Full Length Research Paper

Does the organizational structure affect the management of universities in Uganda? An empirical analysis

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The organisational structure of universities follows particular models that distinguish them from other learning institutions. This research investigated the effect of the organisational structure on the management of universities in Uganda using a sample of 361, 44 % of whom were members of academic staff, and the rest contained university top management officials, administrative and support staff of universities. The subjects were selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a questionnaire as well as interview guide. Statistical data were analyzed by referential and descriptive statistical processes with SPSS software. The findings reveal that the organisational structure of universities significantly affects the management. While the staff in universities require a more flexible approach which enhances more creativity, innovations and autonomy, the present organisational structure of universities contains high levels of formalization characterised by rigidity and centralised decision making processes. The staff feel that universities can operate between the two theoretical polarities (bureaucratic and collegial) in order to remain competitive.

Key words: Organizational structure, management, bureaucracy, collegial.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the management of universities in Uganda is at a crossroad; the inappropriate organisational structures are threatening the survival of universities. Universities are increasingly becoming more unstable; a condition that has deterred success and requires immediate redress to avert crisis in management. Kezar and Eckel (2004) emphasises that the management of universities has changed during the last decades with more emphasis put on high stake issues and more incremental decisions made in a less collegial mode. The reasons for this stem from trends that have devalued the notions of partici-

pation and also from the external pressures for more accountability and demands for quicker decision making (that sometimes is achieved through bureaucracy). Dearlove (2002) added that under the conditions of mass higher education, today no university can avoid the need for some sort of bureaucratic management and organisation.

When universities are established, their overall functioning is supposed to be controlled by the established structure. The university organisational structure is an important guide such that it gives all the important

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information about the activities that take place at the institution along with details of the management plans. The organisational structure encourages efficient communication, team work and overall institution's goal attainment.

Weihrich and Kootnz (1993) pointed out that the organisational structure of any organisation is established to achieve corporate goals. This implies that for an institution to thrive, it must have an appropriate organisational structure. It is important to note that the variance in size, ideology, objective or steering policy of universities does not give them a leeway to operate haphazardly though Sanyal and Martin (1998) argue that the management of universities is always influenced by the type of government steering policy in force. The four major types of governmental steering policies include: systems operating under self-regulation with a broad framework of accountability with greater use of free market incentives; systems in transition from centralized planning to self-regulation; systems operating under self-regulation but experiencing difficult; and systems under direct centralised planning and control. These four types of steering policies led to four types of decision making models in a university which include: collegial or consensus model; political decision model; bureaucratic model; and entrepreneurial model. Given the fact that in an ideal situation a university makes a combination of the above models to suit its own context, this study intends to examine the effects of some of these models on the management of universities in Uganda.

Background to the study

University management in Uganda can be traced back to 1922 when Makerere, started as a humble technical school with only 14 students. It expanded and in July 1970, Makerere became a fully fledged university of the Republic of Uganda. However, from the late 1980s, other new universities were established and these include private not- for profit, private for profit and public institutions governed by differentiated structures of management. It should be noted that by the 1980s, universities particularly those in Africa grew from elite institutions to large ones which now provide most higher education.

A pertinent and fundamental observation to note is that each university deals with management concerns in a way that makes sense of it as confirmed by Watson (2007) that each university is autonomous, with a distinct history and culture. Nevertheless, the competitive academic environments universities are experiencing today regardless of their history require an appropriate organisational structure to become effective. Truthfully, universities are facing new challenges, they are exposed to changes in their operation; such changes predispose

universities to re-organize and adopt an appropriate system that can lead the university to goal attainment. A well organised system for example, can stimulate creativity and innovation (Martins and Terblanche, 2003); attract good staff, students and donor funding; lead to prestige; as well as reducing staff turnover. In support of the argument, Schermerhorn (2002) said that the structure of a successful organization contributes to her long term performance. Certainly, an organisational structure that leads an organisation to flourish encourages practices such as participatory decision making, team work and cohesion, creativity, commitment and flexibility.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The organizational structure of a university refers to the hierarchy through which delegation of responsibility is accomplished. This gives employees and students a sense of direction. The organisational structure consists of activities such as task allocation, coordination and supervision which are directed towards the achievement of organisational goals. It can also be considered as the viewing glass of perspective through which individuals see their organisation and environment.

The concept of management was recognised many years ago by early practical scholars of management such as Henri Fayol and Chester Bernard (Koontz, O'Donnell and Weihrich, 1980). Management may be seen as a science or as an art. The two perspectives enhance organisational effectiveness. The image of management as a science brings out the notion of management processes which Musaazi (1982) described as planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting. In this perspective, we see that the first task of management is to plan – that is setting targets or goals for the future, establishing detailed steps for achieving those targets, and then allocating resources to accomplish those plans. This is followed by organizing and staffing. Here, management creates an organisational structure, sets job requirements, staffs the job with qualified individuals, communicates the plan, and devises systems to monitor implementation. Finally, management ensures plan accomplishment by controlling and monitoring results versus the plan in some detail, both formally and informally, by means of reports, meetings, and other tools; identifying deviations and then planning and organising to solve the problem.

The study is interested in examining the effect of organisational structure on the management of universities in Uganda as modeled by the conceptual framework (Figure 1). This framework focused primarily on how two forms of organisational structure influence the management of universities and the overall outcome as goal attainment.

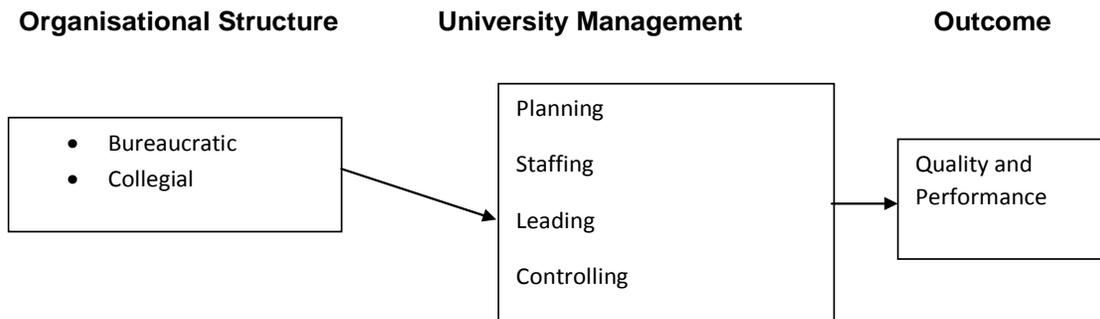The conceptual model portrays the two selected

Organisational Structure   **University Management**   **Outcome**

- Bureaucratic
- Collegial

Planning

Staffing

Leading

Controlling

Quality and Performance

Figure 1. Conceptual framework on the effect of organisational structure and the management of universities in Uganda. Source: Adapted from Sanyal and Martins (1998).

dimensions of organizational structure (i.e. bureaucratic and collegial models). These constructs are highly suitable for the purposes of this investigation for several reasons. First, they are hypothesized to have a greater influence since most universities have adopted them in their daily operations. On the other hand, management is conceptualized as a variable whose success is dependent on a prevalent organizational structure. In the conceptual framework, management is measured under the four main constructs- planning, staffing, leading and controlling. Though this framework outlines the management constructs, in this study management refers to the means by which the universities are organized and managed.

Contingency theory, at times called the situational approach was developed by managers, consultants, and researchers who tried to apply the concept to real- life situations (Stoner et al., 2002). The theory claims that there is no best way to organize a corporation, to lead a company or to make decisions. These managerial functions depend on a prevalent situation. The contingency notions differ greatly from the belief of classical organizational theorists of scholars like Henri Fayol (1841-1925) and Max Weber (1864-1920) who contend that there is always a best way of doing things.

The concept of contingency enables the researcher to make sense of the dynamics of managing universities more especially today, where university education in Uganda is faced with increased enrolment, institutional and functional differentiation of universities and other issues that come along with globalization. A very relevant perspective on contingency here in the study is the notion of recreating and adapting which are advocated for by contingency theorists. Truthfully, universities are experiencing a lot of changes in admission, marketing, pedagogy, internal interactions, academic programmes and leadership. These changes require a university to re-position, recreate and adapt strategic plans that will lead the university to thrive.

The contingency theory is central in the management of a university. This means that the management orientations of a university should fit the situation. Further this can lead to the assertion that the organisational structural models adapted should vary to fit the situation. Watson (2007)'s assertion that the modern university is expected to be many contradictory things simultaneously is a useful contribution to understanding the linkage of management to contingency theory. Watson contends that the university should be both: competitive and collegial; private and public; conservative and radical; local and international; traditional and innovative.

The problem

The organizational structure of universities is assumed to play a significant role in the overall functioning of the institution. Though widely known that the characteristics of organisational structure of universities follow particular models that distinguish them from other institutions of learning (Sanyal and Martins, 1998); and for a university to succeed there must be deliberate strategy to integrate organisational structural models in order to enhance quality and performance, universities in Uganda have failed to adopt that approach.

As a result, managing universities has become problematic. All stake holders more especially the employees are dissatisfied with the organisational structural models which inhibit staff's innovations, creativity, academic freedom and autonomy. The staff's failure to participate in activities that enhance quality leads to university anarchy, hence, a need to investigate how the organisational structure affects the management of universities in Uganda.

Research questions

To examine the effect of organisational structure on the management of universities, the researcher posed the following questions:

1. Is the university organisational structure bureaucratic?
2. Do these university members have the freedom to decide what to be done or to handle issues in their departments?
3. Does the management involve staff in decision making?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational structure and the management of universities

Research has shown that institutional structures, the way things are organised, influence both behaviour and norms (Bjorkman, 2007), hence, affects the management of the institution. The structures referred to are characterized by the size, specialization, integration, configuration of positions, information flow and location. Like other factors, size determines much of what goes on in organisations. It is easier to control a small organisation than large one- big organizations; like that universities have many faculties and departments that require adequate organisation in order to achieve the purpose and short of that it obviously leads to chaos.

Organisational structure of a fully fledged institution of higher education according to Sanyal and Martin (1998) consists of four areas: a central administration; centrally provided services; specialized teaching and research departments; and non academic services. Today, large universities are moving away from a centralized to a decentralised system. The concepts of centralisation and decentralisation in a university context focus upon the relationship between the senior management and budget centres that are primarily academic departments, although some administrative departments are also maintained as budget centres (Jarzabkowski, 2002).

The degree of centralization or decentralization, particularly in relation to decision making, is a critical issue in the management of universities in Uganda. Basically, more decentralisation may be expected with a group of autonomous departments but can also be tried out to groups that are dependent; for instance in small universities with few faculties and departments. Once in a while dependent groups can be given chance to make and implement their decisions. In so doing, they would gain confidence and realize that their in-put is beneficial to the entire institution.

On the other hand, centralization is associated with universities that have somehow homogeneous departments which are also few in numbers. A centralized system is more less a bureaucratic one, with a culture of formalized and accountable strategic directions and controls. In a centralized system, power concentrates at the top and the senior management controls and influences the programmes and decisions. Control can be

at the top but members within a university, faculty or department can be encouraged to exercise power to a certain degree by allowing them to make decisions on issues that directly affect them**.** However, it is believed that stable environments favour decentralised culture and competitive environments increase centralization as universities resort to management controls in order to improve co-ordination, monitor quality and reduce costs.

Though universities in Uganda are traditional known as professional bureaucracies, loosely coupled systems and resistant to formal direction and control, the increasing competition in the academic market is greatly affecting their functioning and not certain whether the university cultures are in transition from the traditional bureaucracy to more flexible corporate form of organisation. This still leaves a need to understand better the cultures adopted and their impact on effectiveness of universities filling in Uganda. However, Watson (2007, p.372)'s assertion is a useful contribution to this issue.

"The modern university is expected to be many contra-dictory things simultaneously. The university should apparently be both: competitive and collegial; private and public; conservative and radical; local and international critical   and   supportive;   traditional   and innovative…………."

There is an argument on the above point, and it is clear that universities can have both systems as Jarzabkowski (2002 p. 6) put it;

 "It is most likely that most universities operate between centralisation and decentralisation".

It is argued that though each system has its own merits and demerits; integration of systems enhances quality and performance. Here the specific implications of the culture of centralisation and decentralisation in universities can be pointed out.

Centralized universities may be associated with longer term goal setting and management control at the centre, which at times inhibit some high-quality innovations. Such universities are characterized by bureaucratic procedures and could be difficult to change the system of operation.

Decentralized universities may be associated with flexibility and the faculties and departments are able to be locally responsive to initiatives and to generate, deploy and allocate their own resources. However, too much decentralisation affects the quality of a university unless there is a uniform monitoring system for quality of control. These ideas are theoretical polarities and it is likely that most universities will operate between centralised and decentralised systems.

Other literature on organisational structure is concerned with the structural design and individuals filling various positions. Hodson (2005) observed that the structural design of any organisation affects not only

productivity and efficiency, but also the morale and job satisfaction of the workforce. Though there is little research literature on the structural designs of universities in Uganda, the literature on universities worldwide revealed that the traditional bureaucracy (mechanistic) structure still guides the operations within the university, according to Sisaye (2005). The mechanistic structures exhibit hierarchical differentiation with several chain of command levels, concentration of power in top management and centralised decision making (Sisaye, 2005). The traditional bureaucracy is very tight, rigid and inhibits creativity. Sincerely, too tight a central control could inhibit the flexibility and initiative of the academic communities (Fielden and Greenop, 2000) and increase their sense of alienation from the centre.

Bureaucratic and top-down authority is weak in any consent-based organisation of professional employees and it is especially weak where there is a system of professional authority which limits bureaucratic authority. Universities tend to be bottom heavy, with solid professional authority held by academics down the departments. Dearlove (2002) adopts a similar line, arguing that 'universities are too much bottom-heavy, too resistant from the bottom-up, for tycoons to dominate very long and top-down planning involves a control that drives out commitment and trust. Data on universities have shown that they have faculties and departments that are loosely coupled into a system in which the central administration lacks the capacity to give an order and ensure compliance. Nevertheless, it is also arguable that too loose a control could risk the integral identity of the institution and allow factions to develop (Locke, 2007).

While Shattock (2003) views the existing bureaucratic system in universities as inflexible for innovation, Mintzberg (1979) argues that the conventional professional bureaucratic structure of the university is an organic structure. The characteristics of an organic structure are loose structures, flexibility, continual redefinition, subordinates with autonomy, teams and decentralised decision making. That means universities with organic structure are flexible, continually recreate and revise programmes to suit the academic market; they have a culture of encouraging people to think or create and implement the ideas. There is an emerging consensus that this organisational structure is the way universities to go. This is described as move from traditional to modern culture that emphasizes promotion of new values that enable universities become competitive. However, to date, very little is known about the kind of organisational structure which exists in universities of Uganda.

From the literature, it can be inferred that universities, being highly complex (Jarzabkowski, 2002); autonomous, and each with a distinct history and culture (Watson, 2007) follow not just one but at least more structural designs. For instance, when Makerere University was faced with unexpected and rapid expansion of student enrolment and diversification of funding partners it had to decentralise power and responsibilities to the faculties (Epelu-Opio, 2002), and by becoming more decentralised, it is believed tensions and mistrust have reduced. Liu and Dubinsky, (2000) supported the argument when they confirmed that too much centralisation can possibly cause internal tension. Decentralisation of power and responsibilities is an organic dimension.

However, decentralisation should be devolved only to the level that it has capacity and potential to handle the delegated responsibility. This therefore, calls for the need for at least some degree of centralisation of power in persons like the vice chancellor, the academic registrar or the university secretary, who are expected to act as main channels of communication between colleagues and the outside world.

Though some scholars like Liu and Dubinsky, (2000) criticize the co-existence of more than one structural design, definitely, there is need for a coordination of views at a number of different levels, and hence for a hierarchy of responsibilities, if not of power. The existence of the two cultures in this era is essential to minimize inefficiency and maintain high quality. The culture characterized by collegiality, with loosely defined and negotiable strategic direction and control may not be appropriate in this era where universities are facing a very stiff competition, hence, need to integrate the organizational structures. Nevertheless, the structural designs in universities of Uganda need to be established, since they are important aspects and can greatly affect attainment of goals.

METHODS

Research design

The study was carried out following a cross sectional survey, using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The cross sectional survey design involved the administration of questionnaires to a sample of 361. Also, interviews to 72 informants were carried out. Collecting data using a multiple approach system necessitated a triangular approach (Sarantakos, 1988). The examples of educational and management scholars such as Amin (2005), Gall et al. (2003) and Glatthorn and Joyner (2005) also provided justification for the usage of this research design in studying problems in education. However, the design was helpful to this study in such a way that independent variables that were associated with and even those directly impacting on the management of universities were established.

The study targeted all the 6494 people who were working in the 20 universities that had been registered by the National Council for Higher Education by 2007. The first category of targeted population included top management officials who comprised members on the executive committee (vice chancellors, deputy vice chancellors, academic registrars, deans of students and university bursars), and they add up to 156. The second category constituted the deans of faculties and directors of schools and institutes. That category had 92 members. The category of administrative staff had 973

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of universities.

University	Date of establishment	Type	No. of faculties
1. Mbarara university of Science and Technology	1989	Public	03
2. Islamic University in Mbale	1988	Private	05
3. Uganda Martyrs	1993	Private	07
4. Kyambogo university	2002	Public	
5. Bugema University	1994	Private	04
6. Makerere university	1922	Public	22
7. Gulu university	2003	Public	04
8. Ndejje university	1992	Private	04
9. Kampala International	2001	Private	07
10. Uganda Christian university	1997	Private	06
11. Busoga university	1999	Private	03

Source: National Council for Higher Education, 2007.

members; the academic staff were 2905 and the support staff were 2368. Students of the sample universities were, however, left out of the study because the correct information leading to their represen-tation was generally unavailable.

The samples of universities and university respondents were chosen by a combination of random and stratified sampling. The use of random sampling by picking randomly minimized the sampling bias though it is criticized for having included all the public universities in the survey. Table 1 presents information on demo-graphic characteristics of the final sample of universities and Table 2 presents information on distribution of the sample subjects by designation.

The size of the university in terms of number of faculties and programmes was seriously considered. These factors are almost unique features of institutions which would imply that all universities are different. The focus on institutional control was also considered. That is, there are universities under direct influence of government, commonly known as public universities; and those that are private; in this context they can mean non-profit or profit oriented universities. The main difference when compared with the public universities is that the private universities' activities are based on a certain philosophy or religion and that government allows universities sovereignty with respect to religious or philosophical issues. Noticeably, it is the fact that all the four public universities were selected; and only seven out of the sixteen private universities that had been registered by 2007 were selected.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (i.e. 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree}. The questionnaires were administered to three hundred and sixty one university members. The data source also included an interview guide which was responded to by seventy two informants.

To ensure validity of research instruments, content validity index was used. Amin (2005) states that content validity index focuses upon the extent to which the content measures what is designed to measure. The experts' judgments formed the basis for the computation of content validity ratios for the various instruments using the formula:

CVR = (VR+R)/Total. The questionnaire was valid given the

respective content validity ratio of 0.8; and the content validity ratio for the interview schedule was 0.7.

The data collection process was entered after establishing a sound investigative approach that ensured that the data collected was highly representative and unbiased. For instance, the purpose and scope of the study was clearly specified; information about the populations considered for involvement in the study was obtained; samples were prepared and instruments were pilot tested and validated to ensure that they were fit to collect relevant information. The analyses of quantitative data were done at three levels: univariate, bivariate and multivariate. At the univariate level, the study opted for the use of simple statistics (i.e. frequency counts); while at the bivariate level, Correlation Analysis was used. At the multivariate level, the study selected Multiple Linear Regression Analysis that assisted in establishing the strength of each construct variable against the management of universities. 'The choice of the above technique was in consistent with the research objectives that aimed at establishing the effects of organisational structure on the management of universities in Uganda. Qualitative data mainly interview responses were tallied; then interpreted and analyzed according to themes.

FINDINGS

To measure whether organisational structures affect the management of universities, descriptive statistics were computed using percentages. Table 3 shows that the 13 Likert items, with 1 *as strongly disagree* and 5 as *strongly agree,* both groups average near *agree*. However, there were few notable concerns on the scale scores. The respondents' ratings on issues related to organisation structure indicate that universities have appropriate struc-tures (responses of approx. 65% of the respondents). The results indicate that all universities are governed by two main bodies: council and senate. At the head of each university are the Chancellor and Vice chancellor. The

Table 2. Distribution of the sample subjects by designation.

Respondent category	Estimated parent population	Target sample size	Actual sample size	% response turn up rate; Actual/Target x100%
Top management officials	156	8	7	87.5
Deans/directors	92	5	3	60
Administrative staff	973	54	24	44.4
Academic staff	2905	162	124	76.5
Support staff	2368	132	79	59.8
Total	**6494**	**361**	**237**	**65.7**

administrative and support departments support the management of universities and contribute to their growth and development. On staff deployment, it was found out that the staff are deployed according to their areas of specialization as pointed out by approximately 71% of the respondents. Also noted is that the staff individual autonomy is questionable since the respondents who disagreed with the statement (approx. 37%) were slightly higher than those who agreed (30%). These results are also in agreement with the findings which indicated that little action is taken before supervisors' approval (47.8%). This means that the staff cannot take any decision unless the supervisor consents as agreed by 48% of the respondents.

With regard to issues related to decision making process, 40% of the respondents agreed that staff is often involved in decisions that concern them while approximately 46% of the respondents disagreed. However, there is an assurance of individual decisions being encouraged (as pointed out by 49% of the respondents). Eminent also in Table 3 is the fact that universities are characterized by high standard rules and procedures as observed by 72% of the respondents. The high standard rules and procedures represent a hierarchical structure. The structure designed or adopted affects the behavior, motivation, performance, team work and interdepartmental relationships. This finding was backed by 73% of the respondents who agreed that formal channels are emphasized in getting work done; and the form of communication followed is mainly formal (67%).

The results presented indicate clearly that universities in Uganda are mainly following a bureaucratic structural model. This is an organizational structure.

The analysis also assessed the effect of organisational structure on the management of universities in Uganda as hypothesized in the conceptual framework (Figure 1). The results are indicated in Table 4.

The analysis produced a significant positive relationship between organisational structures and the management of universities (r= 0.464, sig =000).

Organisational structure emerges as an important aspect that improves the management of universities. Any improvement in organisational structure improves the management of a university. This implies that a good organisational structure is fundamental; it can improve the overall performance of a university; allows members to take right decisions at the right time and inhibits confusion and conflicts among the staff arising from issues related to reporting, centralization and goal ownership.

The qualitative response on organisational structure threw further light on how universities are organised. From the interviews conducted, it was pointed out that observing high standard rules and procedures is constantly emphasized in universities; most resources are received by the centre, and allocated, managed and administered from the centre (the pure bureaucratic model). These were opinions of the majority of staff members though quite a few asserted that universities are flexible and a member can test his ideas without hindrances. However, one senior academic staff stated clearly how things are done in universities.

> "..........procedures and guide lines are followed strictly to ensure quality of programmes. It is very rare to act outside the guidelines".

In addition, one of the administrative staff warned of trying out new ideas without following university channels and procedures. The lady warned:

> "Rules and regulations must be followed strictly. A university is not a market place where traders have different products and varied means to market them".

However, one member who was bitter and talked strongly against the rigidness in universities which has made them incompetent, less creative and innovative suggested:

> "Universities should be a little bit more flexible to allow us try out our minds."

Table 3. Respondents' ratings on organisational structures of universities.

Established structure is appropriate	Disagree	29	28.4%
	Neutral	7	6.9%
	Agree	66	64.7%
Division of functions in depts based on specialization	Disagree	45	19.3%
	Neutral	23	9.9%
	Agree	165	70.8%
University emphasizes individual autonomy	Disagree	46	36.8%
	Neutral	41	32.8%
	Agree	38	30.4%
University often changes personnel	Disagree	36	35.0%
	Neutral	22	21.4%
	Agree	45	43.7%
High standard rules and procedures	Disagree	30	12.9%
	Neutral	36	15.5%
	Agree	166	71.6%
Staff/I'm often involved in decisions concerning them/me	Disagree	107	45.7%
	Neutral	33	14.1%
	Agree	94	40.2%
Individual workers use judgment in solving problems	Disagree	36	35.0%
	Neutral	21	20.4%
	Agree	46	44.8%
Members free to decide what to do & handle issues in dept	Disagree	45	34.6%
	Neutral	28	21.6%
	Agree	57	43.8%
Little action taken before supervisor's approval	Disagree	73	31.5%
	Neutral	48	20.7%
	Agree	111	47.8%
Individual's/my decisions are encouraged	Disagree	25	23.8%
	Neutral	28	26.7%
	Agree	52	49.5%
New ideas always tried out	Disagree	47	20.1%
	Neutral	36	15.5%
	Agree	150	64.4%
Formal channels emphasized in getting work done	Disagree	32	13.6%
	Neutral	32	13.6%
	Agree	172	72.8%
Formal communication mainly followed	Disagree	41	17.5%
	Neutral	35	15.0%
	Agree	158	67.5%
Our expectations of staff/mgt communicated in detail	Disagree	86	37.1%
	Neutral	47	20.3%
	Agree	99	42.6%

Table 4. Correlation between organisational structures and the management of universities.

		Organizational structures	Management of universities
Organisational structures	Pearson Correlation	1	.464**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	236	236
Management of universities	Pearson Correlation	.464**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	236	237

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The suggestion made above indicates that universities are highly formalized and members see it as inflexible. Flexibility in universities promotes creativity, innovation and autonomy in the staff. However, one academic staff member pointed out;

"Today's uncertainness requires diversity in managing universities, there is need for participatory planning in order to provide better services to the public".

As indicated above, the concept of diversity is very crucial and at one point may necessitate the university to a certain degree allow its members to generate ideas on how best to address the phenomenon. If universities for instance have no culture of flexibility, good new ideas for improvement would be rejected; hence, detrimental to their efficacy. It should be noted that at times the use of bureaucratic structural model in the management of universities acts as barriers to the staff's creativity, for it may take one a bit of time and patience to get his or her brilliant idea(s) through and thus frustrates potential people. These findings are in line with the proposition driving this work, namely that a high standardized rule and procedural culture, correlated with bureaucratic model could be associated with the management of universities.

DISCUSSION

The main objective was to establish the effect of organisational structure on the management of universities in Uganda. The dimensions of organisational structure were bureaucratic and collegial structural models. The findings from this study are consistent with Weihrich and Koontz (1993) whose theory has it that organisational structures are established to achieve corporate goals. Organisational structure was found to have a positive significant relationship with the management of universities. This could be attributed to the fact that the effect appeared to be quite reasonable (r= 0.464; sig = .000; Table 4). This

must be considered a rather fair effect although it should be acknowledged that the magnitude of this effect is inversely proportional to the inconsistency of the sample studied. In this study, the sample has maximum variability because it represents the population of private and public universities. Perhaps, if the study was more focused with less variable samples (e.g. only public universities), the effect size produced may have been larger.

Generally, the results indicated that whenever the organisational structure improves, the management of a university also improves. In practice, organisational structure that improves the management of universities is usually a mix of more than one organisational structural model. The models as pointed out by Sanyal and Martin (1998) are best seen as points of a continuum. At one extreme all decisions are made centrally and at the other extreme departments are autonomous, make their own decisions and implement them.

Some universities are very near to the top end of this continuum and others are at the bottom. Getting closer to the top is an indication of being very bureaucratic. Bureaucratic systems are characterised by highly formalised rules and procedures, less consultations, top-down planning and top-down decision making; and too much of it can wrought many negative factors, one of which is bad policies which tend to emphasize too much rules and procedures to the extent that members of the organisation lose morale; and thus affect the management. In fact, Dearlove (2002) argues, "Bureaucratic practices drive out commitment and trust of members" and Kauju (2004) pointed out that bureaucratic organisational structures hinder organisational innovativeness and should be abandoned. According to Singla (1999), non bureaucratic structures are more apt to organisational change than bureaucratic.

Backed up with studies such as those of Liu and Dubinsky, (2000) which came to similar findings, this study concludes that too much of bureaucratic structures can possibly cause internal tension; and this means that the traditional core values of going through a hierarchy to get an idea through and high formalisation could be seen as injurious because of the rigidity and conservativeness

of the whole organization. High formalisation, rigid rules and regulations and centralized decision making, are all inflexible factors for creativity and innovation, and thus creates tribulations in the management of universities. This argument is in conformity with Dearlove (2002)'s theoretical assertion that top-down planning (i.e. bureaucratic) drives out commitment and trust of members; and contrary to propositions of contingency theorists that where conditions are unstable, organisations would shape their cultures around values that help them outpace their competitors. For instance, universities would cherish values such as flexibility and achievement; and it is quite surprising, the world is changing, yet some universities are still stuck with outdated or obsolete practices though Sanyal and Martin (1998) pointed out that many African universities had made some shift towards devolution downwards of financial management. For instance, in most public universities in Uganda, income is earned by departments and retained by them; they buy central services as they are needed. However, in some universities, this kind of procedure has brought internal conflicts among departments or faculties. Some faculties, by institutional design find it extremely hard to generate income. In reality, of course, such departments hardly get any extra money to spend in their department as needed**.** As a result, members begin advocating for a procedure of income earned by departments but administered from the centre for the benefit of all employees; the notion seriously opposed by the direct beneficiaries.

Taking Watson (2007)'s view that a modern university is expected to be flexible, the study concludes that universities can balance their structures; have centralized and decentralized services; very few rules and regulations; little or no hierarchy; but each member struggling to achieve the set goals. If universities balance the structures, probably the staff can become more confident, creative and innovative. As long as the university staff is neither creative nor innovative, it seems quite unlikely that universities would even produce competent people (products) who will deliver services to communities appropriately. The challenge therefore, is to find ways of operating between the spectrums. Perhaps integrating the less bureaucratic organisational structure into the system of organising universities would be a practical proposal.

Policy implication

An important implication is that universities need to address the significance of appropriate organizational structures in order to manage universities effectively. Indeed universities would thrive if there is a perfect mixture of organizational structural models.

Conclusion

In reality, an organisational structure is fundermental for every university. It has hierarchy and reporting system which comes with authority, responsibility and accountability. A good organisational structure improves the overall performance and allows members to participate in decision making and also take right decisions at the right time. All issues are streamlined leaving no room for confusion. However, though in practice, the organisational structure aligns strongly with the university vision and strategy; and equally, on the other side, the structure drives jobs and roles which in turn is linked with goals and their delivery, sometimes, the structure fails to fit into the prevalent situation. Usually, the failure to align the structure with other important university systems creates confusion and conflicts, hence affecting the management of universities. Unless the structures are designed to meet the emerging needs and strategies, universities may continuously operate in state of confusion and conflict. Universities can thrive in the context of seemingly competitive higher education by ensuring that their structures are effective and supportive. Universities can as well integrate organisational structural models to improve the overall performance.

Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests.

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