Management and Leadership in The Contemporary University: Strategies For A Rescue Operation.

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Abstract

Universities will continue to require professional specialists to deal with increasingly rigorous legislative and audit requirements relating to, for instance, finance, academic excellence, the estate, and equal opportunities; and a proportion or these roles are likely to be filled by strategic institutional managers and leaders. However, universities also require experts to work across internal boundaries and to interpret and contextualize the obligations placed on them by different constituencies. In the same vein, another professionals may be an expanding group who facilitate institutional adaptation to more fluid internal and external environments, as systematic, evidence-based approaches to planning and decision. The object of this write-up therefore is to evolve an improved leadership and management strategies within the context of the contemporary universities.

Keywords: Management. Leadership, University, Administration

1. Introduction

The attainment of organizational objective is fundamental to all organizations whether public or private. The principal personnel in private enterprises are known as managers while those in public enterprises are referred to as administrators and the major attribute connecting both of them is the element of management and administration, otherwise known as the management process. The management process is the series of steps taken by managers and top administrators to get their work done. These include planning, organizing, staffing, leading, controlling and coordinating.

Contemporary educational reform places a great premium on the effective leadership and management of schools. The logic of this position is that an orderly school environment that is efficiently and well managed provides the precondition to enhanced peace and tranquility (Ijaduola, 2011). The leader works through a group or groups of people to achieve organizational goals, the leader adopts one leadership style or another. Whatever the leadership style will determine the sort of cooperation and relationship that exists between the leader and his subordinates. As opined by Alabi (2009), Ayeni (2003) and Ijaduola (2009) skill in human resources management is very important in determining the effectiveness of leadership. This is because in all the resources that organization has, human resources are the most important. According to Sergiovammi (2010) human being make things happen efficiently.

2. The University

The University, as Hutchins Robert sees it, is a symbol of human integrity, a trustee for civilization, and intellectual community whose role is to serve as a centre of thought. In the same vein, the National Policy on Education while outlining the objectives of Education seen the university performing as hereunder:

1. The acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society.

2. The development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environments.
3. The acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community.
4. The acquisition of the detached view of local and external environments.

In the 1960's, all over the world, the ideal of a university, cherished for almost one thousand years, appeared to be fading, to be replaced by the notion of the university as a nationalized industry. Instead of being thought of as an autonomous community of masters and scholars pursuing the truth, the university was coming to be regarded as the nerve centre of be knowledge industry, dedicated to national power, prosperity, and prestige. The president of the largest American university maintained: the basic reality for the university is the widespread recognition that new knowledge is the most important factor in economic and social growth.

However, whatever may be the peculiarity of the circumstances of the birth of the university there are certain basic general characteristics which define a university culture which is the sum of "the concrete arrangements and institutions which order the educational and governmental processes of the university and the intangible values such as a sense of common fellowship, a commitment to free enquiry and rational discussion and a pride in belonging to an institution that refuses to judge itself or the behaviour of its members by any but the most demanding standard…the complex of tacit assumption about what is important that leads members to ask not what is the letter of the law or the prerogative of status and authority, but what is appropriate to an institution concerned with the cultivation of the mind and the spirit." (Ijaduola, Odumade and Agbajeola, 2009).

From the foregoing, is the university to be the servant or the critic of society? Is it to be dependent or independent, a mirror or a beacon? Is it to attempt to meet the nation's immediately and practical needs or is its primary duty that of meeting the need for the transmission and extension of high culture? Is an intellectual community possible in an age of specialization? Can a nationalized industry pretend to a world outlook? Or can all these apparently contradictory aims be successfully combined in one institution?

Such questions had been asked from time to time since the rise of the nation-state and the beginning of the Industrial revolution. We are then led to ask, what are the essential goals of a University? One of the most satisfactory answers to this question is as contained in the report of the study commission on University Governance, University of California (1968) which asserts.

> *At its best a University can aspire to kind of civic culture of the mind in which arrangements for decision and deliberation are designed to try out what is special about a university culture; its commitment to rational enquiry, tolerance, goodwill and unabashed idealism. The most important single goal of a University and therefore the best measure of its excellence is the intellectual growth of its students, their initiation into a life of the mind, their commitment to the use of reason in the resolution of problems, their development of technical competence and intellectual integrity.*

Having critically discussed the concept and essence of the University, attention will now be focused on the organizational structure with a view of taking a cursory look at how universities are administered.

2.1 Organizational structure of the university.

The Universities are administered through a good network of officers and statutory bodies in a hierarchical order. Among these are the visitor, principal officers, the council, senate, faculty board and congregation. These are now briefly discussed below.

The Visitor is at the pinnacle of the administrative structure in the University. In some of the advanced countries of the world, citizens who have distinguished themselves in the society may be appointed to the position. However, in Nigeria, a decree which was promulgated in 1986 specified that the President and Commander – in – Chief of the Armed Forces shall be the visitor of each Federal University. In the same way the Governors are the visitors to their state – owned universities. The visitor shall, not less than once in five years conduct a visit of the university or direct that such a visit is conducted by such persons as the visitor may deem fit and in respect of any of the affairs of the university.

The function of the visitor which are not properly defined as observed by Ijaduola (2010), revolve around ceremonial and political duties. He is the ceremonial head at convocations, laying of foundation stones of building projects, opening of completed projects/buildings, donation to support the institution and the approval of appointments to special offices.

2.1.1 Principal officers

The principal officers of the university are the chancellor, the pro-chancellor, the vice-chancellor, the deputy vice chancellor, the registrar, the bursar and the librarian.

- The chancellor is appointed by the visitor to the university for a period of five years and may be re-appointed for another tenure. This office is highly ceremonial. Whenever he is present at meetings of convocation or congregation for the conferment of degrees, he takes precedence over all officers of the university and consequently presides. The chancellor is the ceremonial head of the university. In Nigeria, elderly citizens who have distinguished themselves in the society are usually appointed to this post.

- The pro-chancellor is also appointed by the visitor, usually on the recommendation of the minister of, or commissioner for Education, for federal and state university respectively. This principal officer is the chairman of council, the highest ruling body in the university. He is appointed to this office for a period of years. He takes precedence over all members of the university except the chancellor who acts particularly as chairman of the congregation or convocation.

- The Vice-chancellor is the chief executive and academic officer of a university. He is appointed by the visitor after the recommendation from the university council and senate. The tenure of the vice-chancellor is five years. He is the chairman of senate. He is responsible to the senate for the general functions of the day-to-day governance of the university. He is also chairman of appointments and promotions committee, especially for academic staff. The vice-chancellor caters for the welfare and interest of staff and students and for the maintenance of order and discipline as may be conferred on him by the edict which established the university.

- The deputy vice-chancellor (DVC) is appointed by the senate on the recommendation of the vice-chancellor. The correct trend in most universities is to appoint two DVCs, for administrative and academic matters respectively. They are both responsible to the vice-chancellor for the daily administration of the university. They assist the vice-chancellor and act in his place when the office is vacant, when he is unable to perform his functions, for instance, as a result of incapacitation or possible legal restriction.

- The Registrar is the chief administrative officer of a university. He is responsible to the vice-chancellor for the day-to-day general administration of the university. He is the secretary to council, senate, congregation and convocation. The division under the registry includes academic staff training and development, council division, student affairs, general administration, personnel affairs, planning.

- The Chief financial officer of a University is the Bursar. He is responsible to the Vice-chancellor for planning, administration and control of the financial affairs of the University.

- The Librarian is the chief officer-in-charge of a University library. He is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the administration and its campuses, colleges, faculties, schools, department and institutes.

  In the same vein, the statutory bodies as earlier mentioned include: the council, the senate, the faculty board and the congregation. These we will now discuss in turn.
  The council is the highest governing authority of a University. Members of the council include the pro-Chancellor as chairman, the vice-chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor as well as representatives of the Senate, congregation and convocation. Other council members who are not members of the University (lay members) dominate the council. These are usually appointed by government. The council as noted by Aderounmi and Jiboyewa(1987) is in charge of policy matters of the university. It is empowered to do those things it considered would accelerate the activities of the university. Its decision

on the control of the university finance is responsible for all university assets and liabilities. The various responsibilities of council are executed by council committees and boards.

On the other hand, the formulation of academic policies including the organization and control of all academic activities of a university are the responsibility of the university senate. The faculty boards advise senate on academic matters. Members of the senate include the Vice-chancellor as Chairman, Deputy Vice-chancellor, Provosts, Deans, all Professors, Heads\Acting heads of Department, university librarian, representatives of the congregation, and the Registrar who is the secretary. However, each of the university faculties is governed by a faculty board which controls the academic programmes of the faculty for senate. Much of the work of senate is delegated to the Dean, who presides at the faculty board; he is elected and appointed for a period of two years from among the professors in a faculty. The Dean presents students in his faculty in matriculation and to congregation for such awards, usually after the universities examinations have been concluded successfully.

Finally, the congregation is the general assembly of all senior staff members of the university, both academic and administrative, who hold degrees of the recognized universities. Those who do not possess degrees are not allowed to attend.

Having considered the organizational structure of the university and the diverse activities/functions being performed by various individuals as well as the statutory bodies, it is deemed pertinent to delve into the challenges facing the contemporary university with a view of ameliorating the situation via some rescue operations to be discussed later.

3. Managing the contemporary university.

There are challenges to be confronted if universities are to emerge as new academic hope for Nigeria. The present world order in university education delivery is the national and global ranking of universities. This is the new face of globalization as it affects the educational landscape. Between 2004 and January 2006, three different academic ranking of world universities were undertaken. African universities made the list of the world's best 200 universities, six of the 1000 world best universities are in South Africa (The only African country that made the list). Within the top 100 African Universities, Nigerian Universities are rated 57th (Ibadan); 69th (Ife); 78th (Benin); 90th (Lagos); and 98th (Jos). In contrast, 24 Universities from South Africa made the list with 20 of them being in the top 50 (NUC, 2006).

None-the-less, enrolment in Nigerian universities doubled every four to five years in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. It slowed down in the 1990's growing at an average rate of 12% system-wide and approximately doubling over the decades of the 1990's (Jibril, 2003:495). The escalating demand for higher education in Nigeria has reached a critical point, for instance in the 2005\2006 academic session, al the universities in Nigeria were only able to cater for 18% of the applicants. The approval of private universities in addition to the existing government universities is yet to meet the demand for higher education (NUC report, 2005). This development in the university education system brings about the need for higher education to cater for and absorb the rapidly escalating numbers of secondary school graduates

Another challenge boarder on the changing environment. Environmental influences on university education have long been recognized. Carnoy (2000) noted that the University has been embraced and led down a garden path by its environmental suitors. Since then, this embrace has become which stronger and the garden path much more diversified.

A critical challenge for contemporary university education, then, is how to create the commitment and capacity to observe, analyze and understand these environmental forces and to act in response to them. In order to meet this challenge, many institutions of higher education have turned to strategic planning, a tool once found primarily in the private sector within developed countries. In recent years, however, the use of strategic planning by higher education institutions in Africa and elsewhere has become widespread (AAU, 1995.Fry and Utui 1999; Taskforce, 2000, Ijaduola and Agbajeola 2010). This is because many institutions now find themselves in circumstances where old methods of planning and management are no longer effective in dealing with present, not to talk of future challenges. Strategic planning, when properly done, is effective. This is because apart from all else, its proper use provides university stakeholders and managers with a clearer picture of how a rapidly-changing environment is shaping the critical decisions that their

universities face. Private universities would appear to give appropriate response to those challenges and many more that are yet to emerge.

So far, we have identified some of the challenges facing the leaders and managers of the contemporary universities. The question now is: what measures could be adopted towards tackling the identified and allied challenges? Attempt will be made in the following discourse to proffer answers to this question.

4. Strategies for a rescue operation.

Perhaps, it should be pointed out first that the present state of university education is inadequate to meet the learning needs of youths and adults. If current trends ad conventional approaches to education and training continue, the situation of learning in the world will certainly worsen and will aggravate the global problems rather help to address them. Similarly, educational reforms are notorious because of the need for years of planning, consultation, policy formulation and information it is difficult to carry out reform on a system that in the main time must go on the delivery service. And the effect of any reform takes several years to manifest, which may be one reason why every minister of education is so anxious to make his own changes rather than to ensure that the changes made in previous regimes work more effectively.

All said and done, the most urgent task is to reaffirm that the greatest worth of university education is to be found in its quality, not in its quantity, that if the quality of education falls below a certain standard it becomes worthless; it delivers what Alexander Pole calls "A little learning" which he describes as "a dangerous thing". We must therefore re-establish the needs to uphold quality. In other words, the emphasis should be on re-building, raising quality before seeking to extend access, but making what exist available to all on merit and without discrimination. It is only when we revamp university education to the level that we can say that we have a credible system that we can then expand it and try to assure the right to the deserving citizens.

Another rescue measure which of course has become a recurring decimal is the issue of funding which we cannot detach from the basic structures of our political and economic system. There is already a call for a national conference to review those structures. As regards the funding of university education, given the allocation of appropriate priority and a much improved system of public accounting and accountability, what we need to stress is that funding must be spread and all must contribute.

This trend of development is to mobilize everyone to accept the importance of education, to lift education above party politics, and to get away from the view that education is a favour that government confers, and to be measured by the size of government expenditure. All levels of government should contribute. The federal government, a percentage from consolidated revenue accounts; state governments through budgetary allocation, local councils through performance of specific tasks such as communal erecting and maintaining of buildings and grounds; the private sector through a tax on company profits; parents through minimal fees and payment for examinations and various services such as handouts. Most of these charges already exist but need to be regulated so that, for instance, revenue on handouts go to the university so as to reduce the incidence of abuse that exists in the system as it operates currently.

However, unless there is a radical review of the rates of taxation and the collection of income tax, we need to revisit the lesson of the past that payment towards the cost of university education is easier to collect than payment of higher income tax. Adequate arrangements would then need to be made to ensure that all students of ability can still get through the university even though the parents cannot afford to pay fees.

Besides, various mechanisms for re-establishing standards and ensuring quality control need to be revisited and addressed in all its ramifications. Many such mechanisms are already included in the national policy and occasional conferences on university education- emphasis on the quality of staff, training, adequate and regular payment of remuneration, incentives and motivation, adequate libraries and laboratories etc. Concurrently, the importance must be stressed of an efficient and committed inspectorate apart from the NUC who accept the quality control of university as a challenge. It should be emphasized that centers of excellence are not created by decree, or concentration of supposed "gifted children" ; they emerge over time through a combination of location, facilities, quality staff, admission

purely on merit to sustain the competitive spirit, and inspired leadership dedicated to the pursuit of excellence.

On the whole, there must be a review of various policies which encouraged undue political interference with our universities, thus undermining the professional management of these institutions. Decentralized management in place of centralized control should minimize such political interference in the processes of recruitment, management and discipline of both staff and students. Of particular importance among policies of politicization which has been inimical to the maintenance of quality in our educational institutions are those ostensible affirmative actions connected with quota and federal character.

An objective study of the effects of such policies would reveal that while they have encouraged demoralization, frustration and an acute sense of suffering injustice among many applicants and their parents, thus undermining respect for standards and quality in our Universities, they have not achieved the opening out of opportunities to a wide range of people in the supposedly educationally disadvantaged areas. For example, affirmative action was advocated in the United State of America for people who lived in ghettos because of racial discrimination. There are areas in Nigeria that might claim to be disadvantaged in the sense of inadequate government action or even deliberate negligent in the past. But when politically advantaged people, instead of improving the quality and expanding access to schools enforce quota admission, the result is to encourage their own children to gain admission into the best Universities without the need to complete.

The usual aftermath of the above scenario is that the political class and bureaucrats gain, the masses of the people do not benefit. The whole nation loses, not least because the politically advantaged, raised on the basis on such discrimination, begin to look down on others as second class citizens; and some of the nation's best human resources are wasted because they gain power and privilege without having to struggle, or work hard to earn or justify such promotion.

5. Conclusion

It is obvious form the foregoing discourse that the institutional demography of Nigerian University education is undergoing marked change- new forms of demand, new stakeholders, new modes of provision and new providers. At the same time, relations among the various categories of institution and between them and the state have also been evolving in unpredictable ways. This situation of institutional complexity and policy dynamism poses the challenge of how to treat the higher education system more directly as a system, and to structure it so as to recognize and accommodate the new needs and new forces, while playing to the strengths of the diverse components and preserving the enduring social and economic goals of the system.

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