



Corporate Governance in ODL: Best Practices in Promoting Programme Development in the Department of Teacher Development

***¹Barnabas Muyengwa, ²Augustine Kudakwashe Mubika**

¹Lecturer and National Programme Leader for the Bachelor of Education (Secondary), Bachelor of Education (Curriculum Studies) and Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) at the Zimbabwe Open University.

²Senior Lecturer and Regional Programme Coordinator for the Mashonaland West Regional Centre of the Zimbabwe Open University: Department of Educational Studies.

Email: ²akmubika@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article No.: 042613590

Type: Research

DOI: 10.15580/GJER.2013.3.042613590

Submitted: 26/04/2013

Accepted: 15/05/2013

Published: 22/05/2013

***Corresponding Author**

Barnabas Muyengwa

E-mail: muyengwabb@gmail.com

Corporate Governance gives institutions a character of their own. It defines a brand of given universities and other organisations. It is about exercising good ethical practices in doing something especially in promoting critical and practical issues in the management of academic programmes. The current study seeks to examine some of the best practices of Corporate Governance that the Department of Teacher Development could employ in the promotion of Programme Development at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU). The study is rooted in the qualitative research paradigm which employ a case study as a research approach. Research participants were selected using a convenience sample. Sixteen academic members of the Department of Teacher Education at the ZOU responded to an in-depth questionnaire and a follow-up interview. Data that emerged from the data were interpreted descriptively and analytically in order to give meaning to the research findings.

Keywords:

Programme development, Teacher development, corporate governance

INTRODUCTION

In real life corporate governance is critical in the day to day management of institutional programmes. In other words corporate governance is all about transparency, efficiency and effectiveness as well the acceptance of the product. In the case of the Zimbabwe Open University's Department of Teacher Development issues of efficiency and effectiveness became topical when the Diploma in Education (Primary) graduates were not recognized by the employer namely the Public Service Commission (PSC).

The Zimbabwe Council of Higher Education (ZIMCHE) which is the regulatory authority of higher education institutions noticed that the graduates were not exposed to guidance of the mentor, did not do micro teaching neither did they have a subject of specialization. It would appear that some of the main stakeholders such as ZIMCHE and PSC were not involved in the programme development of this particular diploma. The current study seeks to examine some of the best practices of Corporate Governance that the Department of Teacher Development could employ in the promotion of Programme Development at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU).

Background of the Study

The management culture of any institution should be clearly defined in terms of the goals of that institution, hence the need to develop appropriate governance. It is also necessary to appreciate that the nature of corporate governance is exemplified by its practices. The study starts by examining the current management practices in programme development in the Department of Teacher Development at the ZOU.

The development of teacher education programmes involves mainly the Chairperson of the Department, the national programme leader, the regional programme coordinator (RPC) and regional tutors. The chairperson and programme leader draft programme regulations which are sent to RPCs and tutors for their input. Once they make their comments they return the programme regulations to the chairperson. At this stage the chairperson and national programme leader work on the comments from the regions to come up with a draft to be presented to the Department and then to the Faculty. The faculty dean will then present these programme regulations to the senate. When the senate approves, the regulations are should be sent to the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) before the programme is launched. However, these processes of programme development have their own challenges. Therefore on the basis of the aforesaid the current study seeks to come up with best practices which could be employed in the

promotion of programme development in the Department of Teacher Development at the ZOU.

Statement of the Problem

Programme development in the Department of Teacher Development at the ZOU faces challenges. Some of these challenges could have even led to the non-recognition and suspension of the Diploma in Education (Primary) being offered by this department. The major question this study seeks to answer is:

How can the Department of Teacher Development improve corporate governance in the promotion of programme development at the ZOU?

Sub-research questions

In an effort to answer the main research question, the following sub- research questions suffice:

- Who are involved in programme development in the Department of Teacher Development?
- Which other stakeholders should be involved in programme development in the Department?
- To what extent do current corporate governance practices promote programme development in the Department of Teacher Development?
- In what ways can the Department promote corporate governance in programme development?

Significance of the Study

Conducting the current study is significant in several ways. First, it would clearly articulate the current processes of programme development instituted in the Department of Teacher Development at the ZOU. Second, it also shows some of the stakeholders involved in programme development in the department. Third, it would evidently identify the other stakeholders who should also be involved in programme development in the department. It would also reveal the extent to which the current corporate governance practices promote programme development in the Department of Teacher Development. Furthermore, the study would find out ways the Department can promote corporate governance in programme development.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Defining Corporate Governance

Corporate Governance refers to the manner in which the power of a corporation is exercised in the stewardship of the corporation's total portfolio of assets and resources with the objective of maintaining and increasing shareholder value and satisfaction of other stakeholders in the context of its corporate mission. It is concerned with creating a balance between economic and social goals and between individual and communal goals while encouraging efficient use of resources, accountability in the use of power and stewardship and as far as possible to align the interests of individuals, corporations and society (Tricker, 2009).

What is programme development?

Programme development is an ongoing systematic process that educational professionals follow as they plan, implement and evaluate their educational programmes. It can be applied on a small scale to an individual workshop; on a larger scale to a comprehensive community initiative or to a country or statewide program of action (Cadbury Committee, 1992). The scope may be different but the principles of programme development remain the same.

Corporate Governance and Programme Development

In programme development it is essential that we have a comprehensive set of guidelines for design and development. It is on the basis of regulations that a programme is developed. The regulations spell out learning outcomes, duration of the programme, entry qualifications, exemption qualification, programme structure showing the exact required courses, mode of delivery, scheme of assessment, admission to examinations and certification.

It stands to reason that to come up with all these there is need to consult all stakeholders. In this case corporate governance involves interaction of different stakeholders who of necessity should include academics within the Department of Teacher Development, the Public Service Commission, ZIMCHE, Ministries of Education and potential students. The working relations of these groupings should be complementary. Corporate

governance principles thus provide the structure through which the objectives of the programme are set, and the means of attaining these objectives and monitoring performance levels are determined (Cadbury Committee, 1992). Some of the notable good practices in programme development are:

focusing on special target group: programmes in the Department of Teacher Development should be targeting the professional development of teachers.

appropriate teaching-learning strategies: in designing new courses and developing instruments for assessment and examinations, resourcefulness of tutors is called upon to involve innovative and creative approaches for effective teaching and learning and evaluation in an open and distance learning setting.

Stakeholder involvement in programme development

According to UNESCAP (2003) there are cases which provide good examples of organisations involving a wide range of participants in their policy making processes. Public hearings have been in common practice in many countries for a long time, but the new trend is to go beyond simple hearings to inviting the public, private enterprise, and NGOs to actively participate in developing policy options and implementing programmes. The goal of participatory programmes is to make people responsible for the decision making process and for their behaviour, which have a significant influence on ways they use their resources.

Everybody or anybody who is affected by or benefits from any programme development endeavour must take active part in its planning, decision-making, and implementation. Programme development is after all everybody's business. It is something that each one must attain for one's self. Everybody must take responsibility and get involved in the pursuit of sustainability, as it is the people's right to have a sustainable life. Individual actions, however, are best coordinated and taken together to attain synergy and optimum results. Operationally, therefore, programme development must be pursued in a way that involves and benefits from the complementary actions of the three key stakeholder groups, namely, public institutions (government), private enterprises (business), and civil society. There is a fourth stakeholder group, particularly in the context of developing countries, the resource providers (UNESCAP, 2003).

A Model of Stakeholder Involvement in Programme Development



Adapted from UNESCAP, 2003

HERE UNDER WE EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENT ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS:

Government

Government provides the legal and regulatory framework that sets order and directions to programme development. Actions by civil society and business are governed and influenced by the policies and regulations imposed by government. Government also takes the lead in crafting the future and setting development directions. Governments are able to effectively play these roles as it also has the mandate and capability to generate and allocate resources necessary for programme development. The actions and solutions to programme development challenges do not lie with government

alone. Corollary, government is not the only agent of programme development neither is it solely responsible for developmental problems. In the context of this study the government is represented by the PSC, ZIMCHE and Ministries of Education.

Civil society

Civil society has rapidly become a critical actor in the programme development arena. More and more governments have relied on civil society to handle areas where their reach and services are limited. Civil society has the ability to work for and with local communities. It has better flexibility and can easily adapt to various situations including venturing on innovative approaches in

the pursuit of set goals. Civil society has served as the voice of its beneficiaries and bridge between government and beneficiaries and among stakeholders. Through these linkages, it is quite effective in awareness raising and advocacy.

Civil Society Organizations have increasingly been given direct access to resources that they are able to tap to implement their own programmes designed to build capability of the grassroots in generating sustained benefits from natural resources. Civil society has the advantage of being able to organize and work at different levels, from grassroots to the global arena, to address wide areas of concerns, to adopt a wide variety of constituents, and to execute its work with greater flexibility. These attributes allow civil society to work more effectively with the people and better influence their thinking. In this study it is interesting to find out the extent to which the civil society was involved in the programme development of the diploma.

Private enterprise

Private enterprise dominates the production sector where jobs, goods and incomes are generated. Thus, the sector directly determines the sustainability of production activities, and influences the sustainability of the consumption behaviour of the public through the goods and services they produce, and the manner by which they promote and package them. On the other hand, it also has the capability and resources to promote and influence sustainability. The participation of the sector in all sustainable programme development initiatives is thus critical. As part of the problem, they must be part of the solutions, including in the planning and execution of such solutions. Private sector being one of the consumers of the product of the programme, of necessity needs to be involved in programme development.

Resource providers

Resource providers are not normally considered a major stakeholder in the global definition of tri-sectorial or tripartite dialogues. However, the lack of resources has been a critical limiting factor in the pursuit of sustainable programme development in most developing countries. Government and civil society in developing countries rely so much on external resources. As this commitment has largely remained unfulfilled, private resource providers have taken on the slack in resources. Since the need has become greater while the resources from developed countries dwindled, the number and level of resources of private resource providers have rapidly increased over time.

Through their resources, resource providers substantially influence, even control, the courses of programme development at the local, national and global levels. These resources come in the forms of:

- funds
- expertise or technical know-how
- equipment and technology

This influence makes resource providers a major actor that plays a critical role in sustainable programme development arena. In view thereof, it is imperative that resource providers are actively involved in tripartite discussions. While generally it is accepted that resource providers could have strings attached in their provision of resources, it was still necessary for them to participate in the programme development of the diploma.

Promotion of corporate governance in programme development

The Department of Teacher Development is responsible for spearheading the promotion of good corporate governance practices in programme development.

a) Promotion of good corporate governance

Corporate Governance is a set of processes, customs, value codes, policies, laws and institutions governing the way a corporation is directed, controlled and held to account. It is a prerequisite for the success of any entity, both in the public and private sector which in turn translates to sustainable socio-economic development for the country. Corporate Governance ensures that the organization is running properly, goals are being achieved and funds are being managed with high standards of propriety and probity. If all this had happened the programme development of the diploma would not have been questioned.

b) Promotion of performance management systems

The Department is responsible for promoting performance management systems that ensure adequacy in internal controls, risk management and monitoring and evaluation requirements of the organization. In this particular case the Department had the responsibility of ensuring all the critical components of the diploma were appropriately incorporated in the programme.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is rooted in the qualitative research paradigm which employed a case study as a research approach (Silverman, 2006). Qualitative study is essential for the conduct of this study as it analyzes information conveyed

through language and behavior in natural settings (Kumar, 2008; Gray, 2009). A purposive sample was used in this study because it is a qualitative non-probability sample which is usually consistent with the needs of research studies on beliefs, values, feelings, and motivations that underlie behaviors. Sixteen academic members of the Department of Teacher Development at the ZOU responded to an open ended questionnaire. The respondents responded to an open ended questionnaire to gather thick descriptions of data (Silverman, 2006). Open ended questionnaires have the ability to gather dense data from respondents. Seale and Charteris-Black (2006) confirms this when he points this questionnaire because of its open ended nature have the capacity to gather lots of rich research data from research participants. All research participants answered the same questions so as to obtain consistent data on issues of corporate governance, programme development and promotion of corporate governance in programme development. Apparently these are the issues this study is focusing on. The gathered data are qualitative, thereby, enabling the researchers to rely on words for their presentation. From the open ended questionnaire the respondents had the latitude to describe in their own words the issues being investigated in this study. For

demographic data of the participants, tables were used to present them, thus, giving way to data analysis and discussion. Use of tables enabled quantification of the personal characteristics of participants. Data were analysed using textual analysis that enabled researchers to come up with themes which pave way to data analysis and discussion.

Research Findings

The presentation and discussion of research findings are done in two ways. The demographic data of research participants were presented and discussed prior the interpretation of the research findings.

Demographic Data

This section covers research characteristics of the research participants who responded to an open ended questionnaire. Among other things, the demographic data reveals participants' gender, age and highest professional qualification.

Table 1 Research participants by gender (N=16)

Gender	Frequency	Frequency (%)
Female	5	31
Male	11	69
Total	16	100

Table 1 shows that there are more males (69%) than females. The result is consistent with gender distribution of males and females in the Department.

Table 2 Research participants by age (N=16)

Age in years	Frequency	Frequency (%)
40-49	5	31
50-59	8	50
60-69	3	19
Total	16	100

The majority of the respondents (50%) are in the age group 50 to 59 years, followed by the age group 40 to 49 and the least number are in the age group 60 to 69. All

the respondents are mature enough to provide reliable information.

Table 3 Research participants by teaching experience in ODL (N=16)

Teaching experience in years	Frequency	Frequency (%)
0-4	9	56
5-9	4	25
10-14	3	19
Total	16	100

Most of the respondents (56%) have less than five years teaching experience in open and distance learning. Respondents could have spent part of their working life in

conventional institutions of learning. This may mean that the approaches and processes in programme development could be different.

Table 4 Research participants by highest qualification (N=16)

Highest qualification	Frequency	Frequency (%)
PhD	1	6
Masters degree	15	94
Total	16	100

The majority of the respondents (94%) are holders of a masters degree which happens to be the minimum requirement for employment as a lecturer in the Department. Only one respondent (6%) has a doctorate. One with a doctorate is likely to give answers which are different from the rest of the respondents.

Actual Research Data

This section looks into responses from the open ended questionnaire used in this study.

Programme Development in the Department of Teacher Development

In responding to the issue of programme development in the Department of Teacher Development, fourteen of the targeted sixteen respondents gave useful information. One of these respondents specifically indicated that the people involved in programme development include: regional tutors, the national programme leader, the Department Chairperson, Department Board, Faculty Dean, the Faculty Board and the Senate.

Modalities of programme development

Responding to the question of processes in programme development the majority of the respondents who have been in the service are clear about what is normally done when developing a programme. This includes formulation of programme guidelines and consultations of key stakeholders like Zimbabwe Teachers Association (ZIMTA), Zimbabwe Teachers Union (ZITU), Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ), PSC and ministries of education. That the respondents have relevant experience they are likely to be familiar with the processes of programme development.

Other stakeholders to be involved in programme development

On the nature of other stakeholders respondents clearly indicated that other stakeholders who were not consulted include Public Service Commission (PSC), conventional teacher education institutions, local authorities, potential students, school development committees (SDCs) of private schools, trust schools, mission schools and government schools. Such omissions are likely to have negative impact on the recognition of the diploma.

The extent to which corporate governance practices promote programme development

In responding to this question respondents emphasized the advantages of social responsibilities and transparency in programme development. Social responsibilities include team work in identifying appropriate resources, programme development processes, monitoring and evaluation. Team work would bring about purposeful commitment in programme development, thereby enhancing corporate governance.

Ways in which the Department can promote corporate governance in programme development

Respondents indicated that appropriate involvement of stakeholders at various stages of programme development help in promoting corporate governance. Relevant input from stakeholders ensures efficient programme development thereby enhancing corporate governance. If the critical stakeholders such as ZIMCHE, PSC and the two Education ministries were involved the diploma could not have been suspended.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

On the basis of the above responses, the following are the major findings:

- The people involved in programme development included: regional tutors, the national programme leader, the Department Chairperson, Department Board, Faculty Dean, the Faculty Board and the Senate. However, some of the critical stakeholders could have been involved.
- Respondents thought that they had included stakeholders they thought were critical in programme development.
- The respondents realized that they left out some of the major stakeholders crucial in programme development.
- Respondents emphasized the advantages of social responsibilities and transparency in programme development.
- The need for appropriate involvement of stakeholders at various stages of programme development helps in promoting corporate governance.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the above findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- People involved in the programme development were appropriate but inadequate since some of the stakeholders were left out.
- Some of the stakeholders who were left out were very crucial to the programme development.
- The department did not involve all stakeholders in promoting corporate governance in programme development
- The diploma programme could have benefited more if all stakeholders were involved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the above conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

- An effort should always be made to ensure appropriate involvement of stakeholders at each level of programme development.
- The importance and advantages of social responsibilities and transparency in programme development should always be emphasized.
- There should always be appropriate involvement of all stakeholders. This therefore should bring about efficient and effective corporate governance.

REFERENCES

- Cadbury Committee Report, 1992. The Financial Aspects of Corporate Governance.
- Gray D., 2009. Doing Research in the Real World. London: SAGE Publications.
- Kumar R., 2008. Research Methodology. New Delhi: APH Publishing.

Seale C. and Charteris-Black J., 2006. The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Methods in Health Research. London: SAGE Publications.

Silverman D., 2006. Interpreting Qualitative Data. London: SAGE Publications. UNESCAP,

2003. A United Nations Project: Capacity Building on Integration of Energy and Rural Development.

Cite this Article: Muyengwa B, Mubika AK (2013). Corporate Governance in ODL: Best Practices in Promoting Programme Development in the Department of Teacher Development. Greener Journal of Educational Research, 3(3): 159-167, <http://doi.org/10.15580/GJER.2013.3.042613590>.