APPRAISAL OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL IN NIGERIA

Dr. Arumah Fidelis Ugwu
Department of Educational Management, Michael Okpara University Of Agriculture,
Umudike, Umuahia, Abia State.
E-mail: arumah1970@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to appraise the management practices of National Examinations Council (NECO) on personnel, infrastructural and financial management of Council fund. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The population were 154 NECO Senior administrative staff and 44 Heads of Department making a total of 198 respondents. There was no sampling carried out because the population was small so the entire population was used. The design of the study was a descriptive survey. The research instrument was a questionnaire titled "Appraisal of Management practices questionnaire (AMPQ) and was validated by experts. The instrument was assessed for reliability using internal consistency of Cronback Alpha method. The reliability coefficient obtained yielded 0.92. The data obtained were organized and analyzed using the mean and standard deviation to answer research questions and t-test to test the null hypotheses. Some of the major finding revealed that NECO management adhered to the regulation system (manual) in the personnel, infrastructural, and financial management of the Council. The hypotheses tested indicated no significant difference in the mean rating of both NECO senior administrative staff and heads of Department on the extent to which NECO management adhered to the regulation system (manual) on personnel, infrastructural and financial management of the Council. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that NECO management should continue to be guided by NECO rules and regulation in personnel, infrastructural and financial management of the Council among others.

Introduction

Education in Nigeria is an instrument per-excellent for effective national development (FRN 2004). National Examinations Council (NECO) is one of the education bodies that control and conduct senior school certificate examinations in Nigeria. National Examinations Council (NECO) evolved from the National Board for Educational Measurement (NBEM) in April 1999. The Federal Government accepted the recommendations of the Sogbetum commission and Agulu panel for the establishment of more examination bodies in Nigeria.

As a result, the Federal Government in April 1999 promulgated a decree establishing

the National Examinations Council (NECO). NECO has the responsibility to manage and appraise public examination and conduct several examinations include the senior school certificate examinations (SSCE); improve the quality of continuous assessment and to curb the rising incidence of examination malpractices associated with pubic examination in Nigeria.

Okoro (2009) stated appraisal as the evaluation of the worth or value of things or action and making of appropriate decision on the basis of such appraisal. The purpose of appraisal is to determine the extent to which the objective is being achieved. Management according to Mgbodile (2004) is the process or method whereby a group of people at the top level of an organisation plan, organize, communicate, co-ordinate, control and direct the action and the activities of those who work in an organisation with a view to achieving the organisational objectives. The researcher sees management as concerned with seeing that the job gets done and done effectively.

Management practices are the effective utilization and coordination of human and material resources to achieve defined objective with maximum efficiency. In National Examinations Council (NECO) the Organogram-governing Council is the highest followed by Registrar/Chief Executive. There are different departments with the Heads that is Head off Department for instance Examination Administration Department, test development department, finance and supply department, computer processing department, planning and research department etc in all there are 44 Heads of Department, followed in rank after Head of Department are the senior administrative staff. They are high ranked officers of grade level fourteen and above with at least 15 year of working experience depending on state or federal government.

Unfortunately, there are evidence of problems in the management practices of National Examinations Council in personnel and funding, poor infrastructural mismanagement in the Council. For examination All Nigeria Conference of principal head in a general meeting which they held in Awka, Anambra State in March, 2009 blamed the Federal Government for inadequate funding, weakness in recruitment process and poor infrastructure. The government blamed the principals for various acts of indiscipline and examination malpractices in their schools especially in the NECO conduct of Senior Certificate Examination. Many parents feel that private schools are doing much better than the federal government public schools so they get their children enrolled in the private schools.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the role and action taken by Chief Executive of the Council (NECO) to ensure efficient management of the Council there were evidence of problems in the management of the Council, for instance between 2005 to 2007 four NECO staff were

 All Rights Reserved.

dismissed, twelve terminated, twelve resigned and four retired by the Council for various offences ranging from personnel, infrastructural and financial mismanagement in the Council (Source: National Examination Council headquarter Minna Niger state 2005 2007). Common observation also showed that some NECO states and zonal offices in Nigeria were yet to be completed and infrastructural development left much to be desired. The problem of this study therefore put in question form. To what extent is NECO management adhering to the NECO regulation in their management practices?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to appraise the management practices of NECO in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the extent NECO Management adheres to the Regulation (manual) of the Council in personnel management.
2. Determine the extent the NECO Management follows guidelines of NECO regulation (manual) in infrastructural management.
3. Establish the extent the NECO Management complies to the financial regulation (manual) of the Council in the management of Council fund.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to National Examination Council (NECO) in Nigeria. In terms of management practices, the following area formed the focus for the study. Personnel management, infrastructural management and financial management.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study:

1. To what extent does NECO management adhere to the regulation (manual) of the Council in personnel management.
2. To what extent does NECO management follow the guidelines of NECO regulation (manual) in infrastructural management?
3. To what extent does NECO management comply to the financial regulation (manual) of the Council in the management of the Council fund.

Hypotheses

Five null hypotheses are formulated to guide the study and are tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant different between the mean ratings of NECO Heads of Department and NECO Senior Administrative staff with regard to the extent which the NECO management adheres to the regulation (manual) of the Council in

personnel management.

2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of NECO Heads of Department and NECO Senior Administrative Staff with regard to extent which NECO management follow guidelines of NECO regulations (manuals) in infrastructural management.
3. There is no significant different between the mean ratings of NECO Heads of Department and NECO Senior Administrative staff with regard to extent which NECO management comply to the financial regulation (manual) of the Council in the management of the Council funds.

Method

The design is a descriptive survey. Descriptive survey was adopted because the study was centered on individual who manages the affairs of the Council and their opinions contributed very much in the management of the Council. Moserg and Kaltan (2007) are of the opinion that when a study centres around individual opinions or group opinions that the best method of research should be the survey method.

Population of the Study

The population of the study was 154 NECO administrative staff and 44 NECO Heads of Department making a total of 198 respondents. No sampling was carried out on the population, instead the entire population of 198 respondents was used. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire titled Appraisal of Management practice questionnaire (AMPQ). The instrument was administered and collected by the researcher and with the help of the two assistants recruited by the researcher. It was administered during the meeting of NECO Senior Administrative Staff and NECO Heads of Department at the NECO National Headquarters Minna, Niger State. Descriptive and inferential statistic were employed in analyzing the research data. Specially, the research questions were answered using mean scores and standard deviation. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics applied at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The result of the data analyses in line with three research questions and three null hypotheses formulated to guide the study were presented.

Research Question One

To what extent does NECO management adhere to the regulation (personnel policies procedures) of the Council in personnel management? The data for answering the above research question was presented on table one below.

 All Rights Reserved.

Table 1:

Mean rating of NECO Heads of Department and Senior Administrative Staff on adherence on regulation in personnel management.

S/N	ADHERENCE ON REGULATION PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT	NECO SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF			NECO HEADS OF DEPARTMENT			TOTAL IN CLUSTER		
		X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision
1.	The council (NECO) administration appoints persons of proven integrity to serve as NECO heads of department	2.65	-.01	Accept	2.42	.30	Reject	2.60	.17	Accept
2.	Heads of department show interest in the welfare of those working under them	3.47	.11	Accept	3.21	.14	Accept	3.42	.16	Accept
3.	All staff of the Council undergo in-service training for effective performance	3.50	.15	Accept	3.34	.27	Accept	3.46	.19	Accept
4.	The in-service training of workers given them a sense of satisfaction, confidence and feeding of security	2.59	.14	Accept	2.51	.32	Accept	3.2.57	.19	Accept
5.	NECO staff vacancies are widely advertised	3.41	.10	Accept	3.46	.18	Accept	3.40	.12	Accept
6.	Qualification and experience are highly considered in appointment of NECO staff	2.76	.10	Accept	2.68	.40	Accept	2.74	.21	Accept
7.	The Council offices are staffed with qualified administrative personnel	2.58	.12	Accept	2.62	.27	Accept	2.59	.17	Accept
8.	The Council has personnel policies and procedures adopted by the management	3.08	.02	Accept	3.03	.02	Accept	3.07	0.3	Accept
9.	The NECO recruitment panel performs their duties according to NECO personnel policies and procedures.	3.08	.03	Accept	3.03	.02	Accept	3.07	.03	Accept
10.	Disciplinary action is taken against any erring NECO staff	56	.16	Accept	87	.12	Accept	2.63	.20	Accept
	Cluster 1	2.97	05	Accept	2.91	.11	Accept	2.95	.07	Accept

Table 1 presets views of NECO Senior Administrative staff and Head of Department on the extent to which NECO management adheres to the regulation of the Council in personnel management. The cluster mean score of 2.95 shows that NECO management adheres to the regulation of the Council in personnel management.

Research Question Two

To what extent does NECO management follow guidelines of NECO regulation in infrastructural management?

Tables 2:

Mean rating of NECO Senior Administrative Staff and NECO Heads of Department on the extent to which NECO management follows guidelines of NECO regulation on infrastructural management of the Council.

S/N	GUIDELINES OF NECO REGULATION ON INFRAST. MGT. OF COUNCIL	NECO SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF			NECO HEADS OF DEPARTMENT			TOTAL CLUSTER		
		X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision
1.	There is a Council work committee for maintenance and repair of NECO infrastructural facilities	2.97	.18	Accept	3.24	.20	Accept	3.03	.21	Accept
2.	The welfare of NECO Staff are foremost consideration when making infrastructural purchases.	3.38	.16	Accept	3.23	.19	Accept	3.35	.17	Accept
3	Every NECO Heads of Department participates in the selection of infrastructural facilities before purchases are made.	3.22	.06	Accept	3.22	.20	Accept	3.22	.11	Accept
4.	All records of infrastructural purchases are kept open to public scrutiny.	3.33	.10	Accept	3.24	.20	Accept	3.31	.14	Accept
5.	NECO management follows guideline and regulations in infrastructural management	3.21	. 08	Accept	3.24	.20	Accept	3.22	.11	Accept
6.	Government lives up to expectation and her responsibilities by providing and maintaining infrastructural facilities (schools, electricity, water supply)	2.07	.03	Reject	2.13	.12	Reject	2.08	.06	Reject
7.	Inadequate funding of NECO by the Federal government is responsible for the poor maintenance of her infrastructural facilities.	3.17	.07	Accept	3.16	.15	Accept	3.17	.10	Accept
8.	NECO works committee on infrastructural facilities attends workshops regularly to enhance their performances.	2.17	.07	Accept	2.42	.20	Reject	2.19	.12	Reject
9.	Unserviceable infrastructural facilities of the of the Council are disposed off promptly.	2.79	.26	Accept	2.63	.44	Accept	2.75	.31	Accept
10.	All the NECO examination centres and venues have all the basic infrastructural facilities before approval by the Council	2.98	.26	Accept	3.07	.05	Accept	3.00	.23	Accept

 All Rights Reserved.

Cluster 2	2.93	.08	Accept	2.94	.18	Accept	2.93	.11	Accept

The cluster mean score is 2.93. This is an indication that to a high extent NECO management follows guidelines and regulations in infrastructural management of the Council. From the analysis both NECO Senior Administrative staff and heads of Department have congruent opinions on all items and with standard deviation .21, .17, .11, .14, .11, .06, .10, .09, .25, .13 & .11.

Research Question Three

To what extent does NECO management comply to the financial regulation (manual) of the Council in the management of the Council funds? The data for answering research question three are presented on table three below.

Table 3:

Mean ratings of NECO Senior Administrative staff and Heads of Department compliance to the financial regulation (manual) of the Council in the management of the Council funds.

S/N	COMPLIANCE TO FINANCIAL REGULATION OF COUNCIL IN MANAGEMENT OF FUNDS	NECO SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF			NECO HEADS OF DEPARTMENT			TOTAL CLUSTER		
		X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision
1.	The Council (NECO) constitutes a budget committee in order to plan for funds in the Council	3.17	.07	Accept	3.23	.13	Accept	3.18	.09	Accept
2.	The Chairman of the budget committee prepares and issue budget forms to each budget centre heads to enable him provide the information required in his department budget	2.88	.26	Accept	3.12	.07	Accept	2.93	.25	Accept
3.	The budget monitoring unit ensures regular and effective supervision of budget committee.	3.35	.11	Accept	3.27	.19	Accept	3.33	.13	Accept
4.	Appointment of budget and monitoring committee are on merit.	3.23	.07	Accept	3.30	.18	Accept	3.24	.11	Accept
5.	All the management of funds are strictly in accordance with the approved NECO financial regulation (manual).	3.60	.18	Accept	3.26	.14	Accept	3.52	.22	Accept
6.	All payment vouchers are sent to the internal for auditing.	3.09	.03	Accept	3.28	.15	Accept	3.13	.11	Accept
7.	NECO Heads of Finance Department lodge all monies collected on behalf of the Council into the Council accounts.	3.05	.01	Accept	3.07	.05	Accept	3.05	.03	Accept
8.	There is report(s) of cases of embezzlement of funds in the Council.	2.98	.26	Accept	3.31	.17	Accept	3.05	.28	Accept
9.	Federal Government subvention is inadequate to the Council financial obligations.	3.42	.12	Accept	3.29	.19	Accept	3.39	.15	Accept
10.	Financial accounting prevents theft waste and embezzlement of funds in the Council.	3.04	.01	Accept	3.09	.08	Accept	3.05	.05	Accept

 All Rights Reserved.

Cluster 3			3.18	.10	Accept	3.22	.10	Accept	3.19	11	Accept

With cluster mean score of 3.19 it shows acceptance to a very high extent that NECO management complied with financial regulation of the Council. Both have consensus opinions of all the ten items.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference (P < .05) between the mean ratings of senior administrative staff and heads of department with regard to extent to which the NECO management adheres to the regulation (manual) of the Council in personnel management.

To test above null hypothesis, a t-test analysis of the difference between the mean rating of NECO senior administrative staff and heads of department were computed and result is shown on table four below.

Table 4:

Summary of t-test analysis of the response of NECO senior administrative staff and heads of department with regard to the extent NECO management adheres to the personnel management.

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Degree of Freedom	Level of significance	Calculated t. value	Table t. Value (Critical value)	Decision
NECO Senior Administrative Staff	154	2.45	.85					
				1.96	0.05	.197	1.96	Ho_1 is Accepted
NECO Heads of Department	44	2.42	.90					

The calculated t-value is .197 which is less than table t-value (critical value) 1.96. This indicates no significant difference in the opinion of NECO Senior Administrative Staff and Heads of Department on the extent NECO management adheres to the personnel management the null hypothesis was therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant different (P < .05) between th mean ratings of NECO Senior Administrative Staff and Heads of Department with regards to the extent to which NECO management follows guidelines (manual) in infrastructural management of the Council.

A t-test analysis of the difference between mean ratings of NECO Senior Administrative Staff and Heads of Department with regards to the extent to which NECO management follows guidelines in infrastructural management of the Council was computed to test the null hypothesis. The result is shown on Table 5.

Table 5:

Summary of t-test analysis of the response of NECO Senior administrative staff and heads of department with regards to extent NECO management adheres to the council in infrastructural management

Category of Staff	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	Level of significance	Calculated t. value	Table t. Value (Critical value)	Decision
NECO Senior Administrative Staff	154	3.30	.86					
				1.96	0.05	0.66	1.96	Ho_2 is Accepted
NECO Heads of Department	44	3.20	.89					

From the analysis shown on the Table 5 above, the t-calculated of 0.66 which is less than the critical t value of 1.96. This shows that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of NECO Senior Administrative staff and Heads of Department on the extent to which NECO Management follows guidelines in infrastructure management of the council. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significance difference (P<.05) between the mean ratings of the NECO Senior Administrative staff and Heads of Department with regard to extent to which NECO Management comply to the financial regulation (manual) of the council in the management of the council funds.

A t-test analysis of the difference between mean rating of NECO Senior Administrative Staff and heads of department was computed to test the null hypothesis above. The result is shown on Table 6.

Table 6:

Summary of t-test analysis of the mean response of the NECO Senior Administrative Staff and NECO Heads of Department with regard to the extent NECO Management complies to the financial regulations of the council in management of council funds.

Category of Staff	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	Level of significance	Calculated t. value	Table t. Value (Critical value)	Decision
NECO Senior Administrative Staff	154	2.93	0.96					
				1.96	0.05	0.39	1.96	Ho_3 Accept
NECO Heads of Department	44	2.87	0.88					

Data displayed on Table 6 shows that the calculated t-value was 0.39 which is less than

 All Rights Reserved.

table value (critical t-value) of 1.96. This shows that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of NECO Senior Administrative Staff and Heads of Department on the extent to which NECO Management complies to the financial regulation of the Council. The null hypothesis wasaccepted.

Discussion of the findings

1. The National Examinations council (NECO) adhered to the provision of the manual in personnel management (= 2.95. SD = .07), Infrastructural facilities management (= 2.93; SD = 11)
2. NECO Management showed interest in the welfare of their workers = 3.42;SD (= .16 and in-service) training were provided for them (= 3.46; SD = 19)
3. Heads of department participated III the selection of infrastructural facilities before purchases are made (= 3.22: SD = .11) and all records of infrastructural purchases are kept open for public scrutiny (= 3.31:SD = 14) The budget monitoring unit ensured regular effective supervision of budget committee (= 3.33; SD = .13)
4. Federal Government subvention was inadequate to meet the Council's financial obligations (3.39; SD = .15)
5. There was no significant difference (P < 0.05) between the mean ratings of senior administrative staff and heads of department on the extent to which NECO Management adhered to the provision of the manual in personnel (t = 18), infrastructural (t = .66), and financial (t = .39).

Recommendations andconclusion

1. The NECO management should continue to be guided by NECO regulations (manual) in the areas of personnel, infrastructural are financial management of the council. This is necessary since such regulations (manual) would prevent fraudulent practices in the NECO Management.
2. The NECO Management should sponsor their staff on in-service training on the personnel, infrastructural and financial management for the Council.
3. The Federal Government should organize periodic and relevant in-service training, seminar, workshops on the regulations (manual) in the personnel, infrastructural and financial management.
4. The Federal Government should set up supervisory and monitory units

5. The Federal Government should increase NECO Fundings and provide more facilities to the council and recruit more administrative staff to increase their performances and productivity.
6. A committee to be set up by the Federal Ministry of Education in NECO to be reporting the NECO management to the ministry not to Chief Executive of NECO. This is relevant in that where the committee is seen as an external body to monitor the Chief Executive specifically, he will be more cautious and the level of connivance that sometimes existed between the boss and his subordinate will be
eliminated. This will make the committee completely independent and they will

whose objectives were to ensure compliance of NECO regulations. The unit should be free to ask for record of expenditures made in the council and to examine the actual projects or facilities upon which such expenditure were made. discharge their duties with greater freedom.
7. The NECO Management staff and other who performed creditably should be encouraged, motivated and rewarded with promotions, housing and car loans.
8. The Federal Government should live up to expectation by providing infrastructural facilities and save the council from unnecessary financial strain in an attempt to supplement these services.

 All Rights Reserved.

REFERENCES

Adebayo, CC (1990). *Management theory and practice*. Ibadan: Africa

Akinsulire, O. (2002) *Financial Management*, Lagos: EI-Toda Ventures Limited.

Akubue, A (1991). *Classroom Organization and Management*: A 5 - Point Strategy Ibadan and Owerri: Wisdom Publishers.

Ali, A. (2004). *Government's Funding of Higher Education and Quality Assurance Outcome International Education* Review Report xiv

Bush, T. (1995). Theories of Educational Management University of Leicester.

Enyi, D. (2003) *Theories in Educational Administration and Planning (Ed*).

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) *National policy on Education, Abuja National Educational Research and Development council.*

Financial regulation, National Examinations Council (2006) Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, Nigeria.

Hornby, A.S (2000). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Six addition, Oxford, University Press)

Irukwu, J. O. (2004), *Financial Prudence Cost Effectiveness and Efficient Management of Scarce Resources*. Paper presented at the National Workshop of Alternative Source of Revenue Lagos.

Kaltan (1997). *The Nature of Financial Management,* India: Vikas Publishing, House.

List of NECO Staff Disengaged from service within period of September 2005 to January 2007.

Mgbodile, T. O. (2001) *Fundamentals in Educational Administration and Planning*: Magnet Business Enterprises (publishing Division)

Moserg, C. G. (2005) *Appraisal of financial colleges of Education in South Eastern Nigeria,* Unpublished Ph.D Dissertations, Department of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

National Examinations Council (2004-2010). *Regulations and syllabuses for senior school certificate Examination* for candidate in Nigeria

National Examinations council Annual Report. 2000 - 2008.

National Examinations Council: *Background information on the Establishment, Statutory Functions*, Major Achievement Some Challenges and Constraints.

Obi, E (2009). *Educational Management: Theory and Practices.* Jamoe Enterprises (Nig) Ltd, Enugu

Ogbonnaya, N. O. (2005) *Foundations of Education Finance.* Nsukka: Hallman Publishers.

 All Rights Reserved.