

Managing Organizational Politics for Effective Productivity in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Politics is a means of recognizing and, ultimately, reconciling competing interests within the organization. Organizational politics refers to the intentional acts of individuals and groups to protect and enhance their self-interests. This paper examined the concept of politics and organizational politics. It's x-rays how management of organizational politics could lead to effective productivity in Nigeria tertiary institutions. The paper also itemized four challenges hindering effective productivity as a result of negative politics being played. The paper concludes by asserting that issue of organizational politics in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is not a new idea. During colonial era, the activities relating to management of education were influenced politically. The paper therefore suggested four ways forward towards improvement of organizational effective productivity.

Keywords: Organizational Politics, Effective Productivity, Tertiary Institutions, Educational Management, Institutional Governance

INTRODUCTION

Considering the indispensable roles and contributions of tertiary education to meaningful socio-economic, political, cultural and national development, no responsible citizen would argue the fact that its proper management and administration should not receive attention or given high priority by the government. Nigeria tertiary institutions are set up through legislative in the form of Laws, Acts, Decrees, Edits, Ordinances, Status and Regulations which clearly outline the roles of the various tertiary institutions, the administrative and management staff of the institutions, their powers and functions [1]. Till the end of humanity, organizational politics cannot be eliminated from organizational life and a manager would be naive to expect to do so [2]. Organizational politics refers to the intentional acts of individuals and groups to protect and enhance their self-interests [3]. Politics is a means of recognizing and, ultimately, reconciling competing interests within the organization [4]. But organizational political manoeuvring can be managed to keep it within constructive limits [5]. It is clear that the more people focus their emotional and intellectual energy on self-interest, the less the energy that will be available to pursue organizational interest. Yet to be committed to pursue organizational goals individuals must at the same time satisfy their personal interest [5]. Thus, a good team player pays equal interest to personal and organizational interest and goals. Management should create an atmosphere in which their staff can pursue organizational goals while at the same time achieving personal interest [6]. To achieve such a balance, managers should reduce organizational uncertainty, reduce competition and promote cooperation, break existing coercive empires, prevent future empires by transfers, promote open communication, encourage participative goal setting and decision-making [7]. In other words, managers must use their power to allow human resources benefits from what is rightly and legally for them and prevent a situation where staff perceives the organization as not caring for them and their development and collective welfare [8]. Managers should maintain a healthy balance between the self-interest of employees and organizational interests [9]. Organizational political behaviour becomes a negative counterproductive force when self-interest erodes or defeat organizational interest. Political behaviour in organizations is often triggered by uncertainty. Uncertainty may be caused but unclear objectives, vague performance measures, an ill-defined decision-making process, strong individual or group competition, and any type of change [10]. In organizations political action takes place at three levels; individual, coalition and

network [11]. A coalition is at temporary grouping of people who actively pursue a single issue while a network is a loose association of individuals seeking social support for their general self-interests [12]. Networks have broader and longer-term agendas than coalitions.

Concept of Politics

A politician is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'a shrewd schemer; a crafty plotter or an intriguer'. Company politicians can be like this. They manoeuvre away behind people's backs, blocking proposals they do not like [13]. They advance their own reputation and career at the expense of other people. They are envious and jealous, and act accordingly. They are bad news, and they should be stopped [14]. Unfortunately, they work behind closed doors and can too easily scuttle away under the skirting board if you try to crush them. And so they continue to survive. But politics of a much gentler kind are also found in any organization. They are occasions when a subtle appeal rather than a direct attack will pay dividends; and sometimes you have to exercise your powers of pursuance indirectly on those whose support you need [15]. Politics can be conceptualized as the authoritative allocation of resources in terms of what is to be allocated, who gets what, how much, when and possibly why [16]. As people get employed to work for an organization, they at times inadvertently find themselves in camps and factions as informal groups that have clear but unwritten interests and perceived enemies [17]. When a new boss arrives, one camp befriends him/her immediately, and starts pointing the finger, as well as pointing out the weak points or 'atrocities' of the other group [18]. If the boss accepts this view, then conflict has been given birth to because the other group will withdraw, back off and start manifestly or clandestinely fighting the boss [19]. He/she finds himself/herself in a position where one group weeps over and the other celebrate his failures. The perceived enemy group's requests for facilities, funds and/or assistance are turned down with reference to all the rules in the book, in favour of the 'friendly' group. This is as far as groups are concerned [20]. However, there are the individual political struggles that reveal the 'boss' babies', who are the bootlickers. Such people quickly agree to a working weekend without an allowance, and have no 'no' but always 'yes' to the boss ideas, views and mere wishes in order to appease the boss in hope of a possible promotion payoff, a trip or any other favour [21]. There are even pretentious employees who make sure they carry files home to continue the office work. This, they do while making sure the boss notice them carrying the file home although they bring back the files in the same manner; no work on them [22]. The ladies play their game by provocative dressing aimed at attracting the admiration of the males and especially the male boss [23]. This situation is now also becoming common with the male employees targeting their female bosses. These are hilarious games called organizational politics that managers must understand, look out for and handle appropriately.

Organizational Politics

Organizational politics is the process of and behaviour in human interactions involving power and authority. It is also a tool to assess the operational capacity and to balance diverse views of interested parties. It is also known as office politics or work politics [24]. By this it therefore means that people involve in all kind of tricks to get what they want or to satisfy their personal interest or group interest within their organization. Organizational politics, according to [5], is an ever-present and often unavoidable phenomenon of organizational life. The classical school believes that organizations are rationally structured based on reasonable division of labour, a clear hierarchy of authority and communication aimed at well-defined and understandable goals. But in reality, organizations are made up of people with personal agendas to win power and exert influence. Organizational politics refers to the intentional acts of individuals and groups to protect and enhance their self-interests [25]. Politics is means of recognizing and, ultimately, reconciling competing interests within organization. It avoids the rational structure, manipulates communication flow and ignores the established line of authority [26]. The rules of the game are never written down or discussed. Administrators, managers, supervisors and all other staff are active in any organization setting. Organizational actors seek to satisfy not only organizational interests, but also their own needs driven by self-interest [27]. Organizational politics stem from a diversity of interests and are driven by interest. To fully understand the politics of the organization, it is necessary to explore the processes by which people engaged in politics [28]. It is inevitable that within the organization, all employees bring their own interest, wants, desires, and needs to the work place. Organizational decision-making and problem-solving, while seemingly a rational process, are also a political process [29]. Members of a corporation are at one and the same time co-operators and rivals for the rewards of successful performance. Rational models of organizational behaviour therefore only explain a portion of the behaviour observed [30]. Regardless of the degree to which employees may be committed to the organization's objectives, there can be little doubt that, at least occasionally, personal interests will be incongruent with those of the organization [31]. Like organizational conflict, organizational politics arises when people think differently. Managers should maintain a healthy balance between the self-interest of employees and organizational interests [32]. Organizational political behaviour becomes a negative counterproductive force when self-interests erode or defeat organizational interest. Political behaviour in organizations is often triggered by uncertainty [33]. Uncertainty may be caused by unclear objectives, vague

performance measures, an ill-defined decision-making process, strong individual or group completion, and any type change [34]. In organizations political action takes place at three levels; individual, coalition and network. A coalition is at temporary grouping of people who actively pursue a single issue while a network is a loose association of individuals seeking social support for their general self-interests [35]. Networks have broader and longer term agendas than coalitions.

Tertiary Institution

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria not completely free from political interference especially in the management of the institutions [36]. The issues of influencing the internal management of the affairs of tertiary institutions occur as politicians influence the appointment of the Chief Executives of the various tertiary institutions like the Vice-Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts. The situation is sometimes worst in state's owned tertiary institutions which some governors give directive on those to be appointed as Deans, Heads of Departments, Registrar and Directors of different programmes [37]. Inefficiency and mediocrity would dominate the management of tertiary institutions for effective productivity when internal arrangements and guidelines for selecting or electing the principal officers in institutions are replaced with political considerations and influences.

Management of Tertiary Education in Nigeria

[38], noted that management of tertiary education is a dynamic process through which the human and non-human resources are mobilized towards the attainment of the goals of tertiary education. The purpose of managing politics in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is to enhance effective teaching and learning in order to prepare the students to contribute meaningfully towards achieving sustainable development after graduation. To enhance effective productivity of management of tertiary education, the chief executives of tertiary institutions are expected to create conducive working conditions and structures that will bring about the involvement of enable free playground for all staff within the institutions [39]. Effective management of politics within an institutions rest upon at ensuring that all the resources in the institutions are channelled towards the attainment of the goals of tertiary education that are stated in the National Policy on Education through collaboration which represents the political will on how the government wants managers of tertiary education to be managed [40]. The role of the managers of tertiary institutions is to enhance the implementation of the various academic programmes formulated through political process by government with the aim of reducing politics within tertiary institutions thereby improving effective productivity amongst teaching and non-teaching staff. The progress and standard of any tertiary institutions depends on the managerial strengths of the chief executive of such institutions to mitigate the level politics being played among employees of the institutions [41].

Managing organizational Politics for Effective Productivity in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions

Management is the processed practice through which the objectives of an organization are executed towards their achievement by optimizing the use of both human and non-human resources in the organization [42]. By this, management is the authority relationship that exists at organizational level between super-ordinates and the subordinates to achieve the goal for which the organization was established [43]. Managing organizational politics within an organization requires prudent expertise of a manager in handling issues of his employee that has to do their promotions, motivations, compensation and opportunities for training and retraining and so on head-on and by putting in place strategies for achieving these in place. However, a manager has to perform certain functions in coordinating the efforts of the people in the organization. In achieving its primary goals, the manager must demonstrate certain abilities in making decisions; in initiating goals; in inspiring; in understanding and analysing problems and finding solutions to them [44]. Indeed, anyone who carries out these and similar activities could rightly be regarded as a manager. This is more so in an organization as Universities with a structure that allows two or more units or groups to share functional boundaries in achieving its set objectives [45]. In universities, people with differing nature students, lecturers and administrative staff have to work harmoniously together. Hence, the organizational structure is such that staff and staff, students and students and staff and students share functional boundaries of exchange of knowledge. In carrying out these functions, there are always conflicts within and among the categories of people within the university community, namely students, academics, administrators, non-academics and their unions. To achieve a balance-strategies for managing organizational politics, manager should reduce organizational uncertainty, reduce competition and promote cooperation, break existing coercive empires, prevent future empires by transfers, promote open communication, encourage participative-goal setting and decision-making [46]. In other words, administrators and managers must use their power to empower staff and prevent a situation where staff perceives the organization as not caring about personal and collective welfare [8].

Challenges hindering managing organizational politics for effective productivity in Nigeria tertiary institutions. They include:

1. Management Factor: In most Nigeria universities, for instance, politics informed the basis of appointments, promotion, privileges, rights, duties and responsibilities. The management of most universities allow mediocrity as against meritocracy in the acquisition of resources, allocation of resources and duty roles. This can affect administration which will in turn hinder effective productivity in Nigeria universities.
2. Academic Factor: Those who held academic positions like the Deans, Faculty officers, HoDs, Head of Units, etc may decide to play politics in the allocation of duties and responsibilities such as course allocation, faculty responsibilities, and so on. This may affect productivity of academic staff concerned.
3. No-academic staff Factor: Being truthful to those who are in works or duties are allocated to those they have mutual interest or have common benefits to. This then restricts circular flow of opportunities and benefits of workers in the non-academics. This also may affect productivity.
4. Students Factor: Students union is allowed to operate in an institution. In an effort to organize its affairs, they may develop a student union government. This students' union government is filled with politics where interest of individuals and students may be politically moved which will then affect the free flow of education and administration of institutions.

CONCLUSION

The issue of organizational politics in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is not a new idea. During colonial era, the activities relating to management of education were influenced politically. For the fact that politics is concerned with power play to avoid chaos through the maintenance of orderliness in the society, education programmes are bound to reflect politics of the nations which designed them. Hence, educational administrators should ensure that, there is equitable distribution of adequate resources and the harmonization of the relationships and interactions in a suitable environment, in order to foster the attainment of the goals of teaching and learning. Those in managerial offices like the Deans, HoDs, Faculty officers, etc should manage politics that exist in their area of jurisdiction so that the aims of university education can never be thwarted as a result of uncontrolled or mismanaged politics in education.

Suggestions for Improvement

In the face of the obvious challenges of managing organizational politics in the Nigeria tertiary institutions, the paper suggests the following as ways forward for improving the limitations associated with the organizational politics in Nigeria tertiary institutions:

1. There is need for orientating those in the managerial positions: The media, educational institutions and educational stakeholders should create awareness through seminars, symposia, workshops, conferences, adverts, etc on how HoDs, Deans, Faculty officers, etc should manage politics in educational affairs in order to attain smooth administration that will enhance high productivity of academic and non-academic staff.
2. Orienting Academic Staff: The media, educational institutions and educational stakeholders should create awareness through seminars, symposia, workshops, conferences, adverts, etc on how academic staff should play the politics in the school especially when it comes to role sharing, responsibilities, research duties, etc.
3. Orienting Non-Academic Staff: The media, educational institutions and educational stakeholders should create awareness through seminars, symposia, workshops, conferences, adverts, etc on how academic staff should play the politics in the school especially when it comes to role sharing, responsibilities, administrative duties, etc.
4. Orienting Students: The media, educational institutions and educational stakeholders should create awareness through seminars, symposia, workshops, conferences, adverts, etc on how students' union government should manage politics in their affairs in order not to disrupts the administration of the university in the achievement of its objectives.

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