

Chapter 18

Effective Decision Making for Knowledge Development in Higher Education: A Case Study of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Making decisions is the most important task of university leaders or managers and it is often the most difficult task. This chapter offers a step-by-step decision-making procedure for solving complex problems. It outlines the concept of decision-making and processes for both public and private decision-making agendas, using different decision criteria and different types of information. This chapter also describes barriers to effective decision making and decisions that must be made in conditions of certainty and uncertainty. Using a descriptive and suggestive research design, multiple statistical procedures; the results revealed that the types, styles and barrier to decision making processes are significantly related to the poor quality management of higher education in Nigeria? It is therefore imperative that institutional leaders are thoughtful and precise decision makers. This study recommends that the process of decision making ought not to be reactionary, but systematically planned and swift as well as planning for the unanticipated and unintentional situations as they arise.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education management and decision making processes has dominated the academic landscape of higher education management globally. It appears to be gaining ground in present day Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education around the world. Nonetheless, decision making processes of

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these institutions are on a daily basis criticized because of their inefficiencies, sluggishness, bureaucratic nature as well as their ineffectiveness in reaching or meeting targeted goals (Ahiauzu & Ololube, 2016).

Effective institutional management explains the approaches that combine the values, morals, principles and ethics of several different decision making practices that are used to better restore effectiveness in higher education management. Institutional leadership is described in relation to the fairness of decision-making processes and interpersonal treatment including equity and justice in the higher education (Ololube, 2017).

Decision making (decision from Latin *decidere* “to decide, determine,” literally “to cut off,” from *de-* “off” and *caedere* “to cut”) can be regarded as the intellectual processes resulting in the selection of a course of action from among several alternative scenarios. Every decision making process produces a final choice (whether an action or opinion/position) as its output. Some decisions, however, prove to be more than a simple choice among alternatives. Many managerial decisions are part of a process that entails a series of sub-decisions (Sadaghiyani, 2011). One common way of approaching decisions of differing complexities is to see the decision making process as one of problem solving or opportunity-finding. In this paradigm, a problem reflects a distance between an actual and desired situation. The essence of the problem-solving process, therefore, is to bridge this distance. A number of ways can assist leaders in problem solving. Amongst them are:

Problem identification and diagnosis are based on information. Many problems are very obvious or well defined and it then becomes the task of higher education leaders to properly analyze the available information. Once a problem and its associated causes are identified and defined, it is important to generate alternative solutions. A good manager is expected to be creative and satisfying in decision making. Creativity is the ability to generate new or novel ideas. Satisfying is selecting an acceptable rather than an optimal alternative if needed. After choosing an alternative, the choice must be implemented, which usually involves committing resources to a course of action. The poor implementation of a good choice may lead to failure. According to Ibara (2010), the decision making process involves not only making decisions but implementing the chosen decisions. Implementation, however, is not the final step in the process. An effective decision need to be monitored and controlled and results need to be judged in terms of the objectives for which the decision was made. For Hoy and Miskel (2004), it is not until decision making is monitored and the results translated into achievement that a decision can be considered complete and successful.

Higher education institutions the world over aim is to generate value for its owners (private and government), customers (students) and other stakeholders (parents, community and society). It must decide how to combine valuable resources (human and materials) by making good decisions that would be beneficial in such a way that the value of the output exceeds the costs of the input. Unfortunately, most higher education institutions fail to fully satisfy the requirements of this process (Ololube, Agbor & Agabi, 2017; Ololube, Agbor & Kpolovie, 2016).

Many institutional leaders or managers feel as though they are often faced with decisions that may succeed or fail. The nature of any decision depends on the beliefs about the cause-and-effect relationship and preferences about possible outcomes (Ololube, 2013). In rare situations, institutional leaders find themselves uncertain about the cause-and-effect relationship and/or outcome preferences, rendering their decision making even more difficult. Decisions by Institutional leaders can involve a wide range of issues including curriculum planning, motivation, staff and students discipline, facilities and services management, school-community relations, conflict resolutions, staff welfare, and so on. In order to ef-

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