



American Journal of Educational Research and Reviews (ISSN:2474-9265)



Extent of Application of Strategic Management Control in the Management of Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to ascertain the extent of application of strategic management control in the management of tertiary institutions in Anambra State. It was a descriptive survey research guided by one research question and one null hypothesis. All the four public and private universities in Anambra State of Nigeria were studied. The population of the study comprised two-hundred (200) respondents while the sample of the study comprised one hundred and fifteen (115) respondents made up of all the twenty (20) core management staff, thirty (30) Deans selected through purposive sampling technique and sixty-five (65) HODs selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique using 50 percent of the total population of the HODs. The instrument for data collection was researchers-developed questionnaire titled "Strategic Control Application Questionnaire" (SCAQ). The reliability of SCAQ was determined using 20 respondents from tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State. Cronbach alpha statistics was used to measure the internal consistency of the items which yielded the means of 0.83. The researchers personally administered copies of the instrument on the respondents in their respective institutions. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviations and ANOVA. The findings of the study indicated among others that strategic management control was applied to a low extent in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. It was among others recommended that the ministry of education should attempt organizing for managers regular workshops, short courses and seminars on strategic management control to enable them grasp the fundamentals and have confidence in managing strategically and that NUC should ensure that strategic management control is included in its criteria for accrediting tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Application, Strategic Management Control, Management of Tertiary Institutions, Anambra State

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How to cite this article:

Okeke Ifediorah Nonyem And Okaforcha Choice Chima. Extent of Application of Strategic Management Control in the Management of Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State. American Journal of Educational Research and Reviews, 2018,3:16.



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Introduction

In Nigeria as in other developing countries in the world, tertiary institutions are statutory charged with the responsibility of producing high level manpower or human capital. Tertiary institutions are relevant for the training of highly skilled specialists in the fields of science and technology at various types of higher institutions. According to Ike (2013), tertiary institution is a knowledge and value provider, it stands or fails in its ability or inability to deliver on the criteria laid by Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013). This, according to Nwankwo (2011), explains why merit has been the watch word in the tertiary education system - a system a student must first be certified worthy in character and learning before being graduated into the labour market.

FRN (2013) stated that, tertiary education is the education given to an individual after post basic education in institutions such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and those institutions offering correspondence courses at this level. Tertiary institutions worldwide are regarded as the citadel of knowledge, the fountain of intellectualism, the most appropriate ground for the incubation of leaders of tomorrow. The focus of this work is on universities.

Learning at the tertiary institutions could be described as effective if it results in bringing about the expected transformation in the attitudes, skills and knowledge of the recipients or students over a period of time (Babalola, 2008). Effective learning, especially at the tertiary level should result in producing graduates who are adequately informed, technically equipped and morally prepared to become parents, good citizens and selfless leaders.

Managers of any tertiary institution have enormous tasks to perform to ensure effective teaching-learning processes. They are the chief planners, financial managers, personnel managers and general overseers of all the

affairs going on in the institutions. Although the roles of managers of tertiary institutions are clearly stated above, there are problems in the management of these institutions as identified by the World Bank (2012). The traces of these problems are noticeable as: financial crisis, deteriorated infrastructure, brain-drain syndrome, graduate unemployment, volatile and militant student unionism, secret cults, politicization of education, incessant strike actions and unprecedented school population explosion. Tertiary institution managers remain subjected to blames by the public, that the tasks they perform are not adequately channeled towards providing education necessary for the students of today and the future. In the face of all these difficulties, managers of higher education institutions need effective management strategies to combat these challenges.

In order to realize the vision of the Federal Ministry of Education in achieving excellent education system towards the year 2020, the practice of strategic management control among the institution managers should be at the maximum level. According to David (2009), among the problems that are associated with the school administration are bureaucratic attitudes and conflicts that occur among the managers and lecturers, imperfection of the school's infrastructure, personnel management and low student' academic performance, non-conducive school climate and the complication within the administration itself. Institutions are loaded with many problems mainly because of the weak practice of the strategic management controls.

Strategic management control is significant for an institution progress and is usually linked to success in organization. Strategic management control is linked to the success of business due to the institution's ability to understand its environment. Such institution will formulate strategies that prepare the institution to best adapt to the ever changing environment in ways that make it stand out from the

competitors (Forsman, 2004). The essence of strategic management control is to give the institution a competitive advantage.

Naturally, profit-making organizations desire to be competitive in order to make a profit and hence remain in business. An institution of higher education would similarly want to remain in business and the ultimate customer is the students. Competitive advantage enhancement is the underlying aim of the strategic process of an institution. Competitive advantage happens when an institution of higher education generates more economic value over its rivals for a sustained period of time (Barney & Hesterly, 2008). Economic value is the difference between the perceived benefits an institution provides to its customers in form of service, and the total cost of production for the service in question. In the case of a higher educational institution, the economic value would be the benefits accrued from the courses and programs of an institution.

According to Mintzberg (2008), higher institutions are managed through input processes. Therefore the expectation is that the processes by which higher education institutions are currently managed will be more output based. Tertiary institutions in Anambra State operate however in a dynamic environment and organizational structure that is heavily fragmented. Maassen and Potman (2009) posited that there are many decentralized units, like faculties and departments that operate to a large extent independently from each other. The multiple purpose of higher education, the high autonomy at the operational core, the dynamic environment of tertiary institutions and the fragmented structure of tertiary institutions, make application of strategic management control in tertiary institutions a challenging task.

In recent years, however the use of strategic management control by Nigerian tertiary institutions has become widespread due to the fact that many institutions now find themselves

in circumstances where old methods of planning and management are no longer effective in guaranteeing a steady future. Strategic management control is about developing a good match between an institution's activities and the demands on the environment in which it operates (Nte, 2007). Strategic management control focuses on the institution's mission, objectives, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Strategic management is seen as one of the effective management strategies for achieving positive effect in the management of various aspects of higher educational institutions such areas as staff management, institutional performance management, financial management and the student management. In essence, strategic management control aims at ensuring effective and efficient management of the institution.

Strategic management control is interpreted by Certo and Peter (2013) as a series of steps that top management undertakes in order to analyze the organization's internal and external environment, formulate mission and strategies, implement strategies in order to facilitate attainment of the goal of the organization. They furthermore stated that strategic management control involves monitoring and evaluation to ensure the strategic management process bears fruit for the institution. The essence is to determine whether the strategic management process in place is able to make the institutions meet its objectives. This is based on the fact that various strategic management processes exist that can be employed to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of an institution. The aim of Certo and Peter's step is to agree that strategic management control is needed and desirable by all stakeholders especially managers of tertiary institutions (Bryson, 2014). An organization must be properly managed to compete effectively for resources. To do so, it requires giving competitive advantage through strategic management control of all the strategic policies in the tertiary institutions.

It is pertinent to state that strategic management control involves continuous planning, monitoring, analysis and assessment of all that is necessary for an organization to meet its goals and objectives. Then, it is imperative for tertiary institutions in Anambra State to adopt it because it will not only help meet their goals, it will equally help set institutional baselines for formulation of management initiatives and analyzing cross-functional organizational decisions before implementing them, which will in turn enhance better performance. This strategic management control will further help the tertiary institution managers in the study area to streamline and rationalize programmes and projects before spending money on them. Having this as background, development of strategic management controls for the reformation of tertiary institutions in Anambra State, is in line with the four year strategic plan (2011-2015) of the federal government, on the development and management of tertiary education sector embedded in the current National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013).

Personal observations by the researchers indicated that problems such as financial crisis, deteriorated infrastructure, politicization of education and unprecedented school population explosion are encountered by tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The problems are strategic in nature and therefore require strategic management control for their solutions. Again, there are a lot of criticisms from stakeholders of education (Henry, 2008). Their criticisms bother on: financial crisis, deteriorated infrastructure, brain drain syndrome, graduate unemployment, volatile and militant student unionism, secret cults, and political interference. These criticisms by stakeholders might probably suggest that managers of tertiary institutions in the State have not been applying the rightful approach to tackle some of these problems.

Furthermore, public and private universities differ in several respects especially in funding

and approaches to managerial issues. There is need to ascertain whether public and private universities differ significantly in the extent of utilization of strategic management control. Considering that these universities have different leadership and management structures and policies, the difference in structure may likely have different leadership orientation and different managerial practices. Therefore, this work is interested in ascertaining the extent to which the management of tertiary institutions in Anambra State apply strategic management control in the management of higher institutions in order to achieve tertiary institutions organizational goals as directed by (FME 2011-2015) strategic plan. This therefore motivated the study.

Statement of Problem

The Federal Ministry of Education in their Roadmap for the Development of the Nigerian Education Sector (2013) showed that most tertiary institution managers do not have education vision statement, student target and strategic plan. In Anambra State tertiary institutions, poor management skills, inadequate funding and lack of strategy formulation by tertiary institution managers, poor policy implementation and evaluation are among the major challenges facing the institutions (Nwankwo, 2011, p.25). These throw some doubts on the extent to which tertiary institution managers can fulfill the Federal Government's mandate and contribute to the achievement of the goal of education for which the Minister of Education strives to achieve using strategic management control. Therefore, the problem of this study could be put in this form: To what extent do managers of tertiary institutions in Anambra State apply strategic management control in order to successfully address these strategic issues/challenges facing higher education for the improvement of tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to ascertain the extent of application of strategic management control in the management of tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Research Question

One research question guided the study.

To what extent is strategic management control applied in the management of tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of core management staff and Deans of Faculties and on the application of strategic control in the management of their institutions in Anambra State.

Method

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Anambra State of Nigeria. All the four (4) public and private universities in the state were studied. The population of the study comprised two-hundred (200) respondents made up of twenty (20) core management staff, thirty (30) Deans and one-hundred and seventy (150) HODs in the four public and private universities in Anambra State. The sample of the study comprised one hundred and fifteen (115) respondents made up of all the twenty (20) core management staff, thirty (30) Deans selected through purposive sampling technique and sixty-five (65) HODs selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique using 50 percent of the total population of the HODs. The instrument for data collection was researchers-developed questionnaire titled "Strategic Control Application Questionnaire" (SCAQ). It has two sections. Section one seeks information on demographic data of the managers. Section two contains items on strategic control application. These were extracted from the literature on strategic control in higher education and anchored on the following: Very

High Extent (5), High Extent (4), Moderate Extent (3), Low Extent (2) Very Low Extent (1). To ascertain the content and face validity of the instrument, three experts were used. One of the validators is in Measurement and Evaluation and the two others are in the Department of Educational Management and Policy, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. To determine the reliability of SCAQ), the researchers tested the instrument on the representative sample of 20 respondents from tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State where strategic control application is also needed. Cronbach alpha statistics was used to measure the internal consistency of the items which yielded the means of 0.83. The researchers personally administered copies of the instrument on the respondents in their respective institutions. Data collected for the research question were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis at .05 level of significance.

Data Analysis

Research Question: To what extent is strategic management control applied in the management of tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Data relating to the research question were analyzed and presented on Table 1. Item by item analysis on Table 1 indicates item items 1, 8 and 9 are strategic control applied to a moderate extent in the management of tertiary institutions while items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 are applied to a low extent. The mean of means score of 2.49 shows that core management staff in the area of study apply strategic control approach to a low extent in the management of tertiary institutions. The highest variation (1.97, 1.01, .96, .97, .96 and .93) amongst responses was observed in items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 respectively. This indicates that respondents varied in their responses as to whether strategies in items 2 to 7 are applied during strategic control approach in the management of tertiary institution. Items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7

showed homogeneity amongst responses indicating a greater consensus of opinion.

Testing of null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of core management staff and Deans of

Faculties and on the application of strategic control in the management of their institutions in Anambra State.

Table 1: Respondents’ mean ratings on the extent strategic control is applied in the management of tertiary institutions

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remark
	Examines the institution's strengths and weakness	115	2.55	.92	ME
	Examines the reasons for past failures and success	115	2.44	.97	LE
	Assesses staff member's areas of professional expertise	115	2.46	1.01	LE
	Evaluates the institutions' present organizational structure	115	2.44	.96	LE
	Reviews the institutions' current performance	115	2.43	.97	LE
	Provides definite and precise strategic control objectives	115	2.40	.96	LE
	Provides precise procedures for achieving strategic control objectives	115	2.42	.93	LE
	Develops strategic control through a process of ongoing adjustment	115	2.53	.93	ME
	Evaluates strategic control alternatives based on more relevant information	115	2.70	.92	ME
Mean of means			2.49	.95	LE

Table 2: Analysis of variance on Core Management Staff, Deans and HODs’ Ratings of the Application of Strategic Control by Institutions

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.120	3	.560	1.63	.19
Within Groups	82.370	112	.342		
Total	83.491	115			

As shown in table 2, the F-ratio (df: 3/112) was 1.63 and the P-value (.19) was greater than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance. It was therefore decided that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of core management staff, Deans and HODs of the universities on the implementation of strategic control in the management of tertiary institutions. Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Summary of Findings

The following are the major findings:

1. Strategic management control was applied to a low extent in tertiary institutions in Anambra State
2. Core management staff, Deans and HODs of the universities do not differ significantly in their application of strategic control in their institutions.

Discussion of the Findings

Results of the study revealed that core management staff, Deans and HODs of the universities applied strategic control in the management of their tertiary institutions in

Anambra State to a low extent which is seen at the grand mean. This showed that there was ineffectiveness on the part of the institutions managers monitoring and evaluation of the strategy implementation. Perhaps, the ineffectiveness could arise from what Pollanen (2015) found that supports the findings of the study as some obstacles that can hamper the acceptance of performance measures in the public sector. In support of the findings, Collier (2004) found that monitoring and evaluation enables the organization to track progress in the implementation of the strategic management control.

Findings from the test of the fifth hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of the core management staff, Deans and HODs of the universities on the extent of the application of strategic management control in the management of tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. David (2013) maintained that approaches of strategic management monitoring and evaluation must be based on benchmark. The primary benchmark being the ideal organizational picture developed at the beginning of the process.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that there was low extent of application of strategic management control in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. There was no significant difference in the application of implementation of organizational strategy and strategic control in the management of tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The ministry of education should attempt organizing for managers regular workshops, short courses and seminars on strategic management

control to enable them grasp the fundamentals and have confidence in managing strategically.

2. The National Universities Commission (NUC) should ensure that strategic management control is included in its criteria for accrediting tertiary institutions.
3. Managers should ensure that every member of staff is involved or adequately informed in the strategic management control process to be able to contribute effectively to its application.
4. It is recommended that managers make the necessary preparation before they apply strategic management control by ensuring that all pre-requisites for successful application of strategies are in place, especially resource availability and skilled personnel.

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