

EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY WORKERS – A TASK FOR MODERN ADMINISTRATORS

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the supervision of Nigerian university workers following the general complaints by the stakeholders that there was laxity in duty performance by Nigerian university workers. The population consisted of all academic and non-academic staff of 291 tertiary institutions in the six geo-political zones of the federation of Nigeria: North-Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, South-south and Southwest. A sample of 100 academic staff and 100 non-academic staff were selected by stratified random sampling method from each geographical zones of the federation. A total sample of 600 academic staff (300 males and 300 females) and 600 non-academics staff (300 males and 300 females) participated in the study. The data for the study was collected using the questionnaire titled Effective Supervision Inventory (ESI). The validity of the questionnaire was done by experts in educational administration and planning. The reliability of the instrument was tested using a Split-Half Method. The correlation coefficient was corrected by the use of Spearman Brown Formula. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was .76 and final Spearman Brown Formula yielded 0.86. The statistics used were Z-test and percentage. The major finding was that supervision was not effective. This was highly due to challenges of insecurity in the economy and time constraint. Based on the finding, it was recommended that there was need to organize seminars, conferences and workshops to create public awareness on the importance of effective supervision.

Introduction

Supervision is all about helping the workers to realize their full potential in their respective careers. It has a lot to do with the communication and leadership. Workers are groomed by their superiors through discursive interaction to carry out tasks in line with the professional codes of conduct. At every level of management, there is need for supervision. When productivity is low, the supervisor is usually held accountable by the superiors. The main reason for supervision is to use the human and non-human resources for the purpose of maintaining standard, quality and goal achievement. Supervision deals with guiding, advising, encouraging, refreshing, motivating and ascertaining that the stated goals of the organization are achieved. Pierce (2012) defined supervision as a developmental process designed to support and enhance an individual's acquisition of the motivation, autonomy, self awareness, and skills necessary to effectively accomplish the job at hand. An effective supervisor according to Johnson (2012) must have the skills in time management, controlling the working environment, delegating tasks and motivational skill. There is need for experience and knowledge before being a supervisor. Suhaimin (2012) gave nine tips on how to lead, manage, motivate and supervise employees effectively. These tips are enumerated as being fair to everyone, developing everyone, knowing and liking your subordinates, showing continuing interest in your subordinates, criticizing with care, being flexible, giving simple directions, defending your subordinates and finally, being a coach and not a general.

Colier (1986) gave us twelve characteristics of an effective supervisor, These he enumerated as giving clear work instruction, praising others when they deserve it, willing to take time to listen, being cool and calm most of the time, being confident and self assured, having appropriate technical knowledge of work being supervised, understanding the groups problems as demonstrated by attentive listening and honestly trying to project oneself into their situation, gaining the groups respect through personal honesty, being fair to everyone and avoiding favoritism, demands good work from everyone, gaining personal trust and finally going to bat for the group.

Hinkle, Cummings and Scobee in 2012 emphasized on the importance of communication in supervision of workers. Good supervision according to Haenischil affects organizational results and the overall work environment. It also reduces work place stress. He also emphasized on the need for effective staffing. The staffing should be based on merit.

In Nigerian universities, the non-application of purely merit in the appointments of staff makes it difficult to have a right workforce. When wrong people are employed, supervision becomes difficult. According to McIntyre, there are seven employees that drive managers and supervisors crazy. These are according to her: - the slackers, the clingers, the challengers, the drama queens or kings, the loners, the power grabbers and the space cadets. The slackers are people who never develop a strong work ethics. The clingers tend to be uncomfortable making independent decisions. The challengers are very oppositional. The drama queens or kings are those who gossip and carry rumors and always drop in manager's office to share their latest family crises or coworker conflict. The loners are those who talk to no one and do not like to attend conferences and workshops. The power grabbers are those who get into power struggles with their bosses. The last but not the least are the space cadets who are always on the different wavelength. They always seem to be thinking of something else.

Presently, jobs have been so much humanized because of the contributions of Modern Theorists. The gesture seems to be effective depending to a greater extent on the discipline of individuals within the system. An organization's survival depends to a greater extent on the willingness of individuals within the system to sacrifice a degree of individuality and to conform to certain behavioral norms. Studies (Ifedili 2011, Hersey, 1965) have shown that Theory Y of McGregor is not applicable in Nigeria. Productivity increases with closed supervision because of cultural differences, level of education and standard of living. Nigeria has a

multi dimensional culture and this has really affected the attitude and behaviors of the individuals within the system. Many researches (Chegini 2010, Ifedili 2011) have shown that culture of the people has a lot of impact on people's general attitude and how the people should be organized and managed for better productivity.

It is a general notion in Nigeria that government work is nobody's work and therefore does not deserve commitment. The apathy to work among some Nigerians can be traced to the colonial era when indigenous civil servants had very limited growth potentials. As was observed by Nwosu (1977), a seasoned civil servant, that Nigerian workers during the colonial era worked to meet above all, the requirements of the colonial masters. They never obtained the reward which was commensurate with the work well done. Today, despite the fact that the policies and objectives are now being formulated by Nigerians for Nigerian needs and the minimum wage has changed greatly, the colonial attitude persists.

In many Nigerian government universities, there have been general complaints and observations about the Nigerian university workers' understanding of academic freedom. Academic freedom does not mean that one cannot be controlled when there is poor job performance, constant flouting of rules and regulations, high rate of indiscipline and no regard for the constituted authorities.

The method of appointments in Nigerian government universities is causing a lot of concern to those who have education at heart. Ifedili (2009) stated that there was suppression of excellence and diligence and promotion of mediocrity in the appointments and promotions in Nigeria federal universities. The universities do not seem to employ based purely on merit but based on who backs the candidates. The present educational management condones favoritism and nepotism. It will be an understatement to say that approximately seventy percent of workers are employed based on staff relationship or political affiliation or tribe. Many of these have no integrity, not committed and academically and experience wise -not qualified. There are many good job seekers but because there is no godfather to talk for them, they remain unemployed while the wrong people are employed. This type of system breeds lawlessness and low productivity. Many people flout the rules and they cannot be disciplined because they are protected by those who brought them into the system or by their Unions or the supervisor may be afraid of being kidnapped or being injured which is one of the present challenges faced by the Nigerian university administrators. There is high rate of insecurity in the present day management of the Nigerian universities. This insecurity is manifested in the form of kidnapping, cultism, terrorism by the Islamic Sect called Boko Haram, corruption, natural disaster, ritual murdering, violence etc. These challenges instill fear in the lives of the supervisors and these greatly affect their job performances. Poor supervision has been alleged to increase lateness to work, leaving many files unattended, poor record keeping, laxity at work, leaving classes untaught, absenteeism, wasting resources, young mothers bringing their children to the workplace who often distract them etc. Ogbeide (2000) recommended that redundant academic officers and personnel should be flushed out of the system to make university system more productive.

Some of the managers selected to head various parts of the university are never appointed based purely on merit but on the ground that they would be faithful. This is the reason why many seem to find it difficult to control their subordinates. Levitt (1974) pointed out that the process by which a manager is selected is a critical element in managerial success. This determines talents, competences, attitudes, styles, personality which were appropriate for the task and problems of new situation the worker would enter. Some heads of departments are inexperienced and it boils down to some experienced subordinates telling them what to do. Poor supervision has been alleged to have caused lateness to work, leaving many files unattended, poor record keeping, leaving many files unattended, laxity to work, leaving classes untaught, absenteeism, wasting of resources etc.

Recently, Governor Oshiomole of Edo State in Nigeria made an impromptu visit to government primary and post primary schools in his state. This was as a result of the stakeholders' complaints, that majority of teachers in his state including some school administrators had shown great irresponsibility in the performance of their duties despite the huge amount of money invested into education. One would not blame him for taking on the spot decision to dismiss the culprits. It will be an understatement to say that if such visit is made to Nigerian universities, the result will repeat itself. It is unfortunate to note that those who are in the position to supervise shun their responsibilities either due to lack of knowledge or not having confidence in themselves or afraid of their lives or inadequate time due to other work load or due to inexperience or inadequate funding etc.

Statement of the Problem

The method of appointments and promotion in the absence of utilization of pure merit as the criteria has made it difficult for supervisors in Nigerian universities to have effective supervision. The non-challant attitude and attitude of insubordination of some workers have been alleged to create stumbling blocks in having the unique supervision which is expected to bring the intended articulated goals to fruition. There is a general feeling that some supervisors are not qualified to supervise and those who are actually qualified and experienced to supervise find the supervisees difficult to supervise because of their attitudes. These make the supervisors to often be driven to the state of submission, defeat and despair. It is also alleged that the inability of the young ones to learn appropriate procedure from the experienced ones has really affected the processing of students and this has affected the quality of output in form of graduates. The supervisees are alleged to always looking for shortcuts and do not pay attention to details. Also, inadequate funding has also been identified as one of the factors affecting effective supervision. There is need to investigate the actual situation and proffer solutions which can help the system to move forward.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study: -

1. Is there effective supervision of Nigerian university workers?
2. Do Nigerian universities employ based on merit?
3. Do Nigerian universities promote based on merit?
4. Are university subordinates ready to be supervised?
5. Are university superiors ready to supervise their subordinates?
6. Are university superiors qualified to supervise?
7. Is time a constraint to effective supervision?
8. Are resources needed for supervision available?
9. Is there any reward for good performance of any worker?
10. What are the factors hindering effective supervision of Nigerian university workers?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated to guide the research study.

HO1 There will be no significant difference in the perception of male and female Nigerian university workers on the effectiveness of supervision in Nigerian universities.

HO2 There will be no significant difference in the supervision of academic and non-academic staff as perceived by university workers based on sex.

HO3 There will be no significant difference in the perception of academic and non-academic university workers as to adequate motivational forces at play in supervision

Significance of the Study

This study is of great importance to the Nigerian government because it assures the government that there is quality assurance in the implementation of stated goals in the Nigerian National Policy on university education. The various universities would employ workforce that will be able to learn and utilize the knowledge and skill in constructive job performance. There will be better processing of students which would result in the production of desired labor force. The subordinates in the universities would benefit by having personal development and career advancement when supervised. The alleged poor record keeping which has created nightmares on students, graduates, retired workers etc, will be minimized. This will make them more skilled and confident in themselves. The students would benefit from good teaching method and would perform better in their studies. Finally, because of improved teaching and learning due to effective supervision, the failure and drop-out rate would be minimized. Workers would be committed. Files will be treated without delays,

Methodology

The research design used was ex post-facto. The design deals with the collection of two sets of data from a group of subjects with an attempt to determine the subsequent relationship between those sets of data. The population consisted of all academic and non-academic staff of 291 tertiary institutions in the six geographical zones of the federation of Nigeria: North-Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, South-south and Southwest. A simple random sample was used to select three geo-political zones to participate in the study. A sample of 200 academic staff and 200 administrative staff were selected by stratified random sampling method from each geographical zone of the federation that fell into the sample. A total sample of 600 teaching staff (300 males and 300 females) and 600 administrative staff (300 males and 300 females) participated in the study.

The data for the study was collected using questionnaire titled Effective Supervision Inventory (ESI) and augmented by oral interview. It is made up of two parts – Part A is demographic in nature while Part B contains twenty questions bothering on appointments and promotions, availability of resources for effective supervision, attitudes of subordinates and superiors towards supervision, motivational forces put in place to enhance supervision etc. The validity of the questionnaire was done by experts in educational administration and planning. The reliability of the instrument was tested using a Split-Half Method. The correlation coefficient was corrected by the use of Spearman Brown Formula. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was .76 and final Spearman Brown Formula yielded 0.86. The statistics used were Z-test and percentage. The scoring was based on 0 – 1.0 as very low, 1.01 – 1.99 as low, 2.00 – 2.99 as average, 3.00 – 3.5 as good while 3.51 and above as excellent.

Results

Table 1 Responses to the Research Questions

| | YES | NO |
|---|--|-----|
| 1.Is there effective supervision of Nigerian university workers? | 41% | 59% |
| 2.Do Nigerian universities employ based on merit? | 45% | 55% |
| 3.Do Nigerian universities promote based on merit? | 76% | 24% |
| 4.Are university subordinates ready to be supervised? | 58% | 42% |
| 5.Are university superiors ready to supervise their subordinates? | 63% | 37% |
| 6.Are university superiors qualified to supervise? | 46% | 54% |
| 7.Is time a constraint to effective supervision? | 89% | 11% |
| 8.Are resources needed for supervision available? | 46% | 54% |
| 9.Is there any reward for good performance of any worker? | 32% | 68% |
| 10.What are the factors hindering effective supervision of Nigerian university workers? | workload, attitude, inadequate Resources, poor communication | |
| | corruption, lack of trust, fear | |
| | God fatherism, inexperience, leadership quality | |

HO1 The first null hypothesis which states that there will be no significant difference in the perception of male and female Nigerian university workers on the effectiveness of supervision in Nigerian universities was tested using the data collected from the questionnaire. The result is as on Table 2.

Table 2 Test of Significant Difference in Supervision Effectiveness as Perceived by Male and Female University Workers

| Statistics | Male | Female | Calculated Z-Value | Table Value |
|------------|------|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Number | 600 | 600 | | |
| Mean | 2.02 | 1.98 | 1.74 | 1.96 |
| which SD | .41 | .37 | | |

From Table 2, the calculated Z-Value at 0.05-Confidence Level is 1.74 while the Table Value was 1.96, the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in the perception of male and female Nigerian university workers on the effectiveness of supervision in Nigerian universities is therefore accepted. Out of the 600 male respondents, the mean score was 2.02 with a standard deviation of .41 which indicated an average effort in the supervision effectiveness. However, out of 600 female respondents, the mean score was 1.98 with a standard deviation of .37 which indicated a low effort in supervision effectiveness. There was however no significant difference as the Z-Value was 1.74.

HO2 There will be no significant difference in the supervision of academic and non-academic staff as perceived by university workers based on sex.

Table 3 Test of Significant Difference in the supervision of academic and non-academic staff as perceived by university workers based on sex.

| Statistics | Male | Female | Calculated Z-Value | Table Value |
|------------|------|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Number | 600 | 600 | | |
| Mean | 2.67 | 2.72 | 1.92 | 1.96 |
| SD | .39 | .42 | | |

From Table 2, the calculated Z-Value at 0.05-Confidence Level is 1.92 while the Table Value was 1.96, the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in the supervision of academic and non-academic staff as perceived by university workers based on sex is therefore accepted. The mean score for male workers was 2.67 with a standard deviation of .39 which indicated average effectiveness while the mean score for female was 2.72 with a standard deviation of .42. This also indicated average effectiveness. This, however from statistical testing showed that there was no significant difference

HO3 The third null hypothesis which states that there will be no significant difference in the perception of academic and non-academic university workers as to adequate motivational forces at play in supervision

Table 4 Test of Significant Difference between Academic and Non-Academics Staff Perception of Motivational Forces at Play in Supervision

| Statistics | Academics | Non-academics | Tested Z-Value | Table Value |
|------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| Number | 600 | 600 | | |
| Mean | 2.08 | 2.85 | 32.08 | 1.96 |
| SD | .43 | .41 | | |

From Table 4, the calculated Z-Value at 0.05-Confidence Level is 32.08 while the Table Value 1.96. The null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in the perception of academic and non-academic university workers as to adequate motivational forces at play in supervision is therefore accepted. Out of the 600 male respondents, the mean score was 2.08 with a standard deviation of .43 which indicated an average average motivational forces at play in the supervision effectiveness. However, out of 600 female respondents, the mean score was 2.85 with a standard deviation of .41 which also indicated an average motivational forces at play in supervision effectiveness. There was however a significant difference as the Z-Value was 32.08.

Discussion

From the data collected from the questionnaire, 59% of all the respondents indicated that there was no effective supervision of Nigeria university workers. This was due to inadequate time due to heavy workload, lack of trust, inexperience, leadership quality, workers' attitude etc. On the question of appointments and promotions based on merit, 55% indicated that appointments were not based on merit while only 24% were negative in their responses concerning promotion. This means that Nigerian universities to a larger extent promote based on merit. On the question of readiness of the subordinates to be supervised and the superiors to supervise, only 42% indicated willingness to be supervised while only 37% were willing to supervise. When respondents were further interviewed with regard to low positive responses on both the part of the subordinates and the super-ordinates, the general responses were due to general insecurity in the country especially violence and kidnapping issues and god fatherism. Also, they stated that many young mothers come to work with their children. One sometimes wondered whether workplace has now been turned into nursery.

Time constraint was indicated by 89% of the respondents as one of the major factors militating against effective supervision. This was due to heavy workload carried by both the academic and non-academic staff. Only 54% of the respondents agreed that resources for effective supervision were available while 46% were of contrary opinion. On the question of adequate motivation for good job performance, 68% responded positively while 32% were of negative opinion.

Conclusion

From the data analysis and discussion of results, there is no effective supervision in Nigerian universities. Both academic and non-academics have same result in how they are supervised by their superordinates. This is an indication that there is need to change the present form of supervision to a more vibrant method that will bring about increase in productivity of staff. The attitudes and behaviors of individuals within the organization must be in line with Weberian characteristics of bureaucracy of the organization. Too much workload may affect the time reserved for supervision. Supervision is one of the major functions of an administrator and where it is not well performed, it makes administration a child's play. The non-academic supervisors showed good motivational forces available for the supervisors while the academic supervisors were on the lower scale which means that there is need for improvement.

Recommendations

In order to correct the present deficiency in effective supervision in Nigerian universities, the following recommendations are made: -

- Conferences, workshops and seminars should be organized for both subordinates and the supervisors in Nigerian universities in order to create public awareness on the importance of effective supervision.
- Supervisors' workload should be decreased in order to give more time for effective supervision.
- Attitudes and behaviors of workers should be controlled by the use of rules and regulations set down by the organization irrespective of who brings one to the organization.
- Universities should build daycare centers for young mothers to keep their children during working hours.
- Universities should try to employ based on attitude, skill and knowledge. There should be transparency in appointments and promotion.
- Better motivational forces should be put in place for better supervision.

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