

Assessment of Extent of Deputies' Assistance over Resource Allocation and Middle Managers' Influence on Staff Performance in Federal and State Universities in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed extent of deputies' assistance in resources allocation and Heads of Departments exert of influence on staff performance in their Departments In Nigerian Universities. This study was descriptive survey and had two research questions and tested two null hypotheses. The population was 520 Deputies and Heads of Departments in six Nigerian Universities in South-South, South-East and South-West of Nigeria. A sample of 227 was selected using stratified random sampling technique. The study utilized a structured instrument which was validated by three experts in business education and management sciences and pilot tested on thirty deputies and Heads of Departments using test re-test in University of Benin. The reliability yielded 0.80. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer research questions while hypotheses were tested using t-test. Findings showed that the responses of the respondents ranged from 'some extent' to 'little extent' indicating that both Federal and State Universities have moderate mean responses as per the amount of assistance deputies give over resource allocation. The findings further showed that Heads of Departments to some extent exert influence on the performance of their staff on some specific functions in their departments. Test of hypotheses shows that there was no significant difference on the extent to which deputies give assistance over resource allocation between federal and state universities among others. It was, therefore, recommended that the management of Nigerian Universities should give more authority to their deputies over resource allocation so that the jobs of the deputies will not just be ceremonial.

Key Words: Deputies 'Assistance, Middle Managers, Resource Allocation, Staff Performance

Introduction

University education in Nigeria like many other nations of the world occupies a central position in the socio-economic, political and technological development of the nation. According to Lazzeretti and Tavoletti (2006), universities bring about learning, culture, socio-economic development and improve standards of living across society. Consequently, Nigerian university education has undergone many reforms in a bid to make it adaptable to the diverse needs of the nation. In the words of Ogbogu (2013), the Nigerian University system has grown astronomically in size and has undergone deep transformation since its inception over 60 years ago. University education in Nigeria has through the years developed formidable mechanisms of decision-making in order to break through and effectively overcome the challenges of the current period that is characterized by rapid demographic and technological changes.

In Nigeria, both the government and citizenry have a high esteem for university education as a means of individual and national transformation and emancipation. This position

has resulted in massive student enrolment especially in public universities. In the words of Agboola and Adeyemi (2012), priority is given to university education because of its role in the production of high-level manpower needed for sustainable social and economic development of the nation. Also, the need to meet the yearnings and aspirations of the people and nation has brought about the expansion of the functions of universities in Nigeria beyond the primary assignments of formation, processing and dissemination of knowledge through teaching and research into other ventures like politics, socio-economic and community services. Besides, the national call on university for 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 industrialization (Abdulkareem & Gabadeen, 2015). According to Abdulkareem and Gabadeen (2015), therefore, the university can 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 rapid increase in student enrolment in Nigeria universities has consequently necessitated increase in the number of both academic and non-academic staff and resources needed to run the university including public universities. Therefore, massive increase in student enrolment, employment of both academic and non-academic staff, and increase in number of contract staff, contractors and general associates of the university has made the university a complex organization. This view was reported by Charas (2015) who said that the incredible increase in enrolment has made the management of the Nigerian Universities a complex task with a large number of staff, students and programmes to attend to on daily basis on one hand. On the other hand, Charas noted that the complexity of Universities has resulted in the use of a structure and highly formalized organogram with competent and quality leadership to pilot the affairs of the university.

Indeed, the administration and management of university education in Nigeria especially the public university is a complex issue. According to Nakpodia (2009), the Nigerian Universities are complex social organizations occupying a strategic position in the education ladder of Nigeria because they are made up of people with different backgrounds in terms of needs, skills, talents, status, competencies, knowledge, behavioural styles, and interests. Besides, Mainardes, Alves & Raposo (2011) list the fundamental characteristics that make Nigerian Universities not excluded complex organizations:

1. their main activities are based upon knowledge;
2. a highly fragmented department structure, due to the division by subject field, the organization of knowledge and research methodologies;
3. decision making processes are highly diffused, with different university sub-units concerned with their own objectives and targets, and neither respecting, nor aligned with organizational strategy;
4. within each specific academic field, universities may be innovative and adaptable even while the majority of innovations are incremental. Nevertheless, at the structural level, the university is highly resistant to change; and
5. clearly, these organizational characteristics cannot be separated from the surrounding environ.

There is so much pressure occasioned by the complexity of the University to provide specialized training to more students; develop and transfer knowledge and technologies to industry; and provide responses to societal needs (Daramola & Amos, 2016). The complex nature of Nigerian university has necessitated not only competent and transformational leadership but also the use of a highly organized and formalized structure and organogram for the effective and efficient management of the affairs of the university. More so, in a bid to make

informed and profitable decisions that can promote the overall development of the University, leadership of the University is highly decentralized into colleges, faculties, departments and units. Also, there are positions of assistants and deputies to aid management in providing real time services to students, staff and other associates of the University. Charas (2015) remark that the complexity of the Nigeria university has made the administrators to develop strategic ways such as good policy formulation and implementations and the use of committees and positions of deputies/assistants as a style of administration to assist the management in arriving at useful and meaningful decisions that can facilitate the proper administration and growth of the University system without being quarried.

The structure of University administration and management in Nigeria is similar across federal, state and private Universities because all universities in Nigeria are controlled and regulated by the National Universities Commission (NUC). However, autonomy makes every university to have its own laws, rules and regulations that govern the system which is made by the governing council, university senate, and Committee of Deans, Faculties, Departments, and Institutions (International Association of Universities (IAU) in Akpan and Amadi (2017). According to Okai & Worlu (2014), university autonomy refers to the condition, which permits administration of higher learning to govern itself without any external interference. In this regard, universities are permitted or allowed freedom from government regulation, terms of internal management of the university, its governance, and the internal management of financial resources. International Association of Universities (IAU) in Akpan and Amadi (2017) describe university autonomy as the necessary degree of independence from external interference that the university needs in respect of its internal organization and control, the internal allocation of financial resources and generation of income from non-public sources, the recruitment of its staff, the setting of the conditions of study and finally the freedom to conduct teaching and research activities. Autonomy of the university, therefore, may have a major role to play in the function of those occupying the position of deputies, assistants and Heads of Departments in different universities in Nigeria.

Important in the structure of university administration in Nigeria are deputies and assistants such as Deputy Vice Chancellors, Deputy Directors, Assistant Deans, Assistant Supervisors and Heads of different Departments. The various Deputies and Assistants assist their chiefs and offices in making profitable decisions that can accelerate the growth and development of their office and act as catalysts that fast-track the physical and intellectual growth of the system, faculties and units in competitive terms (Ogbomida, Obano, Emmanuel, 2013). The Deputies and Assistants may also participate in the recommendation and approval of University or Faculty/Institute budgets and/or funds for various activities in the University or Faculty/Institute. Apart from participation in budget recommendation and approval and allocation of funds, Deputies may also give assistance over allocation of space (offices), houses, vehicles and other resources in their University or Faculty/Institute. Sometimes, in the absence of their superiors, Deputies act and take decisions on issues that are sensitive on behalf of their chiefs and such decisions and actions are equally binding. These and many other functions give Deputies access to vital information about new policies and proposed policies in their University or Faculty/Institute. A Deputy or Assistant may also be appointed or designated by his chief to act in University or Faculty Committees such as appointment and promotion, staff housing allocation, car refurbishing loan, research grant, furniture loan; and study/sabbatical leave from time to time.

For proper grass root development in the University, there are also Heads (middle managers) for various Departments who are directly responsible for the efficient and effective running of their Departments in line with Departmental, Faculty and University goals. The

Heads of Departments are closest to the students and staff. They combine both administrative and academic functions for proper achievement of goals and vision. Consequently, the Heads of Departments (H.O.Ds) continually strive to provide the necessary support and encouragement for improved staff performance and productivity on the job especially academic staff.

Job performance is the overall expected value from employees' behaviours carried over the course of a set period of time (Motowidlo, 2003). In this study, staff's job performance is the ability of a staff to accomplish assigned task based on the expectation of the Department and/or University. The functions of Heads of Departments in promoting and encouraging high performance among staff include improving the preparation and submission of examination results on due date, improving quality of teaching by staff, encouraging writing quality papers for journal publications and grant application, promoting the welfare of staff and elevating the status of the profession to mention a few. Administratively, the Heads of Departments undertake functions such as discouraging absenteeism by staff, efficient use of office stationeries by staff, providing solution to interpersonal conflict among staff and control of conduct of staff among others.

Statement of the Problem

Federal, state and private Universities all utilize the offices of Deputies and Middle Managers (Heads of Departments) to ensure the efficient and effective management of human and material resources. In the structure of Nigerian university, the Heads of Departments (H.O.Ds) are the closest to the students and combine both administrative and academic functions for proper achievement of departmental, faculty and university goals and vision. The Heads of Departments are primarily the ones who monitor and control the activities of students and staff at grass root level for optimal performance. More so, they appraise the performance of their employees and recommend them for promotion or otherwise. In addition to the positions of H.O.Ds, there are positions of Deputies to the Vice Chancellors, Deans and Directors. The various Deputies and Assistants assist their bosses or chiefs in making relevant decisions that can help to promote the growth of their offices. The Deputies may also act as Head in the absence of their chiefs. However, it is not clear how much assistance Deputies and Assistants give over resources allocation in their Faculties and Universities. It is also not clear the extent Heads of Departments (middle managers) influence their staff performance of some specific functions in their Departments. These are the issues this study sought to resolve.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to assess the extent of assistance Deputies give over resource allocation and extent Heads of Departments (middle managers) influence their staff performance of some specific functions in their Departments. Specifically, this study assessed:

1. The extent of assistance Deputies/Assistants of Federal and State Universities give over resource allocation in their Universities
2. The extent Middle Managers (Heads of Departments) exert their influence on their staff performance of some specific functions in their Departments

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the course of this study:

1. What extent of assistance do Deputies of Federal and State Universities give over resource allocation in their University?

2. To what extent do Middle Managers (Heads of Departments) exert their influence on their staff performance of some specific functions in their Departments?

Null Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. The extent Deputies give assistance over resource allocation in Federal and State Universities will not differ significantly in their University
2. The extent Middle Managers exert influence on their staff performance of some specific functions in their faculties will not differ significantly in Federal and State Universities

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group (Anaekwe, 2007). The population of study was 520 Deputies/Assistants and Heads of Departments in six Universities in three geo-political zones in Nigeria. A sample of 227 was selected from the population using stratified random sampling technique. The study used a structured instrument for data collection titled: Assessment of Extent Deputies' Assistance over Resource Allocation and Middle Managers' Influence on Academic Staff Performance in Federal and State Universities in Nigeria (DARA-MMIA-SP). The instrument was divided into sections 1 and 2. Section 1 contained two (2) items design to collect demographic information such as type of university. Section B consisted of two (2) sub-sections (B1-B2). B1 and 2 were 5 point scales of Very Large Extent, Large Extent, Some Extent, Little Extent and No Extent with boundary limits of 4.50-5.00, 3.50-4.49, 2.50-3.49, 1.50-2.49 and 1.00-1.49. The instrument was validated by three experts in field of Business Education and Management Sciences. The reliability of the instrument was established through a test re-test approach on a pilot group of thirty Deputies/Assistants and Heads of Departments in University of Benin who were not part of the sample. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation co-efficient and a reliability value of 0.80 was obtained. Nunnally, as cited in Reynaldo and Santos, (1999) has indicated 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient thus; the instrument was considered reliable for this study. Administration of instrument was conducted through trained research assistants who were recruited from the target institutions. Analysis of data related to research questions was done using mean and standard deviation (SD). The null hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. A decision rule was taken as very large extent with real limits of number rating of 4.50-5.00 and 3.50-4.49 was regarded as large extent while mean rating of 2.50-3.49 was regarded as some extent and those with mean rating of 1.50-2.49 was regarded as little extent. Those with mean ratings of 1.00-1.49 were regarded as No Extent. The level of agreement or disagreement of each research questions was ascertained based on aggregate mean. A null hypothesis was upheld when the probability (p) value was greater than or equal to the level of significance of 0.05 and the null hypothesis was rejected when the probability (p) was less than the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What extent of assistance do Deputies/Assistants of Federal and State Universities give over resource allocation in their University?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on extent of assistance of Deputies/Assistants

No	ITEMS	N	M	SD	Decision
1	What extent of assistance do you give over the way funds are approved for various university activities	227	3.01	1.15	Some Extent
2	What extent of amount of funds can you yourself approve for various activities in your (a) university (b) faculty?	227	2.70	1.12	Some Extent
3	What extent of assistance do you give over appointment to various duty posts in your (a) university (b) faculty/institute?	227	2.90	1.05	Some Extent
4	What extent of access do you have over vital information in: (a) your university (b) faculty?	227	3.31	1.05	Some Extent
5	What extent of early information do you have about new policies or proposed policy changes by superior?	227	3.14	0.86	Some Extent
6	When you are acting for your superior when he is away, what extent of freedom do you have in allocating resources (e.g. approving funds for official activities)?	227	2.96	0.85	Some Extent
7	If the funds you are to spend are specified, to what extent would this be when compared to that of your superior?	227	2.86	0.78	Some Extent
8	When in an acting capacity, to what extent can you freely take decisions on issues that would be regarded as sensitive on behalf of your superior?	227	2.87	0.77	Some Extent
9	In your point of view how binding are the decisions and actions you normally take in the absence of your boss?	227	3.05	1.01	Some Extent
10	Apart from funds, what extent of assistance do you give over allocation of space (offices), houses, vehicles and other resources in: (a) your university? (b) your faculty/institute	227	3.02	1.18	Some Extent
11	What extent of assistance do you give on matters of staff discipline in: (a) your university? (b) your faculty/institute?	227	3.49	1.04	Some Extent
Aggregate Mean			3.02		

Table 1 shows the finding on the extent of assistance Deputies of Federal and State Universities give over resource allocation in their Universities. The result shows that all the items were rated as ‘to some extent’ with an aggregate mean of 3.02 which fell within the boundary of some extent’. The Table further revealed that the standard deviation ranged from 0.78 to 1.18 in both Federal and State Universities.

Research Question 2: To what extent do Middle Managers (Heads of Departments) exert influence on their academic staff performance of some specific functions in their Departments?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the extent Middle Managers influence their staff performance

No	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Staff productivity	227	3.81	1.01	Some Extent
2	Quality of students' academic performance	227	3.52	1.07	Some Extent
3	Absenteeism by your staff	227	3.57	0.92	Some Extent
4	Quality of teaching by your staff	227	3.67	0.86	Some Extent
5	Writing/research by your staff	227	3.27	0.92	Some Extent
6	Waste of office stationery by your staff	227	3.51	0.90	Some Extent
7	Solution of interpersonal conflict by your staff	227	3.41	0.97	Some Extent
8	Control of conduct of your staff	227	3.51	0.90	Some Extent
9	Control of your staff conduct at meetings	227	3.74	0.92	Some Extent
10	Submission of examination results on due date	227	4.06	0.98	Some Extent
Aggregate Mean			3.60		

Table 2 shows the finding on the extent Middle Managers (Heads of Departments) exert influence on their staff performance of some specific functions in their Departments in Federal and State Universities. The result shows that all the items on the Table were rated as to 'some extent' with an aggregate mean of 3.02 which fell within the boundary of some extent'. The table further reveals that the standard deviation ranged from 0.86 to 1.01. Therefore, Middle Managers in Nigerian Universities to some extent exert influence on the performance of their academic staff on some specific functions in their Departments.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The extent to which Deputies give assistance over resource allocation in Federal and State Universities will not differ significantly in their University

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis on the assistance Deputies/Assistance (Deputy Vice Chancellors, Assistant Deans, and Deputy Directors) give in the allocation of University resources

Institution type	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-test	p-value	Level of Significance	Decision
Federal	136	2.89	0.61					
State	91	3.00	0.69	225	-1.00	0.31	0.05	Not Sig.

Data on Table 3 shows that at 143 degree of freedom, the p-value of 0.31 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. There is no significant difference in the assistance which Deputies give over resource allocation in State Universities than their counterparts in Federal Universities. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that the extent to which Deputies give assistance over resource allocation in Federal and State Universities will not differ significantly in their university was retained. There was no significant difference in the extent to which

Deputies gave assistance over resource allocation in Federal Universities as compared to their counterparts in State universities.

Hypothesis 2 The extent to which Middle Managers (Heads of Departments) exert influence on their academic staff performance of some specific functions in their Departments will not differ significantly in Federal and State Universities

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis on the extent to which Middle Managers exert their influence on their staff performance of some specific functions in their Departments

Institution type	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	p-value	Level of Significance	Decision
Federal	136	3.59	0.60	225				
State	91	3.61	0.61		-0.23	0.81	0.05	Not Sig.

Data on Table 4 shows that at 225 degree of freedom, the p-value of 0.81 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in the extent to which Middle Managers (Heads of Departments) exert influence on their staff performance of some specific functions in their respective Departments in Federal and State Universities. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that the extent to which Middle Managers exert influence on their staff performance in some specific functions in their Departments will not differ significantly in Federal and State Universities was retained. The Middle Managers in Federal Universities do not exerted more influence on their academic staff performance than their counterparts in State Universities.

Discussion of Results

The findings for research question one show that the Deputies in Federal and State Universities in the three geopolitical zones studied only give assistance in resource allocation to ‘some extent’ in their various Universities. Both Federal and State universities have moderate mean responses as per the assistance deputies give over resource allocation. This means that Deputies in Federal and State Universities only have some level of authority over resources allocation. A careful look at the findings show that all the respondents merely agreed that they give assistance to some extent over resource allocation. There was no high level of response. Infact, this moderate mean agreement could be a pointer that the Deputies needed to have more opportunity and authority to operate in the dispense of resources in their universities.

The findings on research question two also show that the mean responses of the respondents fell within the boundary limit of ‘to some extent’ as per the extent Middle Managers (Heads of Departments) exert influence on their academic staff performance of some specific functions in their Departments. This means that heads of Departments in both Federal and State Universities in the three geopolitical zones studied only have moderate influence on the performance of their academic staff in some specific functions.

Test of hypothesis one shows that there was no significant difference in the extent to which Deputies gave assistance over resource allocation in both Federal and State universities. Test of hypothesis two also shows that there was no significant difference in the extent to which middle managers exerted influence on their staff performance of some specific functions in their departments between Federal and State universities. The result showed that the Middle

Managers in State Universities do not exerted more influence on their academic staff performance than their counterparts in Federal Universities.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was concluded that the extent of assistance of Deputies in Nigeria universities over resource allocation is generally poor at both Federal and State Universities. From the findings, it was also concluded that the extent of Middle Managers influence or support on their staff performance in their respective University is generally below expectations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The management of Federal and State Universities in Nigeria should give more authority to their Deputies over resource allocation so that the jobs of the Deputies will not just be ceremonial.
2. Middle managers in Nigerian Universities should give more support in the performance of their staff in the areas of promotion and encouragement in preparation and submission of examination results on due date, improvement on quality of teaching, and encouragement in writing quality papers for journal publications and grant application to mention a few.
3. Middle Managers in Nigerian Universities should improve on their administrative functions such as discouraging absenteeism by staff, efficient use of office stationeries by staff, providing solution to interpersonal conflict by staff and control of conduct of staff for effective achievement of the goals of their Departments and Universities for national transformation.

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