

Key failures of the strategy

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Failure type 1: “Fluff”

Strategy language without strategic content

- Overuse of impressive words: excellence, innovation, modernisation, inclusion, transformation
- Example: “The education system will become inclusive, innovative and future-oriented.”

Words that do not tell us much about problems, roots causes, priorities, responsible actors or planned changes

Diagnostic question

- Can we translate this statement into concrete decisions and actions?

Failure type 2: Goals mistaken for strategy

Ambition is not strategy

- A common weakness: list goals instead of explaining how change will happen.

Example

- “Improve learning outcomes.”
“Reduce early school leaving.”

A strategy needs to explain:

- why learning outcomes are weak,
- which bottlenecks matter most,
- what approach will be used,
- how actions will reinforce one another.

Diagnostic question

- Does the document explain how the goal will be achieved, or only state the goal?

Failure type 3: No real diagnosis

Some strategies jump too quickly to solutions, e.g. introduce dual VET, digitalise schools, reform curricula, create excellence centres,

Before understanding a real nature and causes of problem:

Example: “We will introduce a dual VET model.” but the real problem may be that **employers do not trust schools, companies lack training capacity, teachers have weak industry experience.**

Diagnostic question

- What problem is this solution supposed to solve?

Failure type 4: Everything is a priority

No choice, no strategy

- Education strategies often include every important issue: early childhood education, general education, VET etc.

A strategy that prioritises everything does not guide decisions when resources are limited.

Example: lack of ranking, sequencing or budget concentration in the strategy

Diagnostic question

- What will receive more attention, money and political effort than the rest?

Failure type 5: Incoherent actions

Policy coherence: actions do not reinforce each other

Example:

- New competence-based curriculum, but teachers are not trained, not supported by guidance materials, assessment approach not adjusted etc.
- digital learning platforms, but teachers are not prepared, lack of quality check for materials, insufficient investment in infrastructure and equipment etc.

Diagnostic question

- Do the actions form a package, or are they separate projects?

Good strategy creates a reinforcing chain. Bad strategy creates a list.

Failure type 6: Paper strategy

Formal strategy versus real strategy

- Some strategies exist mainly as documents. They may be well-written but disconnected from real implementation.

Signs of a paper strategy:

- no budget attached,
- no responsible institutions,
- no implementation timetable,
- no monitoring system,
- no link to annual planning,
- no political ownership,
- no feedback loop.

Diagnostic question

- Could this strategy be implemented tomorrow? By whom? With what resources?

Failure type 7: Weak logic of change

Missing causal chain

- A strategy should explain why selected actions are expected to produce results.

Example: “We will provide laptops to schools to improve learning outcomes.”

- **But to improve learning, the strategy may also need:** teacher training, digital content, technical support, curriculum integration, student access at home, monitoring of use.
- **Without these, the action may not lead to the intended outcome.**

Diagnostic question

Why should this action produce the desired result?

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