

Leadership Structure for Consistent Disciplinary Procedures at a Nigerian University

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Abstract

Discipline is essential in any workplace. It curbs the excesses of employees with aberrant behaviour, instils order in workplaces, and enhances productivity and general outputs, if implemented well. Disciplinary decision-making is a leadership function. So, the quality of the leadership structure in any workplace will critically determine the consistency or otherwise of disciplinary decision-making procedure. In the case university, different leaders over the years had adopted various styles and strategies in managing the university. The common notion among many employees of the university is that, disciplinary procedure is not consistently applied mainly due to the leadership structure of the university. However, majority of staff who have experienced the disciplinary process directly, maintain that the procedure is largely consistent with extant rules and precedents. To this end, this paper looked into the leadership structure vis-à-vis consistent disciplinary procedure at a Nigerian University. The objective is to propose an appropriate leadership framework to address gaps in disciplinary procedure in the case university. The article adopted a qualitative research approach anchored within an interpretivist paradigm. A descriptive research design was adopted. Data was primarily obtained from interviews and participant observation. These were complemented with secondary data sources such as journals, text books, law reports, etcetera. The contents of both sources of data were thematically and critically analysed. Overall, leadership at the case university has been more benevolent than toxic but improvement is desired in some areas. Accordingly, an expedient leadership framework (structure) to enhance consistent disciplinary procedure at the case university was proposed in this paper. **Keywords:** Consistent, disciplinary procedure, Leadership structure

Introduction

Modern university education, which evolved from medieval higher schools in the 12th century are institutions of higher learning that consist of various academic and professional programmes, and have authority to award degrees in different disciplines (Buchanan, 1979). Apart from being socialisation centres for future generations, universities hold the key to national development and should be encouraged to provide examples or models to society as acts or omissions in such places can be picked up by youths who are trained in such institutions (Nwakaudu, 2014). Different universities maintain their own body of norms, rules and ethics. There is, therefore, a need to encourage all staff, especially new entrants to imbibe and conform to the university culture in such institutions. This is facilitated through institutional policies, procedures or work ethics, which includes disciplinary procedures. These rules and procedures may be written or unwritten, but for many universities, these rules constitute part of the contract of engagement between the employees and their employers (NOUN, 2014).

However, it has also been argued that universities are small-scale version of society, and are therefore likely to have and exhibit tendencies of the larger society, including the leadership style and inconsistencies of disciplinary matters (Kaldis, 2008; Sweet, 2001). This is the crux of this article. It explored the leadership structure at a Nigerian university to ascertain the extent of consistency in its disciplinary procedure.

Problem statement

Discipline in the workplace is a leadership function. It is leadership role to define the rules, the expectations and sanctions in the workplace and actively galvanise other workers to ensure compliance to the workplace rules and ethics. Therefore, the role of leadership structure to guarantee consistent disciplinary procedure cannot be over-emphasised. If the disciplinary procedures are inconsistent in a workplace, the likely source of the problem may likely be the leadership structure.

In recent times, there has been a rising spate of discontent among staff of universities in Nigeria, who sometimes accuse their leadership

of procedural inconsistencies in handling disciplinary matters. This study examines the role of leadership structure could play in enhancing consistent disciplinary procedure at a Nigerian university.

Research question

The above problem statement brought about the research questions below:

- How has the leadership structure affected the disciplinary procedure at the case university?

Research objective

The research objective is:

- To explore the leadership structure for consistent disciplinary procedure at a Nigerian university.

Literature review

With the different setting of the university workforce, work methods, morals and approaches are by and large planned and set up to accomplish and keep up satisfactory standard conduct, participation and work outcomes (Working Mind 2014; Ajayi & Adeniji, 2009: p.285). According to Nel, Kirsten, Swanepoel, and Erasmus (2012), to achieve organisational goals, some structure in the operations is required. The maintenance of discipline by leaders is an effort to forge orderliness, seriousness of purpose and direction in any workplace. Discipline is an instrument of engineering conformity to work culture, rules, expectations, etcetera, in a modern workplace like the university (Garner, 2012; Nel et al., 2012; Idris & Alegbelaye, 2015).

The concept of discipline

Discipline as a concept may be defined in various ways. It may be defined as a specific branch of learning, as sanctions imposed on people for aberrant behaviour, as a pattern of life that is in conformity to rules among others. According to Ajayi and Adeniji (2009), as a concept, discipline is difficult to precisely define. However, in a workplace the

focus of discipline is to facilitate coordination of efforts, development of character and self-control, fostering efficiency and orderliness. For instance, the police force is seen as a disciplined force because of the perceived order that exists among staff which is determined by the supervision of senior officials (Police Service Commission (PSC), 2006).

Discipline may mean sanction or control obtained through compliance to order. It may also be defined as a standard or set of standards which control behaviour or conduct. Additionally, discipline may be defined as a state of order on the basis of conformance to authority and expected behaviour (Garner, 2012; Haimann & Hilgert, 1977). Discipline as used here relates to sanction meted out at the workplace to employees who fail to perform optimally or resort to deviant attitudes and behaviour which are contrary to the expectations of management at the workplace.

Essentially, discipline has to do with following rules, policies, culture, regulations, procedures, and so on (Garner, 2012). It has been defined to include instructions, learning, improvement, correction and punishment. According to the ACG (2012), when you discipline someone, you teach that person the correct way to relate to situations, including what to do or what not to do. Therefore, discipline may be defined as a form of training to align people to codes of behaviour using punishment to correct disobedience and deviance from expectations (Chella, 2006). In a fundamental sense, discipline may be considered as a systematic way of training or learning in the workplace (Chella, 2006).

Leadership approach to discipline

The approach and personal conduct of the leader is important. The exemplary conduct of the leader can facilitate the control of employees under him/her. As a leader, the individual's role is to guide, train, control, develop and lead employees directly under his/her care. One's leadership style and personal discipline can encourage direct subordinates to follow the lead and conform to organisational rules much more than even senior management, because of close association between leaders and subordinates (Beekun & Badawi, 1999; Chand, 2015; Giley, 1997).

Leadership is entrusted with the role of managing or administering discipline (Ndu, 2016). According to Hamid, Mustafa, Suradi, Idris and Abdullah (2011), leadership is concerned with blending the entire workforce, managers and subordinates to achieve a firm's objectives. This would therefore include enhancing the operational environment for maximum productivity among the workforce. As direct representatives of management, the superiors, managers and other leaders are those who inspire the workers, as their individual traits, behaviour in the workplace and influence define levels of success that they are likely to achieve to either enhance discipline or encourage discipline in the workplace. Their interaction patterns, relationships, and other employees' perceptions of the legitimacy of their authority may also define how effective they will be at instilling discipline in the workplace (Yuki & Mahsud, 2010). The point is that those who occupy leadership positions have authority to define the organisation's policies, identify those who have infringed the rules, and interpret the rules including to their respective the sanctions. Therefore, if these leaders are found to infringe these rules, this poor example can damage the employees' psyche especially because they are responsible for the protection of organisational goals, policies and culture (Lussier, 1990). This is why wise leaders tailor their approach and interactional styles to inspire their subordinates. Schlechter (2009), accordingly identifies

or categorises the inspirational impact of leaders into charismatic leaders, transformational leaders, authentic leaders, and transactional leaders among others. Leaders who lead by examples are more likely to enhance the operational environment, discourage deviant attitudes, and encourage productivity and friendship in the workplace. Those who resort to base values, abuses and discriminatory tendencies including inconsistencies in the administration of disciplinary rules will only encourage indolence, apathy and create moral challenges.

Leadership and leadership framework

Discipline is a management function, so in any discourse of discipline, leadership is directly or indirectly implicated. Part of a leader's role is to establish strategies, motivate employees and build culture for any organisation (Coleman, 2011). According to Ndu (2016) a contract exists in any social formation in which Leadership is saddled with the responsibility to enforce discipline. If leadership fails to provide this service, it is doubtful that much progress will be made in that social environment.

The term leadership has been defined in various ways by several authors. Rost (1993) identifies 221 different definitions and concepts about leadership by different scholars and practitioners at different times. Some of these definitions are noted by critics as being too broad and vague while others are seen as too restrictive (McCleskey, 2014). This is why Bass (2000; 2008) posits that there is nothing like a single and best definition of leadership in the literature. A correct definition of leadership, which is a function of the specific aspects of leadership, will be articulated in this study. Accordingly, McCleskey (2014) identifies three types of leadership as Transactional, Transformational and Situational. Judge and Piccolo (2004) state that transformational and transactional leadership concepts were introduced by Burns (1978) in his treatment of political leadership. According to Burns (1978) the Transformational leader, conversely offers a purpose that is beyond short term goals. Transactional leaders conversely focus on achieving organisational goals. The transactional leaders offer followers what they want in exchange for something that the leader wants. Transformational leadership is interested in fundamentals. Thus, his/her purpose is to create a significant change that may not necessarily be observed in the short run. Therefore, the major difference (in the notion of Burns) between transactional and transformational leadership concerns what followers and leadership offer and receive from each other and the duration (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). According to Burns (1978), transactional leaders are more common in society. Though these concepts were originally meant for political leadership, the concepts have also become applicable to organisational management (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

According to Owolabi and Chukwuma (2007), a leader is anybody assigned with the function of directing and controlling other people or groups of people for the purpose of achieving set objectives. Thus, in social organisations, there are many leaders that operate at the same time, and sometimes or often share in the same leadership vision and functions, such as planning, directing, coordinating and reviewing, amongst others (Owolabi & Chukwuma, 2007). Taffinder (2006) argues that leadership is about influencing people to act in ways that will make them achieve their desired goals, including attaining goals that the followers thought were impossible.

Taffinder (2006) believes that leadership may also be defined as the action of committing workers to conform to organisational culture and to contribute maximally to the achievement of the workplaces' objectives. Thus, the efficacy of leadership is defined by the outcome

of the enterprises that they head. An efficient leader will produce a performing outfit, and inefficient leader will oversee a non-performing organisation.

Procedure in disciplinary matters

Disciplinary procedures are usually put in place at different establishments with a view to mitigate undue and inconsistent disciplinary decision at the workplace. In fact, some of these procedures are actually products of collective bargaining and consensus between staff and management, which are documented and meant to help guide management in arriving at disciplinary decisions in a specific organisation (Liff, 2007). Disciplinary procedures enhance justice delivery in organisations because they assist organisations to achieve efficient disciplinary decision based on rules and also mitigates disharmony, conflict, and disorder among others in the workplace (ACG, 2012). Disciplinary procedures may also be defined as rules, expectations and methods of relating to employees' acts, omission or behaviour that are out of sync with organisation's expectations (Liff, 2007). These are often documented and given to staff as disciplinary manuals or conditions of service.

According to Nel et al., (2012) the disciplinary procedure outlines the manner and processes through which disciplinary decisions are made. The disciplinary code of conduct may provide terms of employment (Brown, 2015); it details steps that may be followed to discipline an employee. These will include due investigations and commensurate disciplinary sanctions, which include warnings or reminders. Garner (2012) also reinforces this view. According to Garner (2012), a disciplinary policy or set of procedures is essential for every organisation. Brown (2015) declares that, in many countries, employers have a duty to give employees written codes of engagement, including the *essentialia negotii* (latin for "essential terms").

Disciplinary measures are used as corrective measures in organisations to correct behaviours (Bendix, 2010). In universities these are applied to sustain rule of the law within a university community (Edeko, 2011). This is essential since for any significant academic progress to be achieved, a congenial atmosphere should exist. Disciplinary procedures outline the actions, outcomes, principles and policies that are expected to be complied with in any disciplinary matter. This should be done in writing, and made available to all staff members (Knight & Ukpere, 2014). Due to the importance of consistency in disciplinary matters and the need for employees to anticipate repercussions for breaches of work rules, organisations have penal codes, which outline offences and disciplinary actions (Finnermore, 2006).

According to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, (RCVS) (2013) disciplinary procedure is also important to encourage impartial, transparent and consistent decision-making when different people contravene rules in the work environment. Due process, fairness, firmness, timeliness and openness in applying sanctions are important (Olasehinde-Williams, 2006). Williams (2002) mentions that documentation and discipline are two concepts that must occur together. In fact, Williams (2002) compares the two with the chicken and egg scenario in terms of precedence. In order to discipline an employee, documentation is necessary to enhance the decision space, but in order to arrive at the decision; there is a need to enforce an optimal and functional disciplinary policy.

Disciplinary procedure and consistency

A disciplinary procedure is the process, which an organisation establishes as its pattern to adopt when employees breach organisational

rules, which require sanctions including dismissal. Misapplication or abuse of the established procedure of the organisation could lead to litigations (Chianu, 2007), if the staff wrongly disciplined decide to challenge the outcome in court (Williams, 2002).

Decision-making in disciplinary procedure is consistent when similar disciplinary procedures and decisions apply to staff equitably depending on the offence. According to the University of Strathclyde (2014), the disciplinary procedure of the institution applies to all its employees regardless of fixed term or open-ended contract status, grade and staff category. As enshrined in its disciplinary manual, the university will act fairly and consistently when applying this procedure, that the university will act timely and dispense with meetings decisions. The disciplinary decisions are clearly interpretations of extant rules as applicable to specific contexts and actions. The interpretations are usually predictable and consistent so that staff members are aware in advance of decision outcomes in respect of the different courses of action (Landy & Conte, 2008). Knight and Ukpere (2014) posited that where disciplinary procedures are inconsistent, the disciplinary outcomes are also often inconsistent. On the other hand, some studies have shown positive effect on the morale of employees when disciplinary procedures are consistent across the board (Miner & Brewer, 1983; Odumosu, 1994; Banjo, 1997).

Nel et al., (2012), in attempting to clarify policy and procedure argue that policies are broad sets of guidelines, while procedures are more detailed codifications of that, which is required when certain issues arise, in this case, when unacceptable conduct or breaches occur. These organisational responses are necessary in every organisation, since Anstey, Grogan and Ngcukaitobi (2011) claim that when two or more persons are required to work together on a specific set of tasks, conflicts are likely to arise. Hence, many organisations in their organisational disciplinary manuals often state as part of their policy objectives, the need to be consistent in procedures, which involve disciplinary decision-making (the disciplinary procedures manuals, University of Strathclyde). Likewise the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN), (1999) mandates organisations to be consistent and fair in their disciplinary procedures. It is doubtful that this section of the constitution is consistently adhered to, but it becomes difficult to explain what drives the increasing rate of litigations that has become apparent among universities in Rivers State.

Rules and procedures for disciplinary matters in Nigeria

This section of the research article reviews some disciplinary rules and procedures applicable to the public service and universities in Nigeria. By the Constitution there are three types of universities in Nigeria, Federal, State and Private. The Constitution of Federal Republic and specific status define what an offence is. Similarly, the Federal Government's (2008) Public Service Rules (PSR) encourages all employees to acquaint themselves with the disciplinary rules in the workplace. Thus, liability of knowing what the law says is the responsibility of the employee. However, it is the duty of the supervisor or supervising officer to observe and draw the attention of the employee to any aberrant behaviour exhibited at the workplace and notify such employee of the consequence of such action. Where an employee is found to be wanting in his or her duties, management may warn him/ her with a view to improve his/her performance. If the employee did not improve and receives three (3) or more warnings, the employee can be relieved of the work on account of inefficiency.

A disciplinary offence should be an action or inaction related to workplace. Disciplinary actions are effected to discourage acts that run contrary to the rules of conduct at the workplace. According to the

Federal Government (2008) workers may be disciplined generally for inefficiency, misconduct, serious misconduct, and conduct prejudicial to security.

Leading discipline in the university

Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013) opine that, the role of leadership in management is vital, because it is a key factor, which is responsible for employees' well-being and as well as that of the organisation, in general. Organisations that have well-functioning leaders can turn their organisations around with better supervision of their workers, ensuring that each employee performs his/her assignments, ultimately leading to a cumulative general performance that enhances the total output of the organisation (Robbins & Coulter, 2007). Well managed organisations are more likely to generate more profits, increase their stock prices, improve the general worth of the company's equity, and enhance their shareholders' wealth; either through increased dividends, higher stock prices, or better retained profits converted to equity (Oji, 2007).

Leadership roles in Nigerian universities are the responsibility of key officials at each university, and are steered by the Vice-Chancellor (including his Deputies), the Registrar, the Bursar and the University Librarian (Adewole, 2014). The position of leadership in a model university is shown in the organogram in Figure 1 below. The Vice-Chancellor is seen as the symbol of the university administration or leadership in a model university in Nigeria, as the buck stops at his desk. However, disciplinary matters could go beyond the Vice-Chancellor to the Governing Council which is presided over by the Pro-Chancellor. This is because ultimately, the Governing Council is the employer.

The role of implementing or enforcing employee discipline in a university is driven by the Vice-Chancellor through appropriate committees that are established by statutes, the university Governing Council, and university management. However, the role of the Registry in this process is critical in the Nigerian University System (NUS). According to Asagwara (2016), the Registry plays the following key functions, among others, in a Nigerian University System (NUS), record keeping; secretarial functions; administrative duties; advisory and interpretative; roles; enforcement; and communication, amongst others. All these are critical to define the level of success in any university especially given the paucity of finance to deliver essential services in these institutions of higher learning (Adewole, 2014).

The concept 'lead' is a verb obtained from the ancient English word 'lithan' and French word 'leden' which means 'to proceed', 'to go', 'to motivate', or 'impel to move'. It was first used in the 12th Century Anno Domino (A.D) (Webster, 2006). The concept is an active verb. Leading is therefore used in a context of action, causing people or motivating workers or employees to imbibe specific culture, tenets, attitudes and correcting deviants through punitive actions, which must also be in consonance with defined rules and expectations mutually consented to by both the leaders and the led (Ndu, 2016). According to Arnold

and Ukpere (2014) leadership may be defined as the critical agent in group activities that galvanises relevant forces in such organisations to generate or obtain the required goals by ensuring conformity to rules, strategies, processes and ethics, which consequently lead to competitiveness, efficiency and success. Given this premise, Arnold and Ukpere (2014) suggest that the type of leadership in any organisation is defined by a range of circumstances which includes the nature of the organisation and the volume of its resources, as well as its long-and short-term objectives, and operational environment, amongst others. Often these factors also may determine the approach used by leadership to achieve set goals.

Research methodology

The article adopted a qualitative research approach anchored within an interpretivist paradigm. It is descriptive design, with primary source of data from interviews and participant observation. Utilizing purposive sampling technique, fifteen persons who were very conversant with the research focussed area were chosen and interviewed as the sample. Of this number, five were academics and ten were administrative and professional staff. To differentiate the category of the interviewees, pseudonyms were given to them. For instance, 'PA' was used as the code for academic staff, while 'PS' and 'PJ' were used as the code for senior and junior administrative and professional staff respectively. The data generated from these fifteen interviewees constituted the nucleus of primary source of data. These were complemented with secondary data sourced from journals, text books, law reports, and so on. The contents of both sources of data were thematically and critically analysed. The phases involved in the thematic analysis are shown in Figure 2 below.

Data analysis/critical analysis and discussion of findings

In order to generate required data, three interwoven questions were posed to the interviewees. These questions relate to the: awareness of procedures for disciplinary decision-making; leadership structure for disciplinary decision-making and description of leadership style in the case university.

Awareness of disciplinary procedure in the case university

From the responses of the fifteen interviewees, two themes emerged in terms of awareness of disciplinary procedure in the case university. The two groups are those who are aware of the disciplinary procedure, and those who are not aware of the disciplinary procedure in the case university.

The views of the fifteen interviewees (with their code names) about their awareness or non- awareness of the disciplinary procedure in the case university are expressed below. For those who are aware of the disciplinary procedure in the case university, PA1 responded as follows:

"Yes, I am aware. But...the laid down procedures are not followed sometimes."

Similarly, PA2 agreed with PA1, and state that well laid out procedures exist in the case university. He posited:

"Yes, it is contained in the guidelines."

PA3 was also of the same view as PA1 and PA2. He stated:

"There is, but the question is how is it followed or how is it carried out?"

PA4 concurred, and stated that:

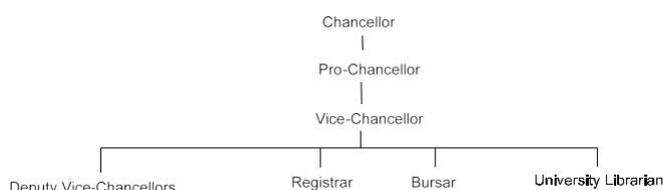


Figure 1. Principal Officers in a University in Nigeria

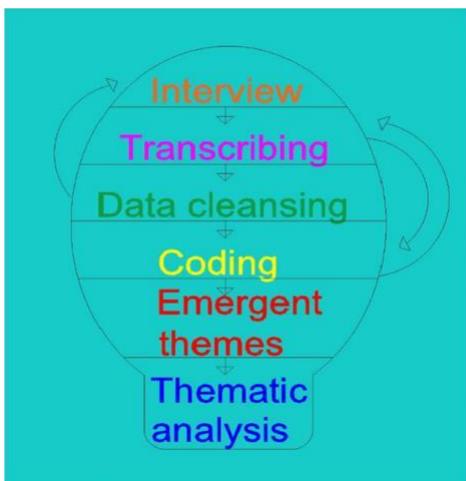


Figure 2. Phases involved in the thematic analysis

Source: Author's fieldwork

"In the university, there is well laid out procedure. First there must be complainant and in fact the complainant should have a face..."

PS1 also agreed with the other research participants above. She affirmed:

"Yes, there are well laid-out procedures , so what you have to do is to comply with the university rules..."

Similarly, PS2 said:

:"Yes there are well laid-out rules and regulations guiding disciplinary decision-making in the university."

The above view was reinforced by PS3 and he stated:

"Yes, the one that I can remember; the code of conduct, attitude to work and punctuality."

PS4 also concurred with the view above stating that:

"Yes, there are laid-down policies for discipline in the university its not everybody that knows it but me I know it."

In the same vein, PS5 said:

"Yes...the committee I served on, whenever we are sitting, the secretary comes with the rules,..."

PJ1 aligned himself with the above view. He posited:

"Yes that is why we have the code of conduct. At least I know I have my copy."

PJ2 confirmed this situation when he said:

"I am aware. That is, if one commits an offence...there are rules and regulations based on my experience. The Registrar will constitute a committee to look into the matter. So I am aware."

PJ3 also echoed the fact and replied:

"Yes the university has staff conditions of service that has the rules and regulations governing staff conduct in the university."

PJ4 reiterated this fact, when he declared:

"Yes, I know there is rule that is governing the university. There is procedure for discipline."

PJ5 re-affirmed the view above and stated:

"Yes, there is, I know."

On the other hand, for those who not are aware of the disciplinary procedure in the case university, on her part, PA5 commented:

"I don't think so because I have been employed for six years, I don't have a copy...I am learning on the job..."

From the above, apart from PA5 who claimed not to know or have access to the rules all the other fourteen interviewees know that there are well laid out disciplinary procedure in the case university and that the procedure is defined in the code of conduct. This is in consonance with Ndu (2016) who posits that leadership must define the rules of discipline and expectations in the workplace so that infractions and sanctions are known beforehand. Figure 3 illustrates the state of knowledge of the disciplinary rules from the interviewees.

Leadership structure for consistent disciplinary procedure in the case university

With regard to the leadership structure for consistent disciplinary procedure in the case university, PA1 (one of the fifteen interviewees) replied as follows:

"First if there is any petition to the Head of Department, the department ought to constitute a panel to look into the matter. It is only when the department is not able to handle such matter, that the department can refer it to the faculty through the Dean. And the faculty ought also to set up a committee to look into such a matter but where the faculty fails in this responsibility by not being able to resolve the matter, then it now goes to the Vice-Chancellor."

In response, PA2 said:

"The university has leadership structure for disciplinary decision-making. The Head of Department is the leader of the Department even though the leader could have senior members like the Professors ... but his leadership is key. For example, if anything happens in the Department, the Head of Department should be able to first look at that issue. If the issue is such that it cannot be handled... one that can be handled, they handle it at that level. But if the issue cannot be handled, they can move it on to the Faculty...and from the Faculty to the Central Administration."

Similarly, PA3 stated that:

"In handling of disciplinary procedures, like in my own case, that time this thing happened to me I was the Head of Department. The students reported to the Dean and the Dean collected those scripts before telling me what was actually happening. Then from there, the Dean forwarded the petition with a covering letter...to the Ethics Committee. It went to the Vice-Chancellor. There is a procedure, that's what I know."

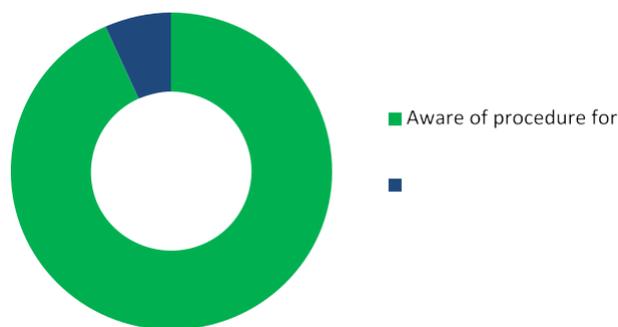


Figure 3. Awareness of procedure for disciplinary decision-making in the case university
Source: Author's fieldwork

In addition to the views above, all the other interviewees with the exception of PJ5 agreed that this is the leadership structure for disciplinary procedure in the university. More specifically, PJ5 stated:

"I don't know"

In terms of the various responses received in this regard, the leadership structure for disciplinary procedure at the case university is summarised in Figure 4 as follows:

The data generated from the research participants' responses showed that disciplinary decision-making in the case university starts from the units/departments of the offending employees, where a disciplinary committee is set up to investigate the staff member and the matter at this level, depending on the nature of offence, the matter is resolved it ends there. If, however, the matter is not resolved at the departmental level because the staff is culpable of an offence beyond that level, the matter is escalated to the faculty where the Dean or his/her nominee is the Chairperson. The Dean sets up a disciplinary committee to re-examine the matter and if successfully resolved, it ends there. If, however, the matter is beyond the Dean and the faculty, it is referred to the central administration. At this point the Registrar can set up a disciplinary committee for the junior staff matters while the Vice-Chancellor would set up a disciplinary committee if a senior member of staff is involved. Any disciplinary matter that is not resolved at this point is then referred to the university Council for investigation and determination by the disciplinary committee. If at the end of the disciplinary hearing at this level the staff is not satisfied with the outcome, he/she could appeal to the University Council for reconsideration of the matter. In point, the disciplinary procedure at the case university applies to all categories of staff. This seems to align with the University of Strathclyde (2014), whose disciplinary procedure applies to all its employees irrespective of grade and staff category.

Description of leadership style of the university management in relation to consistency in disciplinary procedure

Finally, in response to a question on the leadership style of the university management in relation to consistency in disciplinary procedure, PA1 (one of the fifteen interviewees) stated:

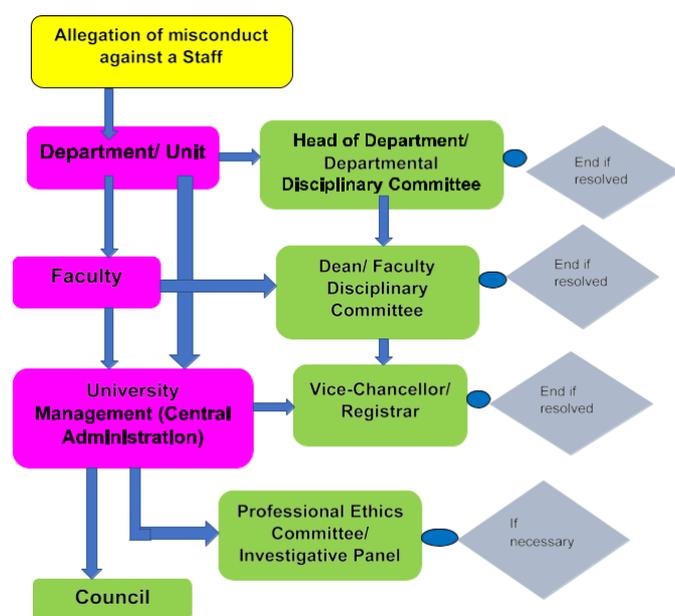


Figure 4. Summary of interviewees' responses on leadership structure in the case university for consistent disciplinary procedure. Source: Author's fieldwork

"The university will want to get the best from the workforce through democratic tenets but leadership should be wary of rumour mongers and peddlers of falsehood as advice or suggestions."

The view of PA1 is germane since staff can take advantage of the opportunity provided by a democratic leader to misinform or misadvise leadership purely for primordial reasons. PA2 described the leadership as transparent and firm. PA2 stated:

"Like I said without mincing words, there is a paradigm shift. Things have changed. The Management has succeeded in making the staff to realize the essence of consistency of disciplinary decision-making. Imagine where you have the university's weekly bulletin and you are reading disciplinary cases of your colleagues that you didn't know before and seeing their pictures displayed, so you know the person, and you are reading word to word what happened, before the disciplinary decision was taken. That alone can make somebody sit up."

Similarly, PA3 stated:

"There is transparency in leadership and most of them go by the policy. When you hear a leader when he is talking he is supporting it with facts and figures; that leadership is open and there will be no victimisation."

Conversely, PA4 identified a challenge regarding the inexperience of members that serve disciplinary panels. He stated as follows:

"The problem that every committee that is being set up has is the problem of proper composition for purposes of investigation of disciplinary cases. There must be persons who have the expertise to be part and parcel of every committee or disciplinary committee, so that the committee can be properly guided. Most of the leaders are young people, and majority are inexperienced."

PA5 also identified the need for inclusiveness in this respect:

"I don't want to say it is autocratic but it doesn't really involve our opinion. I always have the sense of; they don't really know what is happening down here at the departmental level. I think leadership have to look for a way to incorporate everybody's view and be unbiased and really pay attention to staff's perception. Because the younger ones may not have the courage to talk when the elders have spoken."

But PS1 observed that there are some toxic leaders at the institution and mentioned the following in this regard:

"Some leaders in the Department favour those who have affinity with them. On the basis of such relationship they will not follow the rules strictly... when you who is not related to them do what the other person has done which they over looked, they will deal with you without mercy unless they realise that you know your right that you can use the other person's case as a reference."

Unlike PS1, PS2 believed that the leadership is generous when they apply the rules to disciplinary cases and hence stated:

"To me, I love the leadership style in the University because it makes people to sit up. The leaders follow the rules and regulations in leading the university..."

Like PS2, PS3 also perceived that the university's leadership, some are friendly others are not. He said the following in terms of this:

"The leadership styles of some leaders are not friendly, while some are friendly."

PS4 iterated that the case university's leadership was both available, and effective, and said:

"I feel that the leaders of the university follow the rules. I am satisfied with this kind of leadership."

On the whole, the data from the interviewees' responses with respect to the leadership style, it is noted that eight interviewees observed that leadership in the case university was democratic, open and good. However, two interviewees in particular identify toxic leaders that are high handed. The other five could not directly take a clear position as they noted that leadership was not static or was mixed by having elements of benevolence and toxicity.

Effectively therefore, it may be stated that the overriding majority acknowledge the existence and functioning of a leadership and management structure for consistent disciplinary procedure in the case university. Most of the interviewees (fourteen) agreed with this fact of its consistent functionality, out of this, two interviewees confirm its existence but doubt its consistent functionality and only one research participant exhibited ignorance of its existence. In other words, there is a well laid down and sufficiently publicised procedure for consistent disciplinary decision-making. This is consistent with the advice by Bass (1999) for an effective structure for disciplinary decision-making which should be accessible, well-disposed and known by staff. This is also the standard of statutes setting up public universities in Nigeria (Folarin, 2019).

Recommendations

Based on the findings above, some recommendations are imperative to enhance the leadership structure for consistent disciplinary procedure at the case university.

- **Appointment of chairpersons and committee/panel members who are knowledgeable and experienced in disciplinary procedure:** - There is a need for the leaders to appoint or elect disciplinary committee chairpersons and members who are experts on the subject matter of the disciplinary hearing and are capable of being fair to all parties during the process.
- **Leaders should always authenticate information received:** - Leaders should confirm the authenticity of information they receive from in-group members, which relate to colleagues and as far as possible, minimise emotions and suspicions when taking disciplinary decisions.
- **Need to streamline the leadership framework for consistent disciplinary procedure:** - The disciplinary process could be time consuming during which time several man hours and other resources are lost on the part of the employer, while on the part of the accused employee, it is usually traumatic, stressful and tension laden. In order to reduce the foregoing combined burdens, the following new features are therefore proposed to add value to the leadership framework (structure) for consistent disciplinary procedure at the case university:
 - Clarify actions to be taken at each level of the disciplinary process;
 - Counselling;
 - Alternative dispute resolution as a last resort at each level;
 - The accused staff should be accompanied by his or her choice of attorney at disciplinary hearings; and
 - The letter communicating the decision of the University Council to staff that are found guilty, should include the right of the staff member to appeal if dissatisfied with the disciplinary decision within four weeks, if they so wish, provided that the staff has new facts/evidences on the matter.

These new features should ensure that ample opportunity is given to the parties to exhaust the means of resolving disciplinary matters at each level. Furthermore, the modifications will make the employees of the case university become more conversant with disciplinary procedure as well as make them have confidence in the entire process. In this regard, the resources the university expends in servicing disciplinary committees/panels' sittings and court cases, will be conserved. These resources will then be channelled to infrastructural development, research, better welfare packages for employees, and community service.

Conclusion

In general, the foregoing shows that there have been different leaders in the university overtime and those leaders exhibit different leadership styles. Some tended to be autocratic, others benevolent, democratic and open. The role of leadership and leadership structure for consistent disciplinary procedure is very important. The findings above revealed that there is a leadership structure in the case university for disciplinary procedure which is well known to many of the employees. In a nutshell, the structure provides for a graduated mechanism where suspected offenders are tried first at their departments or units and depending on the magnitude of offence, the matter could be escalated upwards to the central university management. Among the fifteen participants, only one staff stated that he has been employed for about six years and did not have a copy of the disciplinary procedure and structure. The other fourteen participants seem aware of the laid-down procedure and structure for disciplinary hearing at the case university as contained in the University's Code of Conduct, which is a reflection that the awareness level of the procedure and structure is quite high, which will go a long way towards boosting members trust and morale in the organisation.

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