Problem of Organizational Structure of Typical Government Owned University in Nigeria

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This study looked at the problems associated with deriving effective and efficient advantages from organisational structure in government owned universities. A particular federal government owned university was studied critically. There was brief discussion of government owned university organogram which tries to expose some of the usefulness of organizational structure. Certain problems were identified and the causes of those problems were identified and discussed as well. It was suggested at the end that universities should as a matter of urgency commence the process of making the entire university community a small village, no matter the size, with the use of ICT.

KEYWORDS: Organisational structure, organisation, management, university, coordination, Communication.

INTRODUCTION

Organisational structure is the pictorial representation of an organisation showing the flow of communication and responsibilities among the personnel of the organisation. Usually, from the top level managers to the least personnel in the organisation. In the definition, it must be noted that the vital thing and/or the keywords are the flow of communication and responsibilities. Joan Lloyd in his work – Organisational structure can be underlying cause of “peoples' problem”- stated that organisational structure, much like a human skeletal structure, determines what shape an organisation will take. We do not spend much time thinking about our skeletal structure until something breaks, and so it goes with organisation.

Wikipedia defined organisational structure as how activities such as task allocation, co-ordination and supervision are directed towards the achievement of organisational aims. It can also be considered as the viewing glass or perspective through which individuals see their organisation and its environment.

Organisational structure allows the expressed allocation of responsibilities for different functions and processes to different entities such as the branch, department, workgroup and individual. Organisational structure affects organisational action in two big ways:

• First, it provides the foundation on which standard operating procedures and routines rest.
• Second, it determines which individuals get to participate in which decision-making processes, and thus to what extent their views shape the organisation's action.

When it is said that organisational structure otherwise known as organogram is the vessel for the flow of communication. What then is communication in an organisation? Communication is the process of changing raw data to information and allows such information to get to the user(s) of such information (Umoh, 2013). He went further to described data as raw, unevaluated facts, figures, symbols, object, event, etc. Data may also be a collection of facts lying in storage, like a telephone directory, names of students, score of students and so on. Information, according to him is data that have been put into a meaningful and useful context and communicated to a recipient who uses it to make decisions. Information involves the communication and reception of intelligence or knowledge.

Information appraises and notifies surprises and stimulated, reduces uncertainty; reveals additional alternatives or help eliminate irrelevant or poor ones and effluences individuals and stimulates them to action (Umoh, 2013). To process data to information, computer had made the processing function much easier than in the old centuries. As a result, large quantities of data can be processed quickly through aiding in the conversion of data to information. For instance, raw scores of students can be inputted into the Microsoft Excel to get information as the standing of the students during and after the

Nevertheless, the organisational structure of typical government owned university shows the flow of authority from the office of the Vice Chancellor through the University Registrar/Secretary to the Council down to the least subordinate within the school. The organisational structure is similar in nature to any standard organisation showing the flow of communication, responsibility and authority but the problem here identified from investigation is that the people within the organisation are not properly interacting as it is expected in the 21st century communication-wise.

This formed the basis of the further investigation into why the people within the system are not interacting and possibly proffer solution on how to make people within and outside the system to be interacting. By not interacting, the author is looking at why are information being hoard, why are information not getting to the recipient as at when due and worst still, why are files and cabinet still being used to keep/store data and information within the system. All these form of data and information transmitting are caused by a wide number of factors and problems which this study intend to look into.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS

So many problems were identified in the course of this investigation and some of them include the following

- Data/Information insecurity.
- Long access period/time for data/information retrieval.
- Unnecessary bottleneck.
- Loss of vital and necessary data/information.
- Delay in accomplishing task/responsibilities.
- Reduction in organisational performance.

Some of the causes of the problems include:

- Lack of political will to move with the pace of development.
- Insufficient fund to run the university.
- Sabotage/negative attitude of management/employees to change.
- Lack of financial resources to carry out such project.
- Insufficient ICT tools/expertise.
- Poor management attitude towards computer knowledge acquisition.
- Poor infrastructure.
- Poor research project finance.
- Politicizing of office of the Vice Chancellor/Non-

continuity with the Predecessor’s projects.
- Problem of bureaucracy.

For better understanding, it will be better to first dwell on the causes of the problems indentified in the investigation before looking at the problems created itself.

Lack of political Will

This is the situation in government institutions such that necessary impetus for the organisation to perform optimally will be denied the organisation mostly because of selfish reason(s). The people at the corridor of power might just feel that that is not necessary and/or important now. Onuoha, 2008 asserted that “political ability is the needs to deal with conflicting interest groups mean that Nigerian managers must sharpen their political skills”. Talking about political support is like putting a big ‘weight’ behind the proposal to comply with what the 21st century demand for in terms of IT compliance. Simply put, the backing and support of the board and council within the university to be IT compliance will go a long way in achieving such loadable project.

Insufficient funding of the University

Almost all Nigerian universities are not given adequate fund to get involved in most vital and elephant projects. Nigeria budget year in, year out did not give adequate fund to educational sector and the little budgeted would have been tampered with by the officials from the Ministry of Education before the remnant that remain would be shared among large numbers of tertiary schools within Nigeria excluding the private institutions. The peanut that would be given would not be enough to embark on any meaningful capital intensive project of the nature. Our rich men are not visible in this area at all, instead we hear of one of them going abroad to institute a chair in foreign university.

Sabotage/Negative attitude to change

Many of us are allergic to change, even though, change is very constant. The moment the news of a change into how we were doing things before comes, many of us will develop cold feet against embracing the change. We will not consider the positivism of such project as long as it is going to obstruct our old way of carrying out our task before. Again, many will just turn to a stumbling block against the success of the new invention, mostly, for no definite reason and upon it all, be jeopardizing all the efforts to ensure that the change takes place. This funny attitude is not peculiar to the subordinates/employees alone; it can also come from the management team.

Lack of Financial Resources

As mentioned earlier, the Federal and State government
budget allocation to educational sector is always below the international requirement of about 35 – 60 percent of the entire budget every year. Also, the tertiary institutions are restricted to raising fund internally, which is one of the reasons the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) is asking for the autonomy of the universities and government had turned the whole issue to political issue (Sule and Omoankhien, 2018). In the face of limited and/or little resources, the next thing is the scale of preference by considering the priority and the cost of the project(s). The moment the university could not afford the cost, the next thing to do is to drop the project till further notice. Moreso, it must be noted that what we need to make the university to be interacting with the internal and external environment required a big fund that will yield little or nothing especially at the inception.

Insufficient ICT tools/expertise

Today, in our country, we are still trying to catch up with the trend of ICT. This is due to the fact that most times what we use to have here would have been faced out where it is coming from and what we are talking about need much of ICT equipments and more importantly, expertise that will do the installation. Most times the tool and the expertise are not readily available and any available expertise will be over-engaged and very expensive to contract.

KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION

It is very disheartening that today many organisation managers still see training and re-training as a waste of money. As such, most of them still find it very difficult to send their employees out to acquire new knowledge particularly computer based knowledge. Without adequate computer knowledge, it might be somehow difficult to be able to flow within the ICT communication setting.

Poor research finance

Being a research based institution, universities can encourage students or group of students to conduct a thorough research in making sure the university is not only ICT compliance but effectively interacting with the internal and external environment of the university community. From a reliable source, it was established that that of Universities of Lagos and Ibadan were done through this similar methodology – research financing in the needed areas. In the two universities, you do not need to come to the school to obtain your post-graduate form, complete and submit your application form; uploading and submitting your relevant credentials including passport photograph and after being admitted you can complete your course form in the corner of your room without necessarily visiting the university. Two or three days after the course form will be signed and approved. Again, it is easy for your sponsor(s) to monitor your academic progress at the corner of their house. So, the university should encourage this study by putting money into it for the Computer Engineering and Management students to collaborate and put an end to the obsolete system of moving files around.

BUREAUCRACY

This is simply, the structure and regulations in place to control activity, usually in large organisations and government operations (English Dictionary, 2015). Today, many superior officers assume much of the power the office they are occupying vested in them will be taken away if the system should be made to be interactive. For instance, the officer that do vetting of credentials and signing of course form may feel deprived of the power if you have to feel and submit your course form on-line and then such form will be signed on-line as well. Such person and/or cabal may create administrative bottleneck to delay the success of such projects.

Office of the vice-chancellors

Finally, in most of the universities, the office of the Vice-Chancellors had been politicized such that when Professor A tenure expire, the next Professor to become the Vice-Chancellor abandon all the projects embarked upon by the former Vice-Chancellor. Meanwhile, we were made to belief that administration of any entity is a continuous exercise. This is the practice of our political leaders in Africa, not only in Nigeria; to abandon any laudable programme/project their predecessor embarked upon and commence a fresh one. The same and similar attitude had been embarked upon in the academic environment. It must be noted that this kind of project we are envisaging here takes a long time to complete and when completed it has to pass through stages and corrections being made at every stage.

Poor Infrastructure

This is one of the identities of developing nations all over the world. The necessary infrastructures are not usually provided due to many reasons. For instance, it is part of the standard in putting up a building to link each room together with telecommunication facilities. But in Africa, we see things of this nature as luxury and can only be provided if we have more than enough fund. But the issue of cordless interaction came in, still we lack adequate infrastructure to tap from the vital resources. Now, looking at the problems created by the above factors one after the other.

Problems identified are:
Data/information insecurity

Usually, when files are being moved from one office to the other, pilfering of documents is very easy and this singular attitude makes data/information to be unsafe. Also, with sabotage tendency in many Africans, anything we do not want/like will not see the light of the day but if it is done through ICT, once the information is keyed into the system, destroying it might be a bit difficult. A very good case was when the former Nigeria President was being accused of not completing his PhD Thesis. Assuming things were done on-line, it will just for them to key-in into the system and verify. Another example is the Motor vehicle registration number being issue these days by Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC). It is easy to know the type of car a registration number is allotted to and if you probe further, you will have the details of the owner of the motor vehicle from the system unlike where you just fill a form and after a short time; those papers had been sold to groundnut seller. You can as well ascertain if the number plate issue to you is genuine or not. Applying for driving license now is on-line and it is progressing, you can monitor the progress on the issuance and even, pay for the license on-line without leaving your house; only to go for capturing whenever you are invited through SMS.

Long access period/time

One of the characteristics of information is timeliness. This refers to the currency of the information presented to the users (Umoh, 2013). In this case, if it takes months before information is made available, it means the information is obsolete and not relevant since it might not leads to improved decision making. All about data/information is to serve as a pilot to making improved and better decision(s). Again, when the analog form of storing information is used; retrieving such information will take some time and this might invariably affect the viability of the decision such information will be used to make.

Unnecessary bottleneck

No matter enthusiastic an employee is when you do not have adequate information to work with you will just be perambulating within a circle. Also, bottleneck can be created by any affected person by stealing or outrightly destroying the information. For instance, some students were caught in a university in Nigeria for examination malpractices, necessary facts and statements were obtained to make them face the disciplinary committee of the school. The evidence and other prove were kept in an office in the Students’ Affairs Office. But in a bid to destroy the evidence in order to jump the justice, the entire building was burnt down by the culprits and some unscrupulous elements among the non-academic staff. Assuming those evidence had been stored electronically, there is every possibility that the building might not beburnt. Again, many people use their office to create unwarranted problem just to make sure success is not achieved on some assignment because such task cannot be done without passing through them.

Loss of vital and necessary data/information

This can be through pilfering of data/information and/or complete destroying the entire file relating to any particular incident just like the example just given earlier as to the examination malpractice.

Delay in accomplishing task/responsibilities

Like in the example of University of Ibadan where you can purchase post-graduate form, complete and submit it on-line with relevant documents attached to it. At the convenience of the affected officer, he can treat the case by easily run through and approved or disapproved the application and other requirement because the system with the aid of necessary program and software would have done the major vetting. Unlike, when I have to bring my form for submission and I had to be told what and how to do it. Aside that, after being admitted, they have to look for my application form and made to pass through a very tedious routine. Once you did not comply with relevant information, the system will never accept your form in the first instance. Again, let us look at how many hours it takes to search for the relevant file manually compared with where you just give a command and you are on the relevant page within seconds.

Suggestion/conclusion

The university as a matter of urgency should commence the process of making the university community a small village with the use of ICT. The management should encourage bottom-top form of communication (feedback); they should encourage member of the community to do away with the analog system of communication by encouraging E-communication. Authority within the community should be decentralized with little or no interference and finally, as a matter of importance, funds should be provided as well as the political will to commence making the community to be E-system.

Therefore, it is submitted that if the university can look inward rather than carrying cap in the hand by waiting for the fund/subvention from government, they can task the member of the community (students, staff and suppliers/contractors) by levying them, something meaningful can be achieved in this line as well as being focus on achieving such project no matter the situation.

REFERENCE
