FEEDBACK MECHANISM AND IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: A STUDY OF NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA

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ABSTRACT

The need for a functional feedback mechanism as a pre-requisite for an enhanced performance in the University system cannot be overemphasized, as it creates an avenue needed for members of the university workforce to make significant inputs and suggestions aimed at improving the quality of services offered by the institution, which will further enhance the sustainable development of the society. It is pertinent to mention that genuine and sincere input from the workforce is priceless, hence the need for an effective and reliable feedback system that will allow and encourage the workers to conveniently and effortlessly rate and review the services and working conditions of the institution. This study adopts systems theory as a framework for analysis, data was gathered from both Primary and Secondary sources, Purposive sampling was used to elicit relevant information from members of the staff. The study revealed that although there are already established forum for feedback mechanism in the university system such as Departmental board meetings, Senate meetings and even the Vice Chancellors contact being made readily available to the public, the issue of safety and convenience makes a lot of people to refrain from using these platforms as means of feedback. The study, recommends the adoption and use of some technologically advanced computer applications like the "Contact Monkey", capable of preserving the identity of the informants for anonymous ratings and feedback among others, to air their view with ease on some working conditions, without the fear of repercussion.

Keywords: Service delivery, board meeting, advanced computer

1. INTRODUCTION

Owing to the dynamic nature of our environment, people tend to ascertain what others feel about them, in order to make adjustments and fit in accordingly. so also in the business world marketers strive to ascertain the level of satisfaction their customers derive from their products/services in other to know how and where to improve on. The feedback system can be said to be a tool that raises a red flag when an organization is going off track, as the information which serves as a watchdog is gotten from the same organizational system. Assessment and feedback used to be the sole responsibility of the supervisors in the workplace, until in the 1980s when subordinates were allowed to provide feedback to their supervisors, that is upward feedback system. So instead of subjecting feedback communication to a one way traffic system, which involves the act of taking orders and being assessed by only the supervisors, the subordinates were given the opportunity to state how they feel towards some policies and conditions of service. Another factor that gave rise to subordinates assessing supervisors feedback mechanism is captured by (lepsinger & Lucie, 1997) in the early 1990s a strong focus on performance emerged due to downsizing and outsourcing which led to the implementation of a more holistic 360 degree feedback system in the workplace. The 360 degree feedback incorporates input from supervisors, colleagues and customers as well as a self appraisal component. this kind of scenario made everyone a judge over everyone else including one’s self. This practice has imbibed the spirit of hard work and diligence in the workplace because they all stood a risk of losing their jobs as a result of a bad review from a colleague, as the company was downsizing its workforce as at that time. Feedback mechanism exist in the university system in the form of departmental meetings, faculty meetings, Senate meetings, student affairs meetings and every other gathering where workers and students are allowed to air their
opinions on some working conditions and service delivery, in which input made will contribute to the growth of the organization.

1.1 Statement of problem

Good feedback mechanism is needed to maintain effective service delivery at the work place, as issues and challenges can be easily identified and addressed. but with a poor feedback mechanism there can be negative impact and since most of the feedback mechanism system in the university involves human gathering and face to face discussions, some staff may at some point in time encounter some of these challenges mentioned below

a. Fear of ruining relationships or losing of one’s job
b. placing importance on the person giving out the opinion as against the person’s opinion e.g when you consider the rank of the staff involved.

c. fear of being odd and thereby sugar coating the truth.

1.2 Objectives of study

i. To create a feedback system in which staff can give out candid opinion without fear of ruining relationships or job.

ii. To create an avenue through which a message can be received and processed without laying so much emphasis and importance on the conveyor of the message.

iii. To create an avenue through which people can say things the way they are without risking being judged for it.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sometimes we may find ourselves taking some actions and decision’s With the intention of creating either a better working condition or a better service system without knowing that those actions/decisions could have adverse effects or result to hardship on the part of the workers and customers alike and so it is very imperative for managers in any organization to make an arrangement for feedback on any policy made, for necessary input and progressive adjustment where necessary. It is safe to say that any management that fails to look out for people’s reaction or perception on some certain decisions or policies made may end up being grossly misunderstood and this misunderstanding may lead to low productivity, ineffectiveness and inefficiency (Locke & Latham, 1990). Goals relate to feedback in two major ways first they inform individuals as to what type of performance is to be attained so that they can direct and evaluate their actions and efforts accordingly, feedback also allows them to set reasonable goals and to track their performance in relation to their goals so that adjustments in effort, direction and even strategy can be made as needed. Ashford and Cummings (1983) states that feedback is psychologically reassuring and people like to obtain feedback about their performance even if it has no impact on their performance. Ashford and Cummins (1983) also stated that three different motives may instigate certain feedback seeking behaviours:

i. Desire for useful information which is related to instrumental value of information: a person who does this type of research does so with the sole purpose of receiving situational report of what is going on in the organization in order to enable him know the next step to take for an optimal performance

ii. Desire to protect ego and self esteem from the threat of negative feedback: this is more related to the self protection motives of the people, most at times the quest to not just be socially accepted by others but to attract some level of acceptance and respect in the society, some people tries to continuously seek for people’s reaction towards their action.

iii. Desire to control the impression of others which involves both defensive and assertive impression management desire: People constantly seek for others opinion about their actions As they strive to fit into the environment norms and belief they also find a way to manipulate people into agreeing with their beliefs and support for their mission.

A leader who does not take his time to sample the opinion of the people with respect to the priority of their needs might end up providing a need that can be alternatively catered for while that facility or service which they are in dire need for with no seemingly possible alternative suffers. So we cannot talk about growth and sustainable Development in the university, without placing priority on an effective feedback mechanism in its system, as it serves as a guide to all its actions and inactions, while ensuring that the activities of the university is in line with the targeted mission.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The systems theory is employed for this work, the first call for a general system theory came from Ludwig Von Bertalanffy research in the 1940’s, in 1968 he published a book titled General system theory: Foundations, Development and application. The systems theory which encourages organizations to view every member of its workforce as part and parcel of the whole body of the organization is considered the best theoretical framework for this work. Owing to the quest to maximize productivity and increase efficiency in the work place, management always seek for every available positive idea/information that can move the organization forward and as a result of this, most managers goes about looking for
solutions to internal challenges from external sources whereas answers to such unresolved riddle might lie within the organizational system. The systems theory suggests that the views and opinions of every member of an organization must be acknowledged, and under no circumstances should factors such as hierarchy, fear of losing one’s job and intimidation hinder workers from giving genuine reports and information which is needed to move the organization forward.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design
The study adopted the qualitative research approach. The researcher did engage some of the staff from different faculties who have been in the university system for several years on how they receive and pass information, and the challenges encountered.

4.2 Sampling and sampling technique
Purposive sampling technique was adopted, as the researcher purposely chose two staff, each from the faculty of Management, faculty of Education, faculty of Social sciences and faculty of Arts, who have a reasonable amount of knowledge of the feedback mechanism in the university system.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The response gotten from the interview indicated that there are numbers of communication/feedback system in the university which include departmental meetings, faculty meetings, Senate meetings, school email address and the vice chancellors phone numbers. These avenues are under utilized by the staff, as they only assess these means when the university’s policy or system affects them in person or when there is a misunderstanding among the workers. This work also found out that the university gives credence to complaints and feedback with a known source. In other to reduce cases of fake news blackmail and false alarm, owing to the fact that some staff will not want to be termed as critics or rebels when they give out unsolicited suggestions or report they shy away from using this medium to give their intended feedbacks and recommendations.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings that emerge from this research, the following recommendations are made:

i. The university needs to sensitize and re-orientate its workforce on the need for their cordial feedback, for the growth of the university.

ii. The university needs to adopt the use of some technologically advanced computer applications, like the (contact monkey) which is capable of giving the staff the opportunity to review, rate and comment on the services and policies of the institutions while preserving the identity of the informant.

7. REFERENCES


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