Management strategies for effective administration of higher education in Nigeria in the 21st century

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Abstract

Management strategies are tactics usually employed by administrators in order to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the organization. Just as each organization is unique in its own way, every administrator needs to understand his or her organization in order to determine which strategies to adopt. This paper, therefore, focuses on management strategies for effective administration of higher education in Nigeria in the 21st century. First of all, the meaning of higher education and its goals were examined. This work also discussed in detail key management strategies that higher education administrators can make do with so as to have effective management of higher education. Those strategies basically discussed herein were: strategic planning, committee system, effective communication, constant supervision, application of emotional and social intelligence, organizing, application of information and communication technology, staff training and retraining, staff induction, adequate funding, evaluation, and injection of motivation. The paper concluded that in order to ensure that the goals of higher education are effectively realized, there must be proper administration of this level of education. And for proper administration of higher education, it is necessary for the administrators to have good knowledge of management strategies and apply them sagaciously.

Keywords: Management Strategies, Administration, Higher Education and 21st Century.

Introduction

Administration of higher education is the act of planning, influencing the behavior of workers and coordinating all the available resources (human and material) in higher education with a view to ensuring that the strategic aims and objectives set are efficiently and effectively actualized (Olofu, Idoho & Ojong, 2023).

Badau (2018) perceived higher education administration as the systematic process of coordinating both human and material resources in higher education for the purpose of achieving the stipulated goals. The very essence of higher education administration is to ensure that the system functions in a manner that the predetermined goals, aims and objectives are effectively accomplished. As such, quality higher education is very critical to the growth and development of Nigeria and its economy; thereby making Nigeria to be globally competitive.

Problematizing higher education in Nigeria, Olofu, Opara and Ushie (2023) observed that while the administrators of higher education are duty-bound to ensure that aims and objectives of the system are effectively attained, effective administration of higher education in Nigeria is often jeopardized by certain challenges such as poor planning, inadequate supervision, ineffective communication and poor funding among others.

Kelvin (2019) posited that higher education in Nigeria and beyond can hardly achieve its mandates if the administrators of this level of education fail to address the manifold challenges rocking higher education. Kelvin identified poor funding, bad leadership, inadequate supervision, poor evaluation and insufficient motivation of staff as some of the challenges facing the administration of higher education in Nigeria.

Solomon (2018) maintained that the smooth administration of higher education in Nigeria is often inhibited by several challenges such as hasty planning, lack of organization and proper coordination, inadequate funding and corruption among others. Hence, if the challenges affecting the effective administration of higher education are being overlooked by the administrators, higher education may be crippled in the nearest future.

Therefore, for proper administration of higher education, administrators of this level of education need to explore, understand and apply different strategies. These strategies of course, are numerous and inexhaustible; some of which can be self-initiated by administrators. What then are management strategies? Management strategies can be defined as those tactics which an administrator can employ in the course of managing the day-to-day operations of an organization. They are basically management principles which are used by administrators in order to maximally achieve organizational goals and objectives.

Contextually, Romina and Okoro (2019) defined management strategies as those administrative practices that tend to help improve the functionality of tertiary institutions. The scholars further stressed that the realization of excellent, efficient and quality tertiary education lies on the kind of administrative strategies usually employed by the educational administrators. As such, a knowledgeable and well experienced educational administrator should be properly equipped with diverse strategies to adopt when the need arises.

Literature Review

Higher education is otherwise referred to as tertiary education. It is a post-secondary school education which is aimed at equipping the learners with the right knowledge and skills needed to better their lives and contribute to the development of the society. The Federal Republic of Nigeria in its National Policy on Education (2004) cited in Adebisi (2014) defined

higher education as that level of education which is given after the completion of secondary education. It encompasses university education, colleges of education, polytechnics, mono-technics including those institutions offering correspondence courses. In the view of Ogunode and Abubakar (2020), higher education can be seen as a post-secondary school education which is designed to provide human resources for the industrial sector in a country.

Obanya (1999) cited in Ogunode and Abubakar (2020) defined higher education as the educational level which embodies all organized learning and training activities at the tertiary level.

According to Obanya, higher education also includes all forms of professional institutions drawing from the available pool of persons who have completed a various forms of secondary school education. Examples of such institution are institutions of the military, the police, nurses, agriculture and other possible combinations of programmes.

Higher education in Nigeria is established in order to meet the manpower needs of the country. The Federal Republic of Nigeria in its National Policy on Education (2004) cited in Adebisi (2014) identified seven (7) broad goals of higher education which are to include the following:

1. To contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
2. To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
3. To develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
4. To acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society; International Journal of Development and Sustainability;

5. To promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
6. To forge and cement national unity;
7. To promote national and international understanding and interaction

Types of Management Strategies for Higher Education Administration

They are different types of management strategies which administrators of higher education can employ for the purpose of ensuring high level of efficiency and effectiveness in higher institutions in Nigeria and beyond.

In the opinion of Dada, Okpara, Adeleke, Okon, Merimekwu, Anagbogbu, Petters, Edu, Eno, Akah and Olofu (2022), the management strategies for higher education in the 21st century vary from organization to organization but to some extent share some similarities. Therefore, this work has identified and explicated eleven management strategies that can be utilized by higher education administrators.

1. Strategic Planning: Strategic planning is the process whereby an organization plans for its future needs by identifying its mission, vision, values and strategic goals as well as designing measures that would be used in managing and implementing its strategic goals. Bigelow and Pratt (2022) defined strategic planning as an act which leader in an organization identify their future visions as well as highlight goals and objectives of their organization.

The process of strategic planning involves determining the stages or order in which those goals should be realized so that the organization can reach its stated vision.

According to Hunter (2018), strategic planning is a systematic process of deciding in advance what to do, why, when and how in higher educational institutions. Hunter suggestively posited that leaders and faculty members must perceive that strategic planning helps

in designing the future of their institute and the plan would benefit the institution in sustaining its identity, image, and reputation and lead in a better and more visible direction.

In the opinion of Ferreira, Fernandes and Ferreira (2022), strategic planning is a process which has to do with setting strategic goals, identifying the course of actions to achieve the earlier identified goals, setting the specific timeline to achieve the goals and making provision for the needed resources to carry out the actions.

The application of strategic planning as an administrative tactics in the administration of higher education is very important because it allows higher institutions to analyze their present conditions and forecast the future. Lerner cited in Nataraja and Bright (2018) highlighted the relevance of strategic planning to higher institutions to include-creation of a framework for determining the direction a university should take to achieve its desired future; provision a framework for achieving competitive advantage; allowing the constituencies in higher education to participate and work together towards accomplishing goals; raising the vision of all key participants; encouraging stakeholders to reflect creatively on the strategic direction of higher institutions as well as allowing the dialogue between the participants to improve understanding of the organization's vision and fostering a sense of ownership of the strategic plan and belonging to the organization.

Adebisi (2014) categorically posited that it would be extremely difficult for higher education in Nigeria to achieve some level of success if administrators of higher education fail to strategically plan for both the human and material resources. Similarly, Hunter (2018) stated that the shared governance nature in higher education clearly requires action plan that should vividly guide and direct the leaders and other stakeholders on what to do, when and how. As such, strategic planning, building consensus and ensuring

collaboration, participation and involvement of the various departments, units, faculties and other stakeholders are very necessary for stimulating effective administration of higher education in Nigeria and globally. Hunter observed that there is a much greater chance for academic community to identify with and be willing to implement a strategic plan if they are involved in the process right from the start.

In the opinion of Abubakar (2018), the application of strategic planning in the administration of higher education allows for proactivity in higher institutions; as it encourages institutional heads to systematically think ahead, sharpen its objectives and policies, leads to better coordination of organizational efforts, provides clear performance standards for control. When an organization is being proactive through strategic planning, it does not only result in institutional openness to growth and change but also promotes institutional ability to respond thoughtfully and quickly to new challenges when the need arises.

2. Committee System: The task of managing higher institutions is quite gargantuan, complex and highly demanding; as they are so many functions to be carried out at different times and occasions. As such; the responsibility of administering higher education cannot be solely and entirely left in the hands of the management alone if effective management of the system is to be ensured and guaranteed.

Ogbogu (2013) cited in Okoro (2018) posited that "universities are complex organizations because of their myriad activities". And to facilitate the process of effective governance through decision making in the system, all responsibilities cannot be centralized. As such, committee system has been adopted in the administration of higher education in order to democratize decision making and enhance and enlarge the participation of other staff is making inputs to the growth of the system.

3. Effective Communication: Communication is the process of transmitting ideas and information from one staff member to another either by oral or written form in order to achieve understanding.

The extent to which staff members in higher education understand their institutional mission, vision and goals as well as carry out their assigned responsibilities diligently may be dependent on the effective communication link and process between the management and the workers. Thus, workplace communication is critical to establishing and maintaining quality working relationships in organizations as well as ensuring organizational effectiveness. In the same vein, Landry (2019) posited that poor communication can lead to low morale and missed performance goals but effective communication enables school managers to support their teams and ensure that shared vision is promoted. Effective communication is very key because it promotes trust among workers and between employers and employees. When there is no effective communication in an organization, useful information may be misconstrued and this in turn affects healthy relationships among staff.

Considering the importance communication in work environment, higher education administrators need to properly and clearly convey institutional missions, visions, goals and values etc. to every member of the institution. Responsibilities of staff members should be obviously defined who does what, when and how. There should be clear line of communication to show who is answerable and responsible to who.

4. Constant Supervision: Supervision exists in all levels of education and remains core to the administration of higher education. When tasks are assigned to staff, it is important for team leaders, heads of departments, deans, directors and committee leaders etc. to constantly monitor the progress of work being done with a view to ensuring that the right thing is being done at the right time.

There is often inefficiency and effectiveness in an organization as a result or inadequate supervision of staff and organizational activities. Hence, supervision in higher education does not only ensure that there is effective teaching and learning, it also ensures that staff members carry out their task to an expected level and according to the stipulated guidelines, which control the system.

Supervision in educational context is a personnel element of school administration which basically involves advice, direction and discussion. The entire process of supervision all helps to ensure that the available school resources, manpower, fund and capital equipment are properly put into use for the purpose of enhancing effective teaching and learning.

According to Olorunfemi (2018), school supervision being an essential and integral part of school administration, it is a helping relationship whereby the supervisor guides and assists workers to properly do their jobs. It is an essential activity for the effective operation of a good school system and it is a process that is officially designed to directly affect teachers' behaviour in such a way to facilitate student learning and achieve the goals of the school system.

Ebele and Olofu (2017) maintained that supervision is necessary in educational institutions because there is need to ensure that the policies, principles and methods established for achieving the objectives of education are properly and successfully carried, standard or quality control is maintained, schools physical plants and instructional materials are functional and available in sufficient volume, school libraries are equipped and functional, students are helped to learn and made to feel good of being in school, learning contents or activities are practical and useful, the schools' resources are prudently managed, leadership styles in use are productive-based etc.

5. Adequate Funding: The issue of funding higher education in Nigeria has been a serious challenge; considering the limited resources being allocated by the government to education generally on yearly basis. This is corroborated by Ogunode (2020) who maintained that poor funding of higher education in Nigeria over the years has really affected the quality of higher education.

Therefore, Romina and Okoro (2019) added that the attainment of excellence, efficient and quality functional tertiary education requires adequate funding. Gambo and Fasanmi (2019) maintained that if higher education must achieve its mandates, the government needs to increase its annual budgetary allocation. Higher education managers should as a matter or necessity increase their internally generated revenue sources in order to complement government's budgetary financial allocation. Higher education administrators should also seek for foreign assistance from international organizations and philanthropists.

6. Application of Emotional and Social Intelligence: This management strategy may be very lacking in many higher education administrators. Emotional intelligence has to do with a leader's ability to understand his/her feelings, attitudes and behaviours as well as those of the employees and as such, harnesses both sides' emotions for the good of the organization and the workers. Social intelligence on the other hand, deals with a leader's ability to manage social or workplace relationship.

Bhasin (2020) maintained that as every leader needs cognitive intelligence to make sound decisions and emotional intelligence to understand his/her feelings and those of the workers, so does every leader require social intelligence to connect and relate peacefully with his/her workers; thereby creating a work environment characterized by love, care and harmony. A good leader should possess the ability to read other people, know their feelings and communicate effectively with them.

A leader who is emotionally intelligent can easily understand the feelings, thoughts and mindset of his/her team workers and can manage them very well compared to his/her counterpart that is emotionally bankrupt.

McMillan (2018) maintained that successful leadership and emotional intelligence are directly related; a leader's emotional intelligence helps him/her to be able to read into the thoughts and emotions of his/her employees. Similarly, Michael (2017) stated that when a leader is vested with emotional intelligence, the person does not need to struggle in order to understand the nature and the behavioural tendencies of his/her followers; thereby enabling the leader to easily predict who they are, what they can do at any point in time.

In terms of social intelligence, Akisan (2019) stated that there is better synergy between a leader and his/her followers when there is harmonious and cordial relationship. It is therefore the responsibility of the leadership of every university to create a working atmosphere which is conducive for everyone and maintain cordial relationship with employees. A leader with high social skills increases the willingness of employees to collaborate better and work towards organizational effectiveness.

Building self-social skills as a leader in the workplace goes a long way improving effective communication, understanding and collaboration between the leader and the employees. The social intelligence of a leader also helps in creating and fostering positive, respectful and supportive human relationships between management and employees; thereby enhancing productivity.

7. Organizing: Organization is the act of grouping institutional activities into relatedness tasks and assigning such tasks to staff members based on their

abilities and capabilities. Jimmy (2018) defined organization as the process which involves the identification, grouping and assigning of responsibilities to workers. Jimmy submitted that in an organization where activities to be performed are not clearly identified, grouped and assigned to staff members based on their ability and capability, the tendency for effectiveness and efficiency may not be guaranteed. Hence, Prachi (2015) admitted that organization as a strategy for effective management of higher education is necessary because it ensures that every staff has clear knowledge and understanding of who is to do what and who is responsible to who; thereby avoiding confusion and uncertain in task performance.

In essence, effective organizing results in work specialization, chain of command, authority, delegation and span of control.

8. Application of Information and Communication Technology:
Information and Communication Technology simply refers to those facilities, resources/tools which are used for processing, storing, preserving, accessing, retrieving and disseminating information. It encompasses radio, television, cellular, computer and internet, network hardware and software, satellites systems and the various services and applications associated with them such as conferencing.

The application of ICT in the administration of higher education is critical because data/information can easily be obtained and analyzed for decision making purpose. With ICT, information can be used to quickly process store and retrieve voluminous school records. Olofu and Olofu (2021) observed that information and communication technology remain very fundamental in the management of higher education in Nigeria especially during covid-19 and beyond.

Raihan (2016) maintained that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) application in

education has gained popularity over the past 20 years and this has led to changes in the way educational institutions carry out activities and processes not only in teaching and learning process but it has also had an impact in educational administrative processes and management of higher educational institutions.

The application of ICT in higher education administration according to Raihan helps in organization of information on students and teacher flows. That is, it can be used by administrators organize data into an easily accessible format and can be easily stored and retrieved from the computer. Manual handling of huge data is very difficult and causes delayed information collection and compilation. Therefore, when higher education administrators utilize ICT, this will enhance a well-organized and analyzed data which can be readily available to foster effective and quick decision-making.

Dahiya (2018) similarly submitted that the application of ICT in administration of educational institutions play a major role in efficient utilization of existing resources and simplifies administrator's tasks by reducing much paper work and replaces the manual maintenance of record keeping to electronic maintenance of records which helps in easy retrieval of any information of students, staff and general with in a fraction of seconds can access the required information.

In addition, it increases flexibility; provide the rich environment and motivation for teaching learning process which have a profound impact on the process of learning by offering new possibilities for learners and teachers.

9. Staff Induction:
Every new employee irrespective of his/her knowledge and skills needed to be properly guided and assisted upon resumption in order to acquaint the new staff with his/her job, work

environment and colleagues among others. Bello, Oshionebo and OJeifo (2017) admitted that starting a new job is an anxious time for anyone and no matter how eager a new employee looks forward to a new job, he/she is bound to be concerned about some aspects of it; such as how to get on with his fellow workers, make a good impression on the boss, get to know about the place of work and know what to do etcetera. When new employees are not assisted through proper induction to settle down quickly, they will likely not be able to respond quickly and effectively to the demands of job training or new responsibilities, hence, full effectiveness and productivity will be delayed.

Though comprehensive staff induction may be lacking in some tertiary institutions in Nigeria, higher education administrators should see the urgent need to develop functional induction programmes for their new staff in order to enhance their rapid adjustment to the system, promote job compatibility and reduce the rate of anxiety, poor performance, frustration, brain drain and staff turnover.

This supported by Koko (2018) who observed that staff induction has the capability of reducing the adjustment problems of new employees by providing a high sense of security, confidence and belonging. It further helps to sustain or build the worker's self-confidence by minimizing the initial apprehension experienced by workers as a result of the fear of the unknown. Effective, comprehensive and systematic induction process therefore is a necessary and indispensable organizational tool for enhancing employees' productive performance, morale, assimilation as well as position compatibility and personal development.

10. Staff Training and Retraining: Staff training can be defined as a planned process which is aimed at modifying the attitude, knowledge or skills of employees in order to enhance staff productivity and organizational effectiveness. Okafor (2017) stated that the main essence of staff training in any organization is to develop the abilities of workers; thereby satisfying the current and future manpower needs of the organization.

Akah, Owan, Aduma, Onyenweaku, Olofu, Alawa, Ikutal and Usoro (2022) observed that effective performance on the part of teachers and other employees is essential for the success of the school system. Such performance, to a large extent, will depend on their knowledge and skills and confidence in originating ideas as to how best to carry out the tasks of the job. Hence, the need for teachers training programmes which should aim at improving the effectiveness of individuals at work and for greater responsibilities.

The school system may have teachers with appropriate equipment, yet productivity may fall below expected standards. Therefore, all higher education administrators should ensure that all staff (academic and non-academic) irrespective of their previous knowledge and experience are exposed to constant training and retraining based on their institutions' training needs.

11. Injection of Motivation in Workers: A motivated worker to a large extent is a productive worker if provided with the required resources and supports. Motivation is an effective instrument in the hands of higher education administrators to inspire their workforce and create confidence in the workers.

When workers are motivated administrators basically end up creating in the workers the propelling desire to work harder which is necessary for the achievement of organizational goals. Hence, no matter the richness of an organization in terms of availability of human and material resources, good policy frameworks and strategic planning among others, if the system does not make provision for motivation mechanism for its workforce; such an

organization cannot get the best from the workers as well as achieve its optimum goals (Okoro, 2018).

This is supported by Bello, Oshionebo and Ojeifo (2017) who maintained that the strength of any organization lies on its employees who are sufficiently and constantly motivated in order to perform at their best. This therefore, makes it appropriate for higher education administrators to be conversant with those factors that tend to be affect their workers' motivation, with a view to avoiding negative consequences that may affect the organization's present effectiveness and future functional ability.

According to Storey (2017), motivation is an important basis or ingredient for the success of any organization because achieving higher levels of performance requires attending to how best individuals can be motivated through incentives and performance management approaches. Therefore, higher education administrators should ensure that the welfare and interests of its workforces are not taken for granted.

12. Evaluation: The concept and purpose of evaluation is highly relative; as it can be applied in different context and perspective. Contextually therefore, evaluation is a systematic process of assessing what goes on in higher institutions in order to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the system. It could be the evaluation of institutional programmes and projects, students' performance, staff's performance among others. It is basically a value judgment process.

Hernandez, Jose, Ibarra and Salustia (2016) see evaluation as an organized act of passing value judgment on all the operations or an aspect of institutional activity with a view to either determining the progress of an ongoing operation or a concluded operation. Hernandez, Jose, Ibarra and Salustia stated that the higher education environment is changing exponentially and these changes merit that studies are conducted periodically in order to

discover new needs, desires and expectations of students and design and implement services that meet them

The aim of evaluation depends on the intent of embarking on its. However, Martínez (2010) cited in Hernandez, Jose, Ibarra and Salustia (2016) sees the aim of evaluation in higher education to be geared towards providing rigorous, valid, reliable and evaluative information about an institution or educational program to enable those responsible to take appropriate decisions regarding their maintenance, removal or improvement, increase awareness of the main problems, mobilize collective awareness about important issues, identify areas of inefficiency and assess the impact of certain decisions or policies.

Evaluation as a management strategy in higher education is very necessary for all administrators because the process helps them to get adequate feedback on what goes on in the system. Outcome from institutional evaluation also serves as basis for making well informed and sound decisions.

The application of evaluation in the administration of higher education promotes and stimulates self-¬reflection and growth, increase overall institutional improvement, enhances students' growth through improved teaching, facilitates professional as well as personal growth and development and improves deficiencies in performance when identified.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Higher education is aimed at inculcating useful knowledge, skills, and value orientation that would make the learners relevant to themselves and contribute their quota to the growth and development of society as a whole. Thus, to ensure that the goals of higher education are effectively realized, there must be proper administration of this level of education. And for proper administration of higher education, it is necessary for the

administrators to have good knowledge of management strategies and apply them when there is a need.

In addition to the management strategies discussed herein, educational administrators should also explore other management strategies not treated in this work to enhance their knowledge and ensure effective administration of higher education.

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