

Gender Disparity in Administrative Effectiveness of Heads of Academic Departments in Nigerian Universities

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ABSTRACT The study was on the level of administrative effectiveness of Heads of Academic Departments in Nigerian universities and the significant difference (if any) in administrative effectiveness of male and female Heads of Academic Departments. One research question and one hypothesis were raised / formulated to direct the investigation. Out of 1520 Heads of Academic Departments in all 36 public universities in Nigeria, 1326 academic staff in nine universities were selected from 362 Departments in nine universities for the study. The results of investigation revealed that the administrative effectiveness of Heads of Departments in Nigerian universities was high. Since there was no significant difference in the area of sex, it was recommended among others that gender should not be a hindrance in the appointment of Heads of Departments.

INTRODUCTION

The state of administration in higher education has been a source of concern to the stakeholders. The universities had had firm control of the activities of staff and students. This was to the extent of the existence of normal academic calendar of nine months. Stakeholders especially parents and employers of labour had assurance as to the precise year of graduation and calibre of graduates from universities in Nigeria

The mandate of the university as specified in section 8 of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004 edition) is to teach, conduct research development and provide community service. These organizational goals of the university seem no longer realisable due to obstacles that include alleged poor performance of Heads of Departments who are no longer performing their functions effectively. Lucas (1994) describes administrative functions of the Head of Department to include: preparing teaching schedules, ensuring teaching effectiveness of staff, managing graduate assistants, and other departmental staff, performing personnel decision-making, revising the curriculum, and managing the budget. The success or failure of the department is therefore his responsibility. The mandate of the university can only be achieved through the effective performance, by the Heads of Departments, of their functions.

The National Universities Commission (NUC) in its 2002 report on the state of education in

Nigeria alleged that universities in Nigeria perform below expectation (Okebukola, 2002). Some stakeholders especially parents and employers of labour also alleged poor performance of graduates from universities in Nigeria. Aghenta (2001) equally observed that not more than 30 percent of the normal period of teaching is used for actual teaching. Lecturers do not submit examination questions early neither do they mark the scripts and submit results on time. Could these be because the Heads of Departments are uncaring, self-serving and exhibits dictatorial management? There are situations where, for instance, students do not even register their courses before examinations. Since the department is the basic unit of the university system, could it be that the Heads of Departments are not performing their administrative or supervisory roles effectively? How effective are the Heads of Departments in the administration of academic departments? Could it also be that female Heads of Departments are not effective in the performance of administrative duties?

It was therefore imperative to ascertain the administrative effectiveness of Heads of Departments who are given duties to perform and determine if female Heads of Departments are not effective in the performance of administrative duties?

METHOD OF STUDY

This is a descriptive research based on the ex-

post-facto design. The population of the study comprised all the academic staff in the 1520 Academic Departments in all the 36 public universities in a range of types of (federal, state, conventional, specialized, older, newer) universities. Through a multistage and stratified methods and finally through purposive sampling technique 1,326 academic staff were selected to rate the 362 Heads of Departments in nine universities taken from the 36 public universities in Nigeria.

The main instrument that was used in data collection was the questionnaire titled 'Heads of Departments Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (HODAEQ)'. The purpose of the questionnaire was to request the respondents to rate the performance of the Heads of Departments in Nigerian universities in order to determine their administrative effectiveness. The questionnaire was made up of two major sections. The first section sought background information (ownership, age and curriculum of university and sex of the Head of Department. The second section contained 30 administrative duties of the Head of Department on which academic staff were asked to rate the performance of their Heads of Departments on a five point Likert type scale.

The items were grouped into seven functional areas that included Heads of Departments' administration of instructional programmes, administration of staff, administration of students, administration of facilities, administration of finance, administration of external relations and administration of office. Five of these groups had four items per group whose responses were to determine the administrative effectiveness of the Heads of Departments. The other two groups had five items each.

To ensure the achievement of the face and content validity the instrument Heads of Departments Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (HODAEQ) was designed to reflect

the problem and the hypothesis of the study. Two research consultants in educational administration certified the instrument before it was administered. The test-retest method was used to test the reliability of the instrument. The data obtained was statistically analyzed to obtain the reliability coefficient. The result of the correlation of the scores through Pearson's 'r' was 0.83.

The questionnaire was administered on a total of 1,448 academic staff in the 362 departments out of which 1,326 was retrieved for analysis. The data collected to answer the research question raised for the study were analyzed with the use of means and percentages. The hypothesis that was formulated was tested using the z-test statistics. Sixty percent (or transformed mean of 3.00) was adopted as the base line for administrative effectiveness.

Research Question: What is the level of administrative effectiveness of Heads of Departments? This question was answered using means and percentages. The results are presented in table 1.

As revealed in table 1, there were a total of 1,326 respondents who rated the 362 Heads of Departments in the nine selected universities. With a mean of 15.2, a transformed mean of 3.55 and 71 percent rating on administrative effectiveness, it can be concluded that the Heads of Departments have a high level of administrative effectiveness rating.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in administrative effectiveness between male and female Heads of Departments of universities in Nigeria.

The hypothesis was tested by applying the z-test. The result of analysis is presented in table 2.

The z-test of significance of difference as shown in the table 2 had a calculated z-value of 1.54. This indicates that no significant difference exists in administrative effectiveness of male and female Heads of Departments in Nigerian

Table 1: Administrative effectiveness rating of heads of departments

Effectiveness rating	Respondents	Total Score	\bar{X}	T. \bar{X}	%	Remarks
	1, 326	141,335	15.2	3.55	71	Effective

Table 2: z-test in administrative effectiveness between male and female heads of departments in Nigerian Universities

	Gender	N	\bar{x}	sd	df	z	z-value	Remarks
Administrative Effectiveness	Male	1,150	71.8	6.9	1,324	1.54	±1.96	Not Significant P>0.05
	Female	176	70.2	7.6				

universities. Thus, the hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in administrative effectiveness between male and female Heads of Departments is retained.

DISCUSSION

One of the findings of this study was that Heads of Departments were generally very effective (71%) in their administration of academic departments. The finding confirms that of Hamlin (2002) that found a degree of congruence in all the criteria of managerial effectiveness of leaders in higher education. He had found academic leaders as effective.

Another important finding was that females were under represented in departmental headship in Nigerian universities. The finding of Futrell (2002) is confirmed that women represent a small proportion of educational leaders and administrators. One would tend to agree with Forsyth (1999), that men are likely to emerge as leaders because women are 'reluctant' to assume leadership roles. This result is a confirmation of Forsyth's earlier confirmation that there is a significant difference in leadership emergence by gender, which he translated to mean that leadership performance is tilted towards the male than female leaders. With a mean score of 70.2, female Heads of Departments were found to be effective in their administration of academic departments. This is further strengthened by the result of z-test that showed no significant difference in Heads of Departments administrative effectiveness between males and females. The earlier impressions had been on exclusive gender differences that negatively affect the appointment and performance or effectiveness of female Heads of Departments (Korabik, 2002). Out of the 362 Heads of Departments sampled, only thirteen percent were females. It may be a result of their relative non-availability as may be found in the male-female ratio of academic staff in universities. From the results, therefore, the sex of a leader cannot be equated with ability, performance and effectiveness.

The findings do not agree with Hawkin's (1995) observation that there are mutually exclusive gender differences that affect the emergence and performance of a leader. The finding of no significant difference in administrative effectiveness between male and female Heads of Departments confirms Osho's (1998) earlier finding of no

significant difference in administrative effectiveness between male and female principals. There is thus no differential performance in leadership by men and women as observed by Korabik (2002). She had concluded that women are given person-oriented leadership skills while men should be given task-oriented skills to ensure their effective leadership performance.

CONCLUSION

The study has provided evidence of high level of administrative effectiveness of Heads of Departments in Universities in Nigeria. It would appear that the problems that emanate and usually lead to crises within the universities in Nigeria may not be traced to the administration of departments by Heads of Departments. The appointment of Heads of Departments seems to be appropriate as almost all Heads of Departments were effective in the performance of administrative duties in the departments.

The finding of no significant difference in administrative effectiveness of Heads of Departments between males and females has implication for gender issues in university administration. There is the current global focus on female education that requires increase not only in women education but also in female involvement in educational administration in general and university governance in particular. This seems to be the focus of 'women in academics' movement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Heads of Departments should continuously perform their administrative functions as best they can. They only need to be encouraged to do better so as to increase the percentage rating on the effectiveness scale.

Gender of an academic staff should not be a factor in considering whom to appoint as Heads of Departments. If the academic staff meet the set criteria for appointments such as experience, they should be appointed as Heads of Departments; their administrative effectiveness is not in doubt. Conscious and direct plans need to be put in place to redirect focus on bringing women into academics.

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