

Organisational Structure and Personnel Management Practices in Public Universities in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between organisational structure and personnel management practices in Nigerian universities. The study was a correlational type using twelve federal and six state universities that were randomly selected for the study. Purposive random sampling technique was adopted to choose 1080 academic staff, 720 administrative staff and 1800 students that were involved in the management of the institutions as respondents to the instrument. A researcher-designed instrument, tagged “Organisational Structure and University Management Practices Questionnaire” (OSUMPQ) was used to collect data in the study. The instrument was validated at the face value by experts in the field of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation after which a pilot test was carried out to ascertain their reliability using split-half reliability test technique and 0.97 reliability co-efficient was obtained. One research question and two null hypotheses were generated to guide the study. Mean and percentage were used to answer the research question while Pearson product-moment correlational statistical analysis was used to test the hypotheses generated at 0.05 significance level. The results of data analysis showed, among others, that: the type of organisational structure that predominantly existed in Nigerian universities was organic with weighted mean percentage of 55.5 while mechanistic structure had a weighted mean percentage of 45.5. Furthermore, the results showed that organisational structure had significant relationship (0.492 and 0.789) with staff personnel management practices and students’ personnel management practices respectively. It was, therefore, recommended among others, that organisational structure in the Nigerian universities should be respected in the institutions’ management practices. Institutional managers should continue to encourage innovation and creativity, and should be more proactive in discharging their managerial responsibilities. Also, communication network should be widely opened between the management staff of Nigerian universities and other major stakeholders (Staff and students personnel) for effective management practices in the institutions.

Keywords: Organisations, Organisational structure, Staff Personnel, Students’ Personnel, Management Practice

1. Introduction

The Nigerian university system has witnessed several styles of restructuring and re-engineering in the last four decades. With only six universities in 1960’s, the number rose to 30 in the 1980’s and currently the number has risen to 129 including the Federal (40), State (39) and Private (50) owned universities. The high rate at which the privately owned universities sprang up compared to public-owned universities might not be unconnected with the liberalisation policy of the government. However, the goals of university education in Nigeria remain undoubtedly the same irrespective of proprietorship because the activities of both public and private universities are being regulated by the provisions of the National Policy on Education (NPE) through their supervisory body, the National Universities Commission (NUC).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) unequivocally states the goals of University Education thus;

(a) Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation (b) making professional course contents to reflect national requirements, (c) making all students as improvement in university education to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge and nationalism.

The implication of these stated goals, among others, is to ensure the execution of university’s basic primary assignment, which includes teaching, research and community-services. However, the current global trends politically and economically and the national call on university autonomy has further expanded the role of university education to enable them to be fully involved in the general transformation of the nation from developing stage to the stage of industrialisation. Therefore, a university could no longer be a centre for research and teaching alone but also a centre for public service in order to play a dynamic and vital role in national growth and development.

The effort to realise an organisation’s basic responsibilities necessitates the need for a formal structure which could be organic or mechanistic and provision of adequate resources in terms of human, material and time.

These resources are coordinated and controlled under the auspices of well trained and dynamic leaders. This could be described as the organisation's structure. Blunt (1985) elucidated that, "the structure of an organisation could be defined as the ways in which it chooses to divide its labour into separate work groups and how it coordinates their activities"(p.117). The structure of an organisation varies from simple organisation to complex ones. Thus, Hall (1999) identified three basic rationales for organisational structure, which include production of organisational output, regulating influence of individual variations and controlling the exercise of powers. For an organisation such as the university to achieve synergy for success, as noted by Misshauk (1979), it would require the manager's ability to coordinate and integrate its manpower and other resources.

The organisational structure in the Nigerian universities could then be described as being complex due to their fragmentation pattern in arrangement, hierarchy in structure, participatory in decision-making, centralisation of authority and high level of formalisation. The complex nature of the structure currently in operation in most of the Nigerian universities paves the way for different crises such as funding, admission and crisis of staff and students management practices.

However, the ability of the management team in the universities to achieve desired results (personal and organisational) depends largely on the managerial skills, attitudes and styles adopted for the day-to-day administration of the system. The Nigerian universities have witnessed various management styles depending on who is the Chief Executive; but the general features or characteristics of the universities in the area of management include participatory decision-making through the use of committee system, decentralised system through functional and spatial distribution of power and responsibilities, formalisation and documentation of matters, and a host of others. Paradoxically, the institution heads are expected to maximally achieve the goals of the institution. Hence, the need to investigate how organisational structure would affect staff and students personnel management practices in Nigerian universities.

2. Conceptual Framework

An organisation begin with a minimum of two people that is, micro organisation and a maximum of any number higher than two, which could be referred to as macro organisation. An organisation fosters interdependent and interrelated relationships and interactions among its members and within the environment. The main focus of any organisation be it micro or macro, formal or informal, mechanical or organic, bureaucratic or nonbureaucratic is to collectively realise its purpose of existence or establishment which could not be achieved at an individual level.

Rawlins (1992) remarked that organisations are necessary elements of life that enable us accomplish things that one could not do as well or at all as individuals. Organisations have three elements which include; organisational members, organisational goals and organisational structure. These three elements shall metamorphose to optimal effectiveness of the organisation through effective coordination and control of human and material resources within its purview.

Organisations have five critical features, according to Miller (1995). These include: two or more people with social collectivities, goals pursued by the people(s) in a structural pattern, coordination of activities of the members, definition of relationships through an organogram and environmental influence on the organisations with emphasis on culture and technology.

The efficacy of the coordination and control among organisational members in any formal setting such as the Nigerian university necessitates the rationale for a formal structural arrangement through which the goals and activities of the individuals as well as those of the organisation could be scientifically harmonised, monitored and evaluated. This could be referred to as organisational structure. Organisations, could either be mechanistic or organic in its structure according to Robbins & Coulter (1999). The mechanistic structure organisation is rigid and tightly controlled; while the organic structure organisation is highly adaptive and flexible. While the former is prone to unproductive system, the latter is proactive and thus paves the way for productivity of goods and effective service delivery.

Organisations could be formal or informal, simple or complex, minifaceted or multifaceted but the underlying factors include specification and designation of members' activities, clearly stated goals and effective coordination and control without which confusion, conflict or ineffectiveness would be manifested. This implies the necessity for an organisation to lay a solid structure for its practices.

Miller (1999), while expantiating on Fayol's principles of management, grouped these principles into four as: principles of organisational structure, principles of power, principles of reward and principles of attitude. There are six principles of organisational structure, according to Miller, which include scalar chain, unity of command, unity of division, division of labour, order and span of control. In structuring an organisation, there are six key elements that should be considered. These are specialisation, departmentalisation, chain of command, span of control, centralisation and decentralisation, and formalisation (Robins & Coutler, 1999).

A cursory look into a typical Nigerian university as an organisation shows that it could be described as an organisation that is highly structured with predetermined goals and objectives coupled with hierarchical

supervision of tasks guided by defined rules and regulations, controlled and coordinated under the auspices of qualified personnel in order to enhance optimal staff and students personnel management practices. Thus, the Nigerian university could be perceived as a complex social organisation.

Mintzberg (1979) identified five conventional ways of coordinating and controlling an organisation such as a university. These are: mutual adjustment, direct supervision, standardisation of work processes, standardisation of the products and above all, standardisation of skills. The realisation of these conventional practices of coordination and control necessitates the need for administrative and management structure. It is worthy of note that, there are structural determinants in the organisation as a social system. These determinants could be broadly categorised into two: the context and the design. The contextual factors include organisational size, technology, internal and cultural factors. The organisational design factors are strategic choice and institutional models adopted in managing the day-to-day activities of the university system. Therefore, the managers of universities, as organisations, should be proactive and highly dynamic in handling administrative or managerial issues by perceiving matters from different angles and adopting different approaches in decision taking or policy making. Generally, service-provider institutions such as the university has flair for bureaucracy because of the need for strict compliance with rules, division of labour and hierarchical supervision of tasks, which are the indexes of Webers' theory (Miller, 1999; Minner, 1982).

The Nigerian universities could then be hypothetically adjudged as an organisation that is bureaucratic in its structure and management. In fact, the institutions are pervaded with such bureaucratic features as: clear division of labour, hierarchy of authority, policies and procedures, impersonal orientation, career orientation, and documentation and formalization which are reflected in staff and students personnel management practices. The statutes, laws or edicts that established the Nigerian universities clearly state the principles guiding the management of each institution. Generally, the management team could be grouped into three; The Council, The Senate and The Administration or University Management Committee (constituted by the Institution's Principal Officers). These three exclude "the offices of the Visitor and Chancellor whose powers are limited to certain special circumstances and are not involved in the normal functioning or operations of the university" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001, p.2).

The prominent actors in the management of the university in its day-to-day activities include: The Pro-Chancellor (The Council Chairman), The Chief Executive Officer/ Vice Chancellor (The Senate Chairman), The Deputy Vice Chancellors, The Registrar, The Bursar, The Librarian, The Director of Physical Planning and Development, The Director of Academic Planning and Control, The Provost(s) of College(s), The Deans of Faculties, and The Heads of Department. (FRN, 2001).

The university has various cultures which include academic culture, managerial culture, social culture, and by that, committee system is adopted in carrying out virtually all the responsibilities in the system either at the Council, Senate, College, Faculty or Departmental/Unit levels. This brings about dynamism and flexibility in management which could further enhance the management strategies of the system in order to accommodate changes and innovations that characterised global economy in the World today.

The university as an organisation has fundamental roles and functions, which include teaching, research and community service as service provider, manpower builder, and a host of others. These could be referred to as fundamental managerial functions according to Aghenta (1998) who stated six managerial functions practices that could be described as the heart of modern management and key players in the management of organisations. These functions are planning, organising, staffing, leading, coordinating and evaluating.

Ogawa (2002) observed that, the new organisation structure makes the Japanese universities to be more flexible and more receptive for further reformations and concluded that, the loosely couple structure of Japanese universities would enhance the creation and standardisation of university culture. Nigerian universities may eventually adopt the couple structure in their bid to become world class institutions.

3. Personnel Management (PM) in Nigerian Universities:

Personnel Management is an integral part of the entire management of an organisation which deals with the most vibrant asset of the institution. The hallmark of PM in any organisation, especially the university system is to retain, attract, reward and develop a team of highly motivated workforce, capable and willingly ready to contribute meaningfully to the attainment of institutional and national educational objectives (Odiagbo, 2000).

Infact, PM is an aspect of management primarily concerned about the collectivity in the attainment of both the individual and organisational objectives (Adeoye, 2000). Personnel Management in educational institutions could be classified into two, Staff – PM and Students – PM. The staff – PM has seven sequential stages that could be described as employment life cycle' (Gabadeen, 2002). These stages are, (i) recruitment and selection, (i) appointment and placement, (iii) salaries and wages, (iv) training and development,(v) job evaluation and merit rating, (vi) motivation and discipline, and(vii) separation and compensation.

The students-PM is an important segment of PM just like that of staff – PM, especially at the university level because students are dynamic human beings who must react to their equally dynamic environment

(Durosaro, 1997). The students-PM has two dimensions as, quantitative dimension and qualitative dimension. The former focuses on issues such as admission, enrolment, graduation, classification of students, among others, while the latter focusing on guidance and counseling, health services, accommodation, transportation, information services, sporting activities and a host of others to cater for the psychological, physiological and sociological needs of the students.

The management of students and its importance in the university system necessitate the establishment of the office of Dean, Students Affairs directly in the Office of Vice Chancellor to relate with all stakeholders on matters related to the academic, physical and social well-being of the students, especially while on the campus of the institution. The students also take good care of their personal affairs through various faculty, departmental, religious and social associations under the umbrella of the Student Union (SU) coordinated by the Students Affairs Unit. Therefore, there is dire need to investigate the efficacy of organizational structure and personnel management practices in Nigerian Universities with the view to suggest ways for improvement.

4. The Problem

The Nigerian university, like any other public sector organisation in the country, is being confronted with various problems which include the management of the system through participatory decision-making, committee system and democratisation of all policies and decisions which often manifest in role conflict among focal persons. The university is also being confronted with the problems of sustainability, autonomy and accountability in the face of contemporary challenges as technological and managerial sophistication at micro and macro levels of the global economy. Hence, the need for dynamic and positive response to the environmental needs and challenges. The study then sought to provide answers to the research question and hypotheses.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research design:

The research design for the study is a correlational type, carried out ex-post facto. The sample for the study was drawn from 12 federal and 6 state universities using simple random sampling technique while purposive sampling technique was used to select 3,600 respondents among the staff and students of the Nigeria universities. A researcher-designed instrument tagged "Organisational Structure and University Management Practices Questionnaire" (OSUMPQ) was used to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument was divided into four sections, Section A on demographic data, Section B on organisational structure, Section C on staff personnel management practices and Section D on Students Personnel Management Practices. 4, 15, 10 & 10 items in each section respectively. The instrument was validated at face value. It has reliability co-efficient of 0.97, using Split-half reliability technique. The data gathered were analyzed using means and percentage for the research question and Pearson Product Moment Correlation technique to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

5.2 Research question:

1. What type of organisational structure predominantly exists in the Nigerian Universities?

5.3 Research hypotheses:

Ho1 There is no significant relationship between organisational structure and staff personnel management practices in Nigerian universities.

Ho2 There is no significant relationship between organisational structure and students personnel management practices in Nigerian universities.

5.4 Analysis and Discussion of Results:

RQ1. What type of organisational structure predominantly exists in Nigerian Universities?

This research question was answered through item analysis of data collected on organisational structure in vogue in the universities, using Organisational Structure and University Management Practices Questionnaire (OSUMPQ) The instrument has 15 items which were categorised into two, based on features of organisational structure mechanistic structure and organic structure. The percentages of weighted mean scores of respondents on type of structures in Nigerian universities are as shown in Tables 1-3.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of weighted mean scores of Mechanistic structure in Nigerian Universities

Items	Mean Scores			
	Fed.	States	Conv.	Specialised
	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.
1. The university is highly structured and hierachical in its line of authority.	3.42	3.49	3.51	3.32
2. Obedience to the rule of laws. among members.	3.09	3.15	3.15	3.03
3. Centralisation of powers.	2.53	2.72	2.62	2.54
4. Encouraging limited Span of control.	2.69	2.69	2.73	2.60
5. Allowing subordinate staff to receive directives from single senior officer.	2.29	2.32	2.36	2.17
6. Definition of proper channel of communication flow within the system.	2.94	2.99	3.02	2.84
7. Complexity for effective management.	2.03	2.01	2.08	1.92
Total Mean =	18.99	19.37	19.47	18.42
Weighted Mean =	2.71	2.77	2.78	2.63

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Weighted Mean Scores of Organic Structure in Nigerian Universities.

Items	Mean Scores			
	Fed.	States	Conv.	Specialised
	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.
1. Division of labour among the senior and subordinate staff.	3.47	3.38	3.54	3.25
2. Effective coordination and control of organisational activities.	3.24	3.12	3.24	3.13
3. Decentralisation of power between top and middle level management	2.81	2.75	2.87	2.62
4. Accommodating changes and innovations in the area of management practices.	2.74	2.69	2.82	2.52
5. Enhancing creativity in discharging responsibilities	3.15	3.15	2.91	2.75
6. Allowing collaborative efforts within the system	2.88	2.81	2.91	2.75
7. Allowing participatory decision – making process on all matters of common interest	2.97	2.83	2.97	2.84
8. Promotion of job standardisation for optimal organisational functioning	2.84	2.86	2.93	2.69
Total Mean =	24.10	23.59	24.53	22.74
Weighted Mean =	3.01	2.95	3.07	2.84

Table 3: Type of Organisational Structure Predominant in Nigerian Universities.

Nigerian Universities		Weighted Mean Scores	
		Mechanistic	Organic
I. <u>University by Proprietorship</u>			
1.	Federal Owned Universities	24.9	25.4
2.	States owned universities	25.6	24.9
II. <u>University by Typology</u>			
1.	Conventional universities	25.7	25.9
2.	Specialised universities	24.3	23.9

As shown in Table 3, States owned universities were more mechanistically structured than federal owned universities; but conventional universities were more organically structured than specialised universities states universities that were adjudged has been mechanistic, demonstrated features such as high structural pattern and hierarchy of authority, obedience to the rule of laws and proper definition of channel of communication flow among members in their organisational structure and managerial practices. Furthermore, the conventional universities that were structured organically demonstrated features such as divisions of labour among senior and subordinate staff, creativity in discharging responsibilities and effective coordination and control of organisational activities.

This result could be attributed to high level of manpower (staff and students), magnitude of resources (human and materials) and unification of policies and procedures in favour of conventional universities compared with specialised universities. Perhaps lack of these factors in states universities compared with federal universities might be responsible for the state universities to be more mechanistic in structure to facilitate and promote effective utilisation of meagre resources than federal universities. Further analysis on the organisational structure predominantly existed in Nigerian universities indicated that 55.5% of the institutions were organically structured while 44.5% of them were mechanistically structured. However, decentralisation of power, which Robins and Coutler's (1999) established as one of the features of organic structure, was not revealed by the result of this study.

Ho₁ There is no significant relationship between organisational structure and staff personnel management practices in Nigerian universities.

The results of data analysis are as shown in Table 2

Table 4: Correlational Analysis of Organisational Structure (OST) and Staff Personnel Management Practices (SPMP).

Variable	Cases	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	Cal. r-value	Critical r-value	Decision
OST	3600	43.0389	6.4914	3599	.492	.062	Ho rejected
SPMP	3600	25.7361	6.6755				

Results, as shown in Table 4, indicate that the calculated r-value (.492) is higher than the critical r-value (.062) at .05 level of significance and for 3599 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between organisational structure and staff personnel management practices is rejected. The implication of this result with respect to the Nigerian universities is that, there is significant relationship between the organisational structures and staff personnel management practices in vogue in the Nigerian universities. This could not be unconnected with the formalisation and unification of procedures, which Adler and Borys (1996), established that formalised procedures coupled with strict compliance with rules of laws assisted people in accomplishing their work in institutions of learning. The result corroborates that of Glisson (1978) which showed high correlation between routinisation and formalisation in service delivery organisations, which are akin to the Nigerian universities. The hierarchical structure as being practiced in the institutions used in the study might be a contributive factor to their managerial practices, as Hall (1999) opined that, the very nature of organisation requires some form of hierarchy which will checkmate power differences in such organisation.

Ho₂ There is no significant relationship between organisational structure and students personnel management practices in Nigerian universities.

The data collected on organisational structure and students personnel management practices in the sampled universities were analysed and presented as shown in Table 3

Table 5: Correlational Analysis of Organisational Structure and Students' Personnel Management Practices (STPM)

Variable	Cases	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	Cal. r-value	Critical r-value	Decision
OST	3600	43.0389	6.4914	3599	.789	.062	Ho
STPM	3600	25.7176	6.4266				rejected

The result of data analysis, as shown in Table 5, indicates that the calculated r-value (.789) is higher than the critical r-value (.062) at .05 level of significance for 3599 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between organisational structure and students personnel management practices in Nigerian universities is hereby rejected. This finding shows a positive and high level of relationship (.789) between organisational structure and students' personnel management practices in the institutions. The result shows a remarkable improvement in organizational structure which promotes improved students' personnel management practices in the universities as a result of effective communication network as reported by Odetara in Taiwo (1997).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations:

Arising from the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Decentralisation of powers should be encouraged in Nigerian universities as it is a feature of organic structure more importantly it is a feature of organic structure which predominantly exists in the institutions'. Hence institutional managers should cultivate the habit of delegation of responsibilities which should be accomplished with necessary authorities and powers to enhance his/her performances in discharging the responsibilities.
2. Institutional managers should continue to encourage and promote innovative ideas and creativity in discharging responsibilities. Hence Management Information System (MIS) should be adopted in the management of the institutions especially in the core aspect of management practices (personnel, academics and finances).
3. The academic excellence, which is the hallmark of the university system, should be improved upon by computerising the students' academic records which will enhance prompt release of examination results and thus improving the students' academic performances' The use of scratch card for students to access their results on-line should be encouraged.
4. Communication network should be widely opened between the management of Nigerian universities and other stakeholders (staff, students, government agencies, non-governmental agencies and general community members) for effective management practices in the institutions.
5. The democratic culture of Nigerian universities in the governance and management of the institutions is essential. Therefore public accountability should be revived as part of the socio-economic and political values of Nigeria universities.

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