofit organization at their best are considered offering transitory solution. The relationship among the diverse range of nonprofit organization is also unclear. Social and labor public policies are still to a large extent in coherent in modern societies. During this, there is unclear mix of subsidies and uncertain contracting roles which make uncertainties. Furthermore, hard contracting out practices usually ignore the specific characteristics or Local advantages of nonprofit organization, consequently nonprofit organization are operating in uncertain and in secure environment, their functioning is substantially influenced by short term contracts at the cost of their own long term planning and development.

The legal structures suitable for the functioning of nonprofit organization are still in adequate in modern societies. Mostly legal frame works have been designed to favor the existence of company form than entrepreneurial nonprofit organization.

The state policies should give full legal recognition to nonprofit organization, in order to consolidate the most innovative nonprofit organizational solution to promote the replication process of successful nonprofit organization, to encourage the spread of new nonprofit organization and to create condition to avoided isomorphism among nonprofit organization. To greater extent it can be said with certainty that, nonprofit organization will play a role in future on modern democratic societies. However their future, form, characteristic and contribution are subject to the evaluation of state policies and the dynamics of pluralistic welfare system.

2**. What do you understand by consumer protection act, 1986? Describe the salient features of the Act.**

Now a day, a wide variety of consumer goods has appeared in the market, which provides food and service to the needs of the consumer. In addition to this a host of service has been made available to the consumer like insurance, transport, electricity, housing, entertainment and etc. Because of this fast development, competition among manufacturers, traders and service providers has grown fast. In this competitive environment, possibility of adulteration of goods, sub standard product, cheating and defective services too have proportionately increased. Therefore, to protect consumers from exploitation and to save them from adulterated and sub standard goods and service and to safeguard the interests of consumer, the **consumer protection Act was** passed.

Regarding certain concept commonly used in the Act, consumer means any person who buys any goods or who avails or hires any services for consideration which have been paid or promised or partly paid and partly promised. On the other way, consumer dispute means a dispute where the person against whom a compliant has been made denies or disputes. The allegation contained in the complaint effect means any fault, in perfection or short coming in the quality, quantity, potency, purity or standards, which is required to be maintained by or under any law. According to the Act service means, service of any description, which is made available to potential users, but not limited, to the provision of facilities.

In respect of its **salient factures** of the act, councils to be constituted have three tier system i.e. central, state and district level. Each council has to meet at least twice in a year and assess the step taken or to be taken for the promotion of consumer right, awareness and redresser of grievances. Objective underlying the council is to against marketing of goods and services, which are hazardous to life and property. It would also help to inform about quality, potency and standard and prices of goods, which help to protect the consumer against unfair trade practice and to be assured wherever possible access to variety of goods and services at competitive prices. It would also to be heard and be assured that consumer’s interests will receive due consideration in appropriate form and to promote consumer education. Concerning dispute redressal agencies, which are meant to provide redressal to the grievance of consumer with respect to goods or service, as the case may be. These have been placed in three tiers. Further, any party which feels aggrieved by the decision of one tier can appeal to the next agency according to the rule. Any person whom an order has been passed by three tier, shall be punished with imprisonment of minimum one month and maximum three years or fine of minimum2000 maximum 10,000.

1 Discuss the problem faced by VO/NGO in rural india.

Besically,NGO/Vo is formed when agroup of people having some common interest or purpose agrees to act together to achieve their objective.while it function in society it face problem from the perspective of the rural social milieu and nature of rural Vos.from this bare fact,ruralsocial milieu and skewed land relation affect the functioning of VO/NGO.since the predominant concer of VO is the upliftment of poor and disadvantaged section,they invariably come in to confrontion with political and economic power full caste class,conscontly the power full local elite group implicates workers of VO/NGOin false way.

On the other hand, the constitution 73rd amendment act,1996 furnished the groud for state to enact confirmatory law for the establishment of panchayati Raj institutions with enhanaced powers and responsibilitie.under these act,stste government are supposed to transfer 29 subject to PRJ.in similar way VO/NGO share the same common development space with PRJ in rural area,but they donot enjoy similar constitutional authority as panchayts.as result the problem may arais in case VO/NGO lack experience and capcity in working with PRJ. more

Another important task of VO/NGO is to take stock of the functioning of delivery sevices pertaining to health,education,irrigation at village level through participatory way.however the ground reality is that usual government sponsored rural development scheme tend to be benefit the better off sections and by pass the poor and disadvantaged section,specialy the women.in that case,VO/NGOantegonese the functtionies state or local authorities.many time authorities interested in maintaing status quo,strike back with VO/NGO thuse jeopardising the existance and functioning of VO/NGO in rural area.

Yet another area of problem is the customery practices seriously inhibit the participation of women in panchayats.in such situation,seeking participation of rural poor,disadvantaged section and women in the functioning of VO/NGO become an ardous task in rural area.in certain case,VO/NGO working in town may encounter dificultie in earning the initial confidance and trust of villagers or in taking up entry point activities in rural area’

**CHAPTER ONE**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 BAGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Among other things, the development of world economy and society at present is 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 had 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 of the realities, educators sometimes fail to reach the desired purposes, due to 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 adays 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 the way 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.*’’

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.

Now days, based on the New Educational and Training Policy (April: 1994), to create the necessary conditions to expand, enrich and improve the relevance, quality, accessibility and equity of education and training, Ethiopia follows decentralized educational management.

* 1. **Statement of the problems**

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. .

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 soul 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 route. 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.’’

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 for 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 difficulty with most of these plans is that they too seldom get of paper and into action. According to him, implementation has become the number one problem of educational plan.

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 data, 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.

Strategic planning is one tool of strategic management, and like any management tools it is used to help an organization do better job, to help an organization to focus its mission, vision and priorities in response to a changing environment and insure the members of the organizations are working towards the same goal. . Strategic planning process can be shortened or extended depending on the size of the organizations, complexity of the programs, budget, time, availability of the staff, etc.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to assess the practice and problems in preparing and implementing educational strategic plans in rural woradas of Bale zone, Oromia region in relation to their practice, problems and prospects in terms of the implementation strategies and the results that gained.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**REVIEW OF RELATED LITRATURE**

This chapter mainly deals with reviewing literary works of various scholars on the practice and problem of papering and implementing educational strategic planning. Primarily, concepts related with planning, strategic planning,Importance of Strategic Planning ,Steps of Strategic planning, Characteristics of Strategic Planning, Problems of Educational Strategic Plan, Making Strategic planning effective, Planners’ Knowledge, Experiences, and Meaningful Participation, Strategic Plan Implementation, Why Strategic Plans Fail?, and Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

**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, 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,.

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, anticipate events, prepare for contingencies, formulate directions map out activities, and provide an orderly sequence for achieving goals through planning (Morphet,et al., 1982). 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.

**2.2.2 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.

**2.2.1 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. 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.

However, Kaufman (1995:260) reiterates 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.

**2.4 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 Abdu (2005) 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.

**2.7 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 desires 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 -calibre fashion –weak implementation undermines the strategy’s potential and paves 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.

**2.8 Plan Monitoring and Evaluation**

The last step of planning processis to monitoring and evaluatestheprogress 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.

**2.9 Why Strategic Plans Fail?**

All organizations strategic plans may not be implemented as expected due to various reasons. A numbers of educators recognized different reasons for the failure of strategic plan. McNamara (2008) identified the following reasons that organizational strategic plans fail: failure to understand the clients, inability to predict environment reaction, failure to develop new employee and management skills, failure to coordinate, inadequate reporting and control relationships, organizational structure not flexible enough, failure to obtain management and employee commitment, failure to obtain to sufficient resources to accomplish tasks, under-estimation of time requirement, failure to manage, poor communication, arbitrarily selecting planning team members, not educating the planning team members to the strategic planning process, putting the plan on the shelf and keeping it there, reluctance to revise the strategic plan, resistance to change, and keeping the strategy secrete.

Mbua (2002:83) also argued that the failure to implement plans can result from variety of ncauses. These includes: shortage of financial resources, unanticipated bottlenecks in teacher supply or facilities, unforeseen imbalances between the flow of students and the educational capacity at different levels, and lack of political commitment will to implement the plan.

Byrson (1995) and Roering cited in Vinzant J. and Vinzant D.(1996) suggested that a government unit, wishing to implement a strategic planning process, should have the following in place prior to attempt implementation: i) a powerful process sponsor; ii) an effective process champion; iii) a strategies team; iv) an expectation of disruptions and delays; v) a willingness to be flexible concerning what constitutes a strategic plan; vi) an ability to think junctures a key temporal metric; and vii) a willingness to construct and consider arguments geared to many different criteria.

Therefore, we can conclude that, lack of commitment, shortage of resources, pressure of external environment, capacity to implement the given tasks and absence of monitoring and evaluation systems are commonly identified as reasons for the failure of the implementation of the strategic plan.

* 1. **Meaningful Participation and Planners’ Knowledge and Experiences**

Among the various issues requiring higher attention and which are believed to enhance the effectiveness of strategic plan preparation and implementation , creating conducive environment to the different stakeholders take part in the process, and the strategic plan to be prepared by professionals with special skills and their experiences have strong bearing on the quality of strategic plans (Bharadwaj & Balchandran, 1988). By participation, we mean that, the lower level implementers could effectively incorporate their needs in the plan and commit them for its successful implementation. Parkinson,et al.(1984:46) expressed the importance of participation in the strategic planning practices 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 devices the benefit of their combined knowledge, experience and skill. Unnecessary conflict is avoided and the task is performed with maximum efficiency*.

From this, one can logically understand that participatory planning can be performed with fewer resources but maximum efficiency since it creates democratic environment and we naturally like democratic situations. In short, the planning system comes to life when members of the group be come involved in the strategic planning process (Cunningham 1982). More convincingly, Cunningham (1982) proven that participatory planning process encourages managers to consult their subordinates and potential stakeholders which result in effective strategic planning and decision making process. He has stated the findings of his study as follows:

*--- administrators who consult their subordinates during the planning process receive the highest ratings for being helpful, letting people who know where they 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**

**3. 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 here under.

**3.1 Method of the Study**

This study was 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 according to Keeves (1990), 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 Variables of the study**

The major variables that studied here is that, the extent of how the strategic plan is built on a systematic analysis of the region’s existing structure, governance, staff, programs or service mix, collaborations, effectiveness, resources ( financial , human, technical and material)

**3.2 Source of Data**

The major data sources of the study were of primary and secondary in nature. The primary data was be collected from regional educational planning experts, planning department officials of South Wollo, East Gojjam, South Gondr and Oromiya zones , Woreda Education expertise and planners, principals , and head departments 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 Data Collection Tools**

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

**3.3.1 Questionnaire**

1. **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 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 will be prepared for Principals and department heads respondents so as to collect data regarding their activity to implement the strategic plan.

**3.3.2 Interview**

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

**3.3.3 Document Review**

Necessary documents 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.

**3.4 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 was personally conduct 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.

**3.5 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

There are eleven zones in Amhara Regional state. This researcher has clustered these eleven zones in four groups based on their culture, socio economic background and 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 (30%) Woredas are selected by using 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, Esite and Debretabor 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, one vice heads of education bureau, 2 plan experts and 4 process owners and performers are selected from Region using purposive sampling method, one vice head of Zone education department, 4 process owners, 2 plan experts from each Zones education departments will included in the study by using availability sampling. This is because they are the one with better knowledge as compared with those people who are found in that institution. Thus, from four zones 16 process owners and 8 plan expertise will be selected; 5 process owners and performers, 2 planning and information system experts from each woreda education offices are selected by using simple random sampling technique and finally from 12 secondary schools: 24 principals, 96 head departments (8 department heads from one school) were selected as respondents by using quota sampling technique.

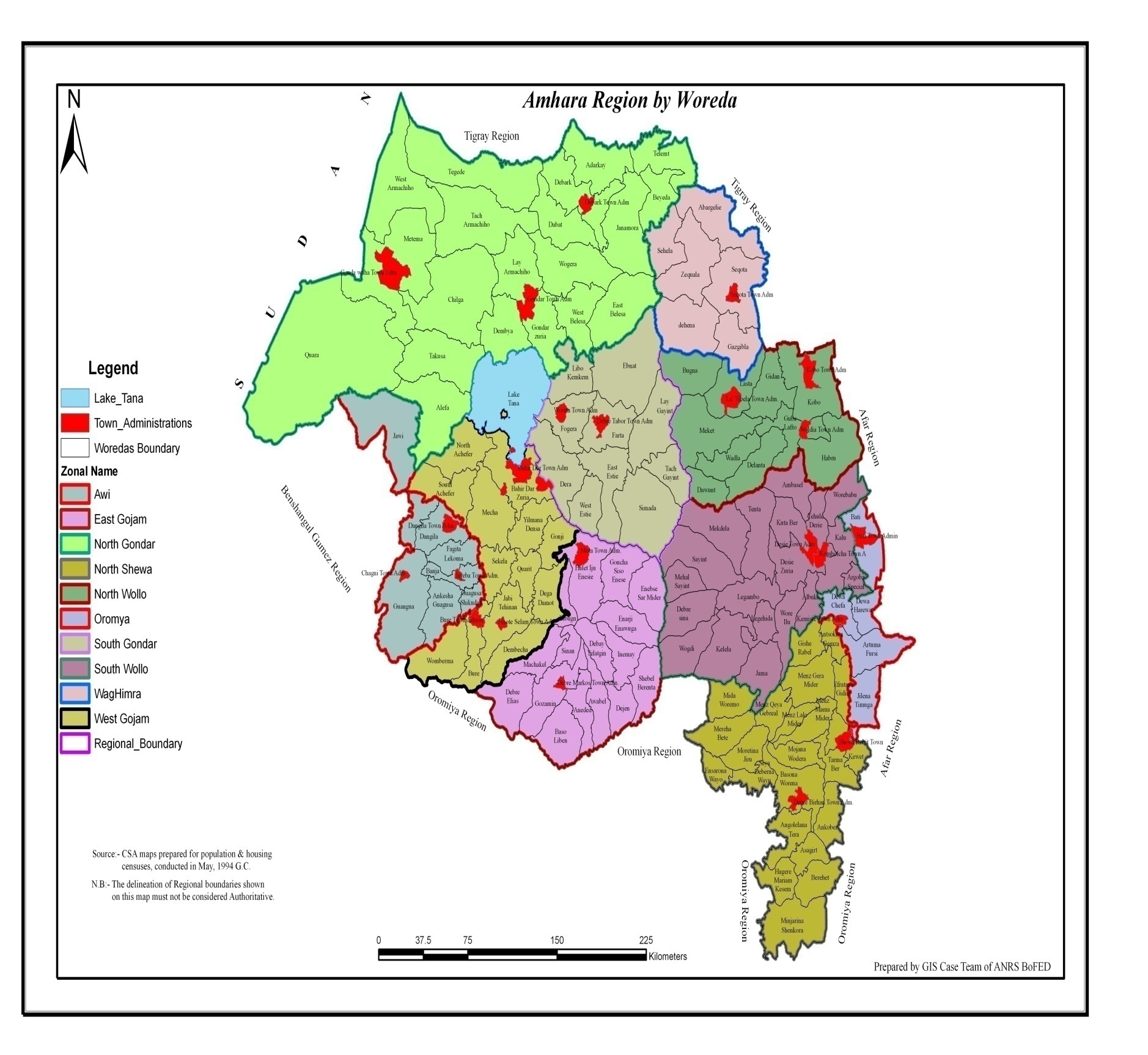


Figure 1: Map of Amhara Regional state by of Zones and Woredas

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter mainly converts two major parts. The first section deals with the characteristics of the respondents; while the second part deals on 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 Vice 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, 204 copies (120 for Principals and department heads, and 84 for Zone and Woreda educational planers, experts and performers) of questionnaires were developed and distributed to the target respondents.

However, all the distributed questionnaires were fully filled and returned to the researcher with unreserved efforts made by the researcher.

As can be seen from Table 2, among the total respondents included in the study 195 (95.59%) and 9(4.41%) 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 2: Classification of the Respondents

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Items | | Respondents | | | | | | | | | |
| RZhigher officials | | Office Respondents (ZW planers,experts) | | Principals | | Department heads | | | |
| No | % | No | % | No | % | | No | % |
| 1 | Sex | Male | 11 | 100 | 79 | 92.85 | 23 | 85.83 | | 94 | 97.92 |
| Female | - | - | 6 | 7.15 | 1 | 4.17 | | 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%) of female respondents in the lower work forces/ Department heads and 1(4.17%) of principals, 6 (7.15%) in the middle levels (ZW planners, work process implementers and experts), and where 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.

However, lack of meaningful participation of females in various decision making positions is not a surprise in countries like Ethiopia were there has been male dominating culture, and where educational opportunities have relatively 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 Ethiopia 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% of the higher officials and planning experts were found in the age limit of 40 and above years, while 1(9.09%), and 2 (18.18%) 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%) of the principals, 42 (43.75%) of department heads and 21 (25%) of ZW planners and experts were in the age limit of 31-35 years. And 12 (50%) of the principals, 15(15.62%) of department heads and 19(22.60%) of ZW 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 2 revealed the educational qualification of respondents. Thus, 6 (7.15%) of higher officials of ZW and plan experts, 5(20.83%) secondary school principals and 4(4.17%) department heads were second degree (MA/MSc/MEd) holders, 76 (79.76%) of ZW planers, process owners and experts, 19(79.17%) secondary school principals and 86 (89.58%) of department heads were first degree (BA/BSc/BEd) holders.

More over 11 (13.09%) of ZED and WEO educational planners and experts and 6(6.25%) 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. This has an implication that a further educational opportunity after first degree has been minimal.

Besides, as shown in Table 2, the respondents were asked about their field of specialization. The data shows that 68 (80.95%) 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%) 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. Further more, it was indicated that, all school principals did not study in either educational administration or pedagogical science or curriculum. They were rather studied fields like Geography, physics, Biology, Mathematics, English Chemistry, Amharic, History, Physical Education and Sports and etc. These data indicated that, educational planners and experts in the zones and woredas and principals in the schools did not study related field related to the current position they held. This may not 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 2 items 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%), 8(9.52%), 26(30.95%) 19(22.62%) of the ZED and WEO officials, planners, experts and processors were in the service boundary 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 and above 20 years respectively. From this, it can be inferred that the largest proportion fall in the comparatively, highest years of services. Similarly 15(62.45%) principals and 69(71.87%) of head departments were in the range of 11-20 years and above 20 years of services, while 9(37.55%) principals and 27(28.13%) 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 education strategic plans.

As far as the respondents’ experience on their current positions 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.

Accordingly, as to be the data in the Table 3, --(%) of higher officials included in the study were from ------------- field of specialization with no trainings given on educational planning and management. Similarly, ---- (%), ------ (%),, and -----(%) of these higher officials have specialized in ------, ----------- and ----------- of fields of studies with no trainings given on strategic planning and managing education.

But, differently, there were – (%) that have specialized in education serving as regional education bureau vice heads and Zone education Department Heads; not in planning and managing education. Thus, it can be felt that the right persons were not put on the right positions. In other words, particularly, individuals who were in planning and programming office were far-off to the planning activities that they were regularly carrying out. Hence the researcher, believed that the organization of top level management of the sample zones and Woredas in the region, particularly, offices carrying out educational strategic planning activities need further capacity building either by putting the right persons on the right positions or by giving relevant and adequate trainings on strategic planning and managing education to the available personnel if needed to plan effectively and efficiently.

**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 pr-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 decided to be used for interpretation as 0.05-1.49 very poor, 1.5- 2.49 poor, 2.5-3.49 medium, 3.5-4.49 good and above 4.49 very good. Additionally, the main value for every item was interpreted using the median dividing line at 3.0. Thus, mean score below 3.0 were taken as weakness /or threats; while above 3.0 were interpreted as opportunities / strengths.

**4.2.1.1 Meaningful Participation of Stakeholders**

In order to ensure effective and efficient strategic planning practices, the parties that are basically affected by a particular development project/plan should be involved in the strategic planning activities in as much as possible, partly to ensure that detained information on social conditions and needs is obtained; and partly to encourage a sense of involvement in, and commitment to the strategic plan by the people.

Major importantly, meaningful participation of the concerned stakeholders in the strategic planning enables the planning processes to focus on the commonly felt needs of the stakeholders through group involvement, and facilities smooth strategic plan implementation with fewer resources but maximum efficiency.

Thus, under this section, discussion regarding the trend of meaningful involvement of potential stakeholders in the practice of preparing and implementing educational strategic planning, by attaching the literary works of various scholars and studies made before in similar area were made as follows.

As can be observed from table 3, all items except item 2, were rated as poor and very poor. In item 1 above, 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 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 more willing for its successful accomplishment (Lewis; et al. 1995).

Despite of 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 have not taken 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.

Table 3: 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 |  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |  |
| f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f |
| a | 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 |
| b | Principals & departments are committed to effective strategic planning | 13 | 23 | 31 | 15 | 2 | 3.36 | 21 | 19 | 41 | 20 | 19 | 3.03 | 2.007 |
| c | your feedbacks are taken for improvement | 1 | 5 | 9 | 38 | 31 | 1.86 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 17 | 93 | 1.35 | 4.384 |
| d | 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 |
| e | 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 |
| f | 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 |

*Df =202 P value =0.05 T-table value=1.960*

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 describes fair /medium agreements to the items. Thus, although commitment is a vital element in order to execute the strategic plans as effectively as possible, AR 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 some one invited to comment on some thing 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 3 item 5, 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 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 of 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 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 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 3 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 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 4), 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 (Table 4).

Table 4: Ratings on Planners’ Knowledge and/or Experiences

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | **Items** | Respondents | Rating Scale | | | | | | | | | | *X2* |
| 5 | | 4 | | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| 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 | 10.909 |
| 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=12) | 10 | 8.3 | 28 | 23.3 | 23 | 19.2 | 37 | 30.8 | 22 | 18.3 |

*Df=4 P value =0.05 x2 table value=9.49*

In table 4 of item1, the chi-square test (x2) is applied to test the significance of respondents’ response regarding availability of qualified personnel in the strategic planning team. The chi square (x2) result is 12.152 which are greater than the table value at 0.05 levels (X2cv=9.49). The difference of the response among each options of the variable (item) is significant. Therefore the response regarding the issue is accepted. Accordingly, 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 were respond as very poor and poor respectively. How ever, it is believed that strategic plans can function so successfully if prepared by planners who have relevant and adequate planning knowledge.

As can be seen from table 4 item2, 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. Therefore, the statement ‘availability of continuous trainings for strategic planners is not accepted. According to the analysis result, 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 agreed also as very poor and medium respectively.

In table 4 item 3, the calculated value (*x*2) of the respondents is 5.048, which is less than the table value at alpha 0.05 level (*X*2cv= 9.49). The difference of the responses among each option of the variables is not significant. Therefore, the respondents’ response regarding the adequate years of experience of strategic planners is rejected. In other words, the adequacy years of planners experiences in the strategic planning team as poor by 33(39.3 percent) of office and 51(42.5 percent) of school respondents. Not only this (lack planning experience), they are not also seen while trying to share planning experiences with other regions, zones and woredas.

However, most literatures repeatedly suggests that strategic plans which are practiced by experienced planners in relevant areas could result better out comes than strategic plans prepared by non-professionals practitioners with less or no strategic planning experiences. Moreover, experience is a school by it self where individuals can accumulate good amount and kind of operating skills.

In item 4, the calculated chi –square value (*X2*) 11.145, which is greater the table value (*X2*cv=9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. So the difference of responses among the respondents is significant. Therefore, the responses regarding ‘the degree to which planners are sent for further upgrading in educational plans’ are accepted. Consequently, the majority 32(38.1 percent) office and 37(30.8 percent) school respondents confirmed as poor.

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 out comes if prepared by professional planners with special skills.

In table 4 item 5, the calculated chi-square value (*X2*) is 10.909, which is greater than the table value (*X2*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.

**4.2.1.3 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 5 revealed the data obtained from various responsibilities.

In table 5 of item 1, regarding the availability of qualified manpower resource, Chi-square test (*X2*) was applied to test the significance difference of the variables. Since the calculated chi-square value (*X2*) is 17.899, which is greater than the table value (*X2*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. Accordingly, 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. 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.

**Table 5: Responses on the adequacy and utilization of Resources**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | **Items** | Respondents | Rating Scale | | | | | | | | | | *X2* |
| 5 | | 4 | | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| 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 capacity building training for the existing man power | 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 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 4.64 |
| 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 | 8.981 |
| 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 | 9.700 |
| 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 |

*Df=4 P value =0.05 x2 table value=9.49*

In item 2 of the above table, in order to test the significance difference among the responses of the respondents’ chi-square test (*X2*) is applied. The calculated chi- square test (*X2*) is 7.23, which is less than the critical value (*X2*cv =9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels, there is no significant difference between the responses of the respondents. Therefore, the response regarding ‘effective planning team in zone and/or woreda level’ is rejected. Accordingly, 29 (34.5percent) of office and 39(32.5 percent) of school respondents, revealed that, there is no effective planning team or poor. On the contrary, 27(32.1 percent) and 24(20 percent) of office and school respondents respectively proved that the availability of effective planning team is medium. Thus from the above findings, one can deduce that the opinions of office and school respondents are the same 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.

In table 5 of item 8, in order to test the significance 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 (*X2*) was applied .The calculated chi-square value (*X2*) is 1.27, which is less than the critical value (*X2*cv= 9.49), there is no a significant statistical difference between the opinions of the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding the availability of adequate amount of budget to implement the strategies are rejected. On the other hand, 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. 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.

In table 5 of item 7, regarding the effective utilization of resources, the chi-square test value (*X2*) is 5.99, which is less than the critical value (*X2*cv=9.49), there is no significant statistical difference between the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding ‘effective utilization of available resources’ is rejected. Accordingly, 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. 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 5 items 6, it is shown that, the calculated chi-square test value (*X2*) is 19.59, which is greater than the critical value (*X2*cv=9.49), there is a statistical significance difference between the opinions of the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding ‘the extent to which budgets were approved based on the strategies of the plans’ is accepted. Accordingly, 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. 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 5 of item 5, regarding the availability of necessary material resources, chi-square test was applied. The calculated chi-square value (*X2*) is 8.98, which is less than the critical value (*X2*cv=9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. Hence, there is no a statistical significant difference between the opinions of the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding ‘the availability of necessary resources’ are rejected. 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.

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

Item 4,with regarding the allocated budget was released exactly on time, the calculated chi-square test value (*X2*) is 13.45, which is greater than the critical value(*X2*cv=9.49) at alpha 0.05 levels. Hence, there is a statistical significance difference between the responses of the respondents. Therefore, the responses regarding to ‘the on time of releasing allocated budget’ is accepted. Additionally, 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.

**4.2.1.4 Competence and commitment of ZED and WED 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 competence 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 6: Responses on the competence and commitment of RZW heads

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | **Items** | Respondents | Rating Rate | | | | | | | | | | *X2* |
| 5 | | 4 | | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| a | 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 |
| b | 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 | 34.2 | 26 | 21.7 |
| c | 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 |
| e | 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=12) | 8 | 6.7 | 17 | 14.2 | 32 | 26.7 | 37 | 30.8 | 26 | 21.7 |
| f | 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 |
| g | 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 |
| h | 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 |
| i | 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 |

*Df=4 P value =0.05 x2 table value=9.49*

As shown in the table 7 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 is poor. Since chi-square value (X2 =4.959, which does not exceed the critical value X2cv = 9.49), there is no a statistical difference between the opinions of the two group respondents.

In table 7 item2, 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 (X2=5.821, X2cv = 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 environment 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 (X2=9.028, X2cv = 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 7 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 (X2=7.052, X2cv= 9.49), there is no statistical significant difference. 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 (X2=6.569, X2cv= 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, chi-square test was applied. The calculate chi-square value does not exceed the critical value (X2 =2.90,X2cv= 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. On the other hand, 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. 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 (X2 =6.929, X2cv= 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 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 (X2 =3.383) is not greater than the critical value (X2cv= 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

**4.3 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 in to 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 6 . 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 8, 4(57.14%) items 1, 2, 3, and 5 were found in the between the mean values of 1.5 -2.49 which would best describe low (less) agreement to the items. Specifically, as the mean scores in Table 8 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.

Table 6: Responses on Plan and Monitoring

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Items | Rating scales | | | | | |
| Office Res. (Planners, process owners & Expert) = 84 | | | | | |
|  | **Plan Monitoring and Evaluation** | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Mean  () |
| f | f | f | f | f |
| 1 | The extent to which timely monitoring and evaluation of educational strategic plans carried out | 1 | 8 | 7 | 51 | 17 | 1.92 |
| 2 | The degree to which the result of monitoring and evaluation be used to take corrective measure | 2 | 11 | 16 | 37 | 18 | 2.05 |
| 3 | The extent to which monitoring and evaluation carried out by external evaluators | - | 4 | 13 | 45 | 22 | 1.98 |
| 4 | The degree to which monitoring and evaluation carried out by internal evaluators | 17 | 25 | 23 | 11 | 8 | 3.38 |
| 5 | The extent to which 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 |

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.

Worse than these, 1(14.28 percent) 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, 1(14.28 percent) 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.

**4.4 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 7, 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 7 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 AR. 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 AR with weighted mean values of 4.50 and 4.54 by office and 4.52 and 4.67 by school respondents respectively

Table 7: 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 |  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |  |
| f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f | f |
| 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 |

*Df =202 P value =0.05 T-table value=1.960*

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 AR 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 AR.

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. But, when parities those are to be affected by the strategic plan get involved in its process, they consider it as their own business and work harder for its successful accomplishment (Cunningham; 1982).

Moreover, as planning naturally refers to the future and future is dynamic, over-reliance on the past experiences could often affect the education sector negatively. To sum up, although these elements need to be put the best level for successful strategic planning practices, AR seems to have been seriously challenged by these difficulties.

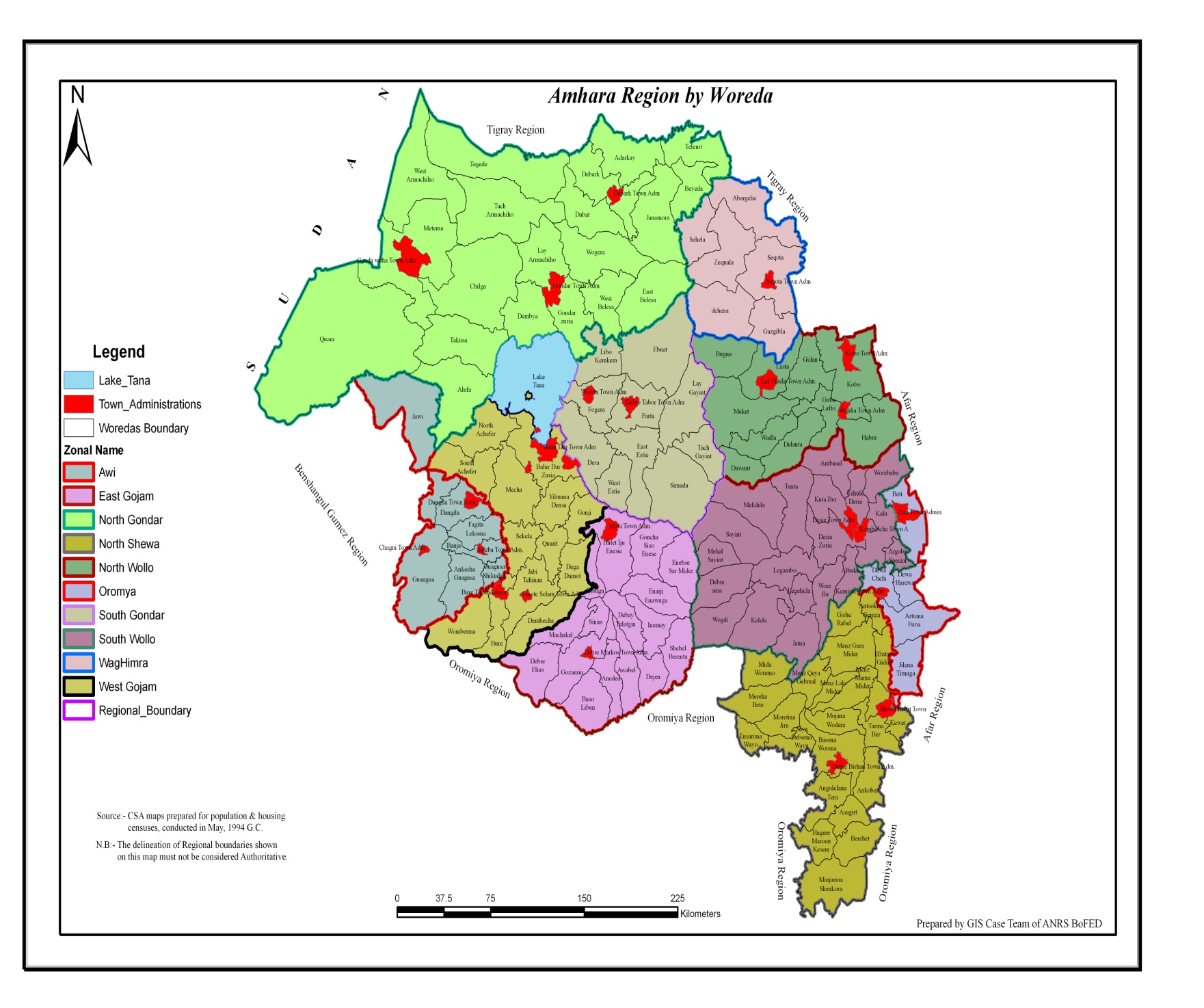
On top of this, failure to set meaning full and verifiable targets, lack of clear lines of delegation, inadequate knowledge and/or experience of the plan actors, failure to obtain sufficient resources to accomplish the tasks, and lack of clear lines of authority which makes decision making difficult 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 AR.

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 AR have been confronted with as many problems as discussed above however their degrees vary.



**CHAPTER FIVE**

**5. SUMMERY, 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 Amhara Region with the following five basic research questions in mind.

* What is the involvement of stakeholders in the current practices of strategic plan preparation and implementation in Amhara region?
* Have monitoring and evaluation systems been instituted for tracking implementation progress, to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses and for making corrections?
* Does Amhara region have adequate resources to effectively implement its strategic plans?
* How the WEO and ZED heads are devoted in implementing the strategic plans?
* What are the major challenges encountered while implementing the strategic plan in the region?

The study was carried out in Amhara region, of which four Zones with their respective woredas were selected. Thus, the zones were purposively chosen, where as the woredas and schools were included in the study based on availability of sampling techniques. --------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

As data gathering tools, questionnaires, interview, and document inspections were employed. The total number of sample respondents was 215. In specific term, there were 24 principals, 120 department heads, 48 woreda, 16 zone, and 4 regional educational Planers and experts included in the study. From among these target respondents, heads and vice heads of region education bureau and zone departments involved in the interview, while the later group responded to the questionnaires.

**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 four basic categories as presented here under:

1. **Pre-conditions for Effective strategic planning practices**

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 thoroughly treated in the study. Accordingly, the study showed that degree of stakeholders’ involvement in preparing and implementing educational strategic planning practices was poor with average mean values of -------.