

Transparency in Higher Education Human Resource Management: Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract

Transparency in Higher Education Human Resources Management is a vital aspect that determines the success or failure of an organization. This study examined the kind of challenges private universities face due to lack of transparency. The concept of transparency refers to disclosure or openness in the passing of information from one agent to another. In conducting this study a qualitative research approach and a critical ethnographic design were adopted. Data was collected through interviews and open-ended questionnaires involving 22 employees from two private universities in Tanzania. The findings indicate that, regardless of contextual variation and semantic pluralism transparent practitioners have benefitted; both on individual and institutional basis. Likewise, lack of transparency affects decision-making processes and jeopardizes employees' relationships which lead to poor coordination and low organizational trust. The paper concludes with recommendations on strategies to be adopted as a means to enforce and promote transparency in Human Resources Management.

Keywords: Transparency, Higher Education, Human Resource, Management and Accountability.

1. Introduction and Background

Transparency is a powerful principle which is paramount in matters of public administration and management of Human Resources (HR). It is indeed a factor without which management practices would amount to nothing (Sánchez, 2006; McMeekin, 2013). It is probably from this background that DeDionisio (2014) contends that without transparency an institution cannot claim accountability which is required for its success. Transparency when constantly applied as a principle of management it empowers the institution to overcome hindrances such as; corruption, bias, discrimination and all types of hidden agendas that have deleterious impact on the growth of the organization. It is also true that the main source of misunderstanding, decline of productivity, quarrels, mistrust, misuse of resources, performance breakdown and irresponsibility, which in turn have led to strikes and frequent closures of higher learning institutions, have been attributed to the lack of transparency in HRM (Pereira, 2003). In order to successfully manage organizational resources, participation among stakeholders is obligatory because involving them is one way of encouraging transparency (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007). Based on this stand point, it is worth arguing that the success and prosperity of Higher Learning Institutions (HLI), like other organizations, rests in the hands of transparent and accountable people in the management. Hence, it is fair to argue that lack of transparency among the people serving as managers in Higher Learning Institutions including Human Resources (HR) jeopardises both the quality of the institution and its beneficiaries.

In this era of tremendous advanced social media, technological development, the increased speed, scope, and volume of communication, information has emerged as a central determinant for every business and the standard according to which failure and/or successful performance is measured. Information has established itself as a pivot upon which the global world revolves. In these parameters, "transparency is not only an obligation for a public entity but also a real benefit to the institution and its policies" (Issuing, 2005, p. 2). We are in the times where communication determines the direction of the world; times of communication technology advancement which has shifted power from suppliers to customers. In the name of transparency political systems have been forced to change even unto the liberty to share information that was once held confidentially (Weiner, 2012). Thus, stakeholders demand transparency from both private and public organization. This is due to the fact that information has become not only a right, a commodity and means to progress but also an end in itself. In this light, it can be inferred that transparent management determines the achievement of the goals for both students and the rest of the institutional stakeholders. It is probably from this background that some scholars have challenged institutions to observe the principles of accountability and transparency lest they collapse (Geraats, 2005; Kennedy, 2009). Private HLIs are certainly not an exceptional.

We argue strongly that, unless transparency in the management of resources is observed, Higher Learning Institutions, like any other organizations, will eventually stumble and fall. Transparency in all aspects of university life helps to maintain the integrity of academic and managerial processes (Cordeiro & Cunningham, 2000). Transparency is an essential ingredient of fair selection processes, for identifying and appointing university leaders, deans and heads of departments. Additionally, transparency can be viewed as key in admission processes, in examinations and in access to financial resources within universities (McMeekin, 2013). It is also indisputable that standardization of performance, recruitment, retention and promotion policies can only be effectively executed under transparent conditions. Despite the known significance of transparency, it is evident that its practice has remained an illusion for many institutions.

In Tanzania, like in many other developing countries in Africa, Higher Learning Institutions, particularly those owned privately, suffer significantly and quietly due to limited resources, such as financial resources, human and physical resources. Some have been closed down and others have deteriorated in ranking. While these incidences affect all those involved in such Higher Learning Institutions, the members who are directly involved and are negatively affected, are often unaware of their own alarming situation. Consequently, when action is taken by the official organs that control the quality of education in Higher Learning Institutions, the intellectual formation of the targeted human capital is disrupted. For example, from in the past five years (2014-2019) a numbers of universities and universities colleges, University centres and programs that were once accredited were closed down or suspended. Such closures and suspensions of the colleges and programs were a disbelief and heart-breaking to the majority of both students and employees in the affected institutions. In our view, the disbelief and the reactions from those who were affected provide hints about the practice of transparency in such institutions and its effects on the members concerned. It should be noted that in a university setting, all stakeholders including, faculty members, administrative and support staff as well as students, have a very important role to play in the realization of the vision and mission of the given university. Hence, in order for each of these groups to play its role effectively, transparency should be observed. Failure to exercise transparency will affect not only the individual members but the entire organization. In other words, as suggested by previous scholars, with transparency, those involved in the management of organization can effectively accomplish most of their strategic priorities despite the scarcity of available resources (Sánchez, 2006). Hence, this study bears significant implications for the government leaders, university owners, Higher Learning Institutional leadership and staff members, as it gives them opportunities to understand the merits and demerits as well as strategic ways of applying transparency in HRM.

It should also be noted that private, like public universities were established for the purpose of disseminating knowledge, conducting research and consultancy for public service. These tasks can be accomplished successfully when the institution has well acquainted and transparent Human Resources (HRs). The HRs is the only unit in an institution which is capable of executing the plans. Thus, the HRs should be properly managed for successful achievement of the institutional goals. However, decreased commitment among workers, high rate of resignation and departure from work, irresponsibility and lack of accountability, misunderstanding and conflict between individuals or between departments in such institutions are some of the signals to the lack of transparency in the human resource management (HRM) and they bring down the organizational performance (Berggren & Bernshiteyn, 2007). This could be due to dissatisfaction among organizational stakeholders. It is unfortunate that students often end up frustrated because their ambitions and dreams to acquire quality and reliable education are interrupted as a result of lack of transparency. Such students cannot compete in the global market whereby only the fittest can survive. To keep the pace of global market requirement for quality personnel, a joint effort from both the institutions' management and the rest of the stakeholders is of considerable urgency (Cowen, 1996). This cannot be possible unless transparency is enhanced. Students in Higher Learning Institutions dream to acquire quality education as fundamental equipment for competition in the global market. It is also true that stakeholders expect reasonable returns. There is a very close connection between the way in which the development of a global meritocracy for students and for universities are viewed and the global search for talents in the world of business. Based on this situation, the aim of this study was to produce a kind of knowledge which can serve as a means to inspire, challenge and promote transparency in the management of Human Resources by excavating the benefits of transparency in the Higher Education Institutions and the kind of challenges which universities face in Human Resources Management due to lack of transparency. Hence, to achieve this goal, we dived into theories of transparency and the multi-dimensional connotation of the concept of transparency in order to expound its meaning and application in various contexts. It is appropriate to note here that this paper is a follow up of an unpublished research which was submitted in the form of a Masters Dissertation to St. Augustine University of Tanzania in the year 2016.

1. Literature Review

2.1 Meaning and Application of Transparency

In the light of Institution bureaucracy theory, scholars concur that transparency is a multi-dimensional concept with a variety of connotations in different contexts (Fenster, 2013; García-Fernández, González-Díaz & López-Díaz, 2012; Christensen, Flyverbom & Hansen, 2015). This is due to the fact that transparency is not an end in itself, but a means by which various goals – social, political and economic objectives – can be achieved. Etymologically, transparency refers to the see-through physical quality of an object (Christensen, Flyverbom & Hansen, 2015). An object is considered transparent if it has a natural characteristic of allowing light to pass through it. This understanding of transparency strictly excludes all sorts of opacity, concealment, distortion, manipulation, secrecy, closure, mistrust and privacy. Studies have shown that the concept of “transparency has become an increasingly popular word in recent times, used, and sometimes misused, by both scholars and practitioners” (Sison & Vaccaro, 2011, p. 18). Therefore, it becomes difficult to exhaust its meaning in a strict definition. It is thus defined differently from various points of view. In general terms, transparency implies a powerful means of the praxis of attaining a predetermined social end, such as pressing accountability to managers, participatory decision making, fraud and corruption eradication (Christensen, Flyverbom & Hansen, 2015).

According to Fierro (2003) in the public sphere, the word transparency has become excessive, going well beyond the traditional meaning of openness and, in political or economic settings, implying accountability. Fierro (2003) further describes a transparent institution as one whose internal practices are made known to its shareholders. In that coherence transparency is understood as “the requirement to inform and make available to the general public their situation, responsibilities, strategy, activities, financial management, operations, and performance, as well as audit results and conclusion” (García-Fernández, González-Díaz & López-Díaz, 2012, p. 2). This perception implies that a transparent organization is responsible to disclose information to the public as much as needed. The transparency of a firm is reflected in its accountability. As a concept, accountability is a legal framework according to which institutional reports are presented (Christensen & Lægneid, 2002). It also refers to the structure, strategy, procedures and actions, which guarantee the firm to produce and present the results of their activities’ assessment, the follow-up activity of the management and its impact (García-Fernández, González-Díaz & López-Díaz, 2012).

However, it seems that the meaning of transparency as given by Fierro (2003) is too abstract and idealistic. Some scholars have argued that this perception of transparency is impractical. For instance, Rothschild (n.d.) contends that there exists a gap between theory and practice in regards to transparency. This implies that the theoretical assumptions which form the foundations of transparency are not reliable. Christensen, Flyverbom and Hansen (2015) similarly argue that there is a gap between the doctrine and reality of transparency. However, as a theoretical construct, Fenster (2013) observes that transparency in the administrative function “cannot accurately conceptualize the information whose disclosure it hopes to prescribe” (p. 2). Its openness is viewed cybernetically, as the transmission of information from the organization to stakeholders, and assumes that transmission will banish the ignorance of customers and stakeholders. Contemporaries of Fierro (2003) such as Erbiti (2003) propose that communication policy can be used as an abridgment between theoretical and practical implications of transparency. According to Erbiti (2003) the theoretical basis of transparency can be interpreted into practical application through communication strategies. Unless there is a communication policy, there will be “the impression of a dull, gloomy institution with little known about it, whose worth is debatable and whose existence could be called into question; such a situation could give rise to leaked information, half-truths, and misunderstandings” (Erbiti, 2003, p. 32). Fenster (2013) in this same line of thought holds that “transparency is best understood as a theory of communication that overly simplifies and thus is blind to the complex nature of the contemporary state, government information, and the public” (p. 1). It is from this understanding that transparency acquires a reciprocal and mutual benefit for interested parties who share information and communicate knowledge among themselves. Despite its significance, the concept of transparency is surrounded by several dilemmas which make it challenging to easily define. The most common dilemma of transparency in various critical discourses involves not only seeing, but also knowing, and often controlling. It cannot be reduced to a technical problem alone. It is as well a moral question, an ethical value and a medium of integrity. Transparency, it seems, comes inevitably with latent ethical dimensions. From the technical point of view, transparency denotes a strategy for stakeholders’ management, a determinant factor of teamwork, integrity, and a human resource management approach. According to the Corporate Transparency Theory, transparency is a pre-ethical condition for enabling or impairing other ethical practices or principles. This theory is expounded on the basis of a balance between the stakeholders’ right to know and the possible risks associated with information disclosure (Bolon, 1998). This concurs with the Analytical Theory which requires that there should be an informational balance between two extremes, that is, complete obscurity and complete institutional transparency (Sison & Vaccaro, 2011).

Corporate transparency is justified on the basis of the principle of justice and the justification is developed relying on the right to speech as opposed to the right to know (Sison and Viccaro, 2011). Hence, transparency is at the same time a technique or management approach and a moral obligation.

2.2 Importance of Transparency in Human Resources Management

The principle of transparency in Human Resources Management is significant in many ways. According to Shobaki, Naser, and Ammar (2017), transparency is crucially important because it facilitates creation of a desired environment “in which information on current circumstances, decisions and actions is available and is understood by all members of the organization who are also involved in decision making process” (p. 15). In addition Shobaki and colleagues argue that, transparency is important because it creates a conducive and attractive work environment in which stakeholder are well informed about their current situation and can easily predict their future. Likewise, transparency in the manner we understand it in this review contributes to the improvement of competitiveness, information network, and communication among the stakeholders (LeeSource, 2006). The importance of transparency is also evident in various other areas. Among them is the realization of institutional objectives. According to Francis, Huang, Inder and Pereira (2009) transparency enables the management to make a proper resource allocation, control of the HRs and improved performance in an institution. This is because transparency facilitates teamwork through communication and information network. Studies have shown that transparency empowers management to merge the needs, ambitions and expectations of the human capital with the mission, vision and objectives of the institution; so that mutual interdependence and reciprocal benefits are created (LeeSource, 2006; Rahman & Rowley, 2007). Such interdependency leads to effective management of human resources, motivation and active participation of employees which in turn results into realization of institutional objectives. It is also true that transparency in the management of Human Resources is important as it contributes to the increase of confidence and accountability among stakeholders. According to Fenster (2013), the more transparent an institution is, the more democratic, responsible and legitimate it becomes. This, in turn, is reflected in better policies formulated by the institution as well as more contented and participatory stakeholders. Hence, the openness of the institution will empower stakeholders to act collectively, as participants capable of deliberative and reasoned actions; in that way hold the institution responsible in turn.

Transparency in Human Resources Management is also regarded important in that it acts as the nucleus of customer-centric Service delivery. According to Fenster (2013) the significance of transparency in the management of resources is to ensure that the institution is truly a representative of the stakeholders’ beliefs, interests and preferences. In the social arena, transparency is considered as a means of corporate accountability and a mirror for self-regulatory policy (Franci, Huang, Inder, & Pereira, 2009). This is consistent with the persona list principle according to which no human person should ever be looked upon as a mere means to an end (Sison & Vaccaro, 2011). However, it should be noted that despite its significance, the importance of transparency in management does not outweigh confidential communication – whereby information is shared selectively, that the manager strictly communicates to the stakeholder what he/she wants them to know, and that stakeholders have access only to the information required of them (Redmond, 2008; Fenster, 2013). A smart manager is expected to strike a balance between these strategies (disclosing/keeping corporate secrets) or else the prosperity of an institution is jeopardized.

Another importance of transparency is that it facilitates policy review. The effect of globalization on all walks of human life does not exclude HLIs. Globalization has changed the objectives and aims of education systems. This change demands a corresponding adjustment on the part of universities management as well. Consequently, Bottery (2003) emphatically invites policy makers and managers of universities to strategic readjustment and adaptation of educational policy that will match the pace of global competition. Globalization requires the management in universities to be more open, more accountable and more flexible, which are the traits of transparency. Similarly, Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2014) further maintain that in order to promote the needed trust among organizational stakeholders, transparency in management is crucial. This is what they call the benefit of transparency. In their view, “organizational transparency is an antecedent to stakeholders’ trust” (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2014, p. 11). Hence, based on our review of literature on the importance of transparency in the process of Human Resources Management is not in any way an option but inevitable.

2.3 Challenges Institutions Face in Managing Human Resources Transparently

The most critical challenges in the management of Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) emanate from putting their resources to best use in achieving their objectives. A vision can only be realized through the effective harnessing of the appropriate resources to specific objectives and ensuring availability in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness and adaptability to changing needs. Proper allocation and management of HRs in an organization require strategic transparency. Furthermore, literature Budu (2000) has shown that the quality of a university is largely determined by its resource base such as; human resources, financial and physical resources.

For this reason, success and/or failure of an institution depends on the functionality of managers, financial capacity, the quality of physical resources and how they are managed. In order to achieve the pre-determined institutional goals, both managers and HRs must exercise transparency. They must manage the resources transparently in. Our review of literature indicates that HLIs face a number of challenges related to managing HRs transparently. The challenges which we discuss in this section have deleterious impact on the overall functioning of the organization. First, severe lack of transparency in organizations can lead to mismanagement of resources which is a big challenge. The success of an organization is determined by the effectiveness in managing the available resources. Contrary to this, the organization Lack of transparency in the HLIs can results in mismanagement of resources and institutional mistrust by the stakeholders. Budu (2000) conducted a study in Ghanaian universities on the purpose, nature and access to higher education in Ghana and came up with an outstanding report that the goals for higher education cannot be achieved unless transparent management of HLIs is exhibited. In his report, Bunduargue that individual stakeholders and the entire nation would end up frustrated if the management of resources in HLIs is not proper. Mismanagement diminishes patriotic spirit among stakeholders, wastes time of students and misallocation of scarce resources.

Second, lack of transparency in the management of human resources can lead to breaking relationship and demotivating of the members in the given organization. In other words, deficiency of transparency in the HRM creates gaps among human resources. For example, in a research on transparency in the workplaces regarding the HRM conducted in 2011 by Roderick Lewis in Nigeria found that the gap in expectations between job seekers and companies calls for greater transparency from companies regarding their place of work. This includes all of the key metrics used to measure how companies manage, develop, and treat their employees. Lewis (2011) suggested that a culture of transparency will help to reduce many of the issues that produce negative employee sentiment in a company's workplace. Without transparency in the management, workers lose motivation, they lose a hard working morality, and they lose unity and the ambition to achieve their personal goals. Oftentimes it is the problems that are not openly discussed that are the greatest threats to a workplace environment. In the report, Lewis underlined the necessity of transparency for human resource managers at workplaces that could well be applied to HLIs. Like Budu, (2000) Lewis calls for transparency in governments, academia and corporations but does not demonstrate the worth, aspects and strategies of transparency in the management. Ouston (2003) examined the fundamental changes in the relationship between governance structures and the management of educational institutions in the United Kingdom. Ouston mapped the fundamental shifts that have occurred in relationships between parents, school governors, and the schools themselves. It was found out that there had occurred a considerable change among the stakeholders of education systems due to globalization. Consequently, it was proposed that deliberate steps must be made in the management of resources so that schools can return back to the stakeholders' value for money (Ouston, 2003). Ouston viewed transparency not only as means of management but also as a standard measure of quality service. In this regard, transparency is understood as an essential skill to be cultivated, an indispensable art in the practice of management, particularly in a globalized world. Apart from the difference in contexts, Ouston does not stipulate strategies according to which transparency would be maintained and promoted.

3. Research Methods

To achieve the purpose of this study we adopted a qualitative research approach. Our rationale for adopting this approach was to acquire quality information and thorough knowledge of the question of transparency. We also wanted to understand the behaviour, beliefs, opinions and emotions from the perspectives of the study participants themselves. It is also true that in order to acquire reliable data; we adopted ethnographic research design which tends to ask questions about social and cultural practices of a group of people (Lekule, 2013). Likewise, to ensure trustworthiness of the findings in-depth individual interviews and open-ended questionnaires were utilized. Participants included; university administrators, lecturers and support staff were selected purposefully. A sample of 22 participants from two private university in Mainland Tanzania was involved in this study. Thematic data analysis procedure which involved transcribing and organizing data according to themes and subthemes and then, interpretation of the findings was adopted.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Variation in the Conception of Transparency

The perception of transparency determines the observance and practice of transparency in the management of HRs in a given institution. The findings from this study indicate that the concept of transparency is understood differently. In this case, the variation in the perceptions of transparency constituted the basic challenge private universities face in the HRM. Some participants perceived transparency as total openness whereby information should be readily disclosed.

In affirming this view one participant defined transparency as “the absence of any secret in the organizational undertakings”. In a seemingly bureaucratic extreme, other participants perceived transparency as instrumental, in the sense that information should not be shared unless it is useful for both the individual and the institution. Another participant noted that transparency “is not a matter of telling everything to everybody without controlling the situation”. Participants who held this point of view noted that “information should be revealed only when it is used as a means to achieve predetermined individual and institutional goals”. Those who perceived transparency this way pessimistically justified the restriction of information by highlighting scrupulously the risks of transparency practice in ways such as contextual transparency and the justification for information restrictions. **Contextual Transparency:** The research findings further indicated that transparency in our context is understood and practiced differently. For instance, one of the participants was on the view that from the contextual stand point, transparency as it is understood in the reality of their everyday life is actually a threat. It is true that in most of the cultures and family background set up there are matters which are strictly not allowed to be discussed at a certain level. Others are reserved for some classified members of the society, clan, family or gender. Hence, given this kind of contextual background in which employees have been brought up, the practice of transparency in its true sense is difficult to be understood or practice. In this study, we found out that some employees were not able to use the opportunity of transparency instead they felt ashamed to share some of their ideas. Even when they are called to the meetings, or asked to give opinions about a certain issue before making a decision some members would hardly contribute to the discussion of the agenda because they feel as if they were breaking a taboo. Another group of participants in this study were of the view that, the practice of transparency as far as revealing and concealing information has very little to do with professionalism. It is rather determined by cultural context and values. Whoever has to reveal or conceal any information has in the background a cultural justification. Based on our findings, we conclude that the concept of transparency in the sense of information crosscutting is a new phenomenon in Africa. Transmission of information and knowledge was from father to son, from mother to daughter. That is why the son of a king became king, the son of a farmer became a farmer, the son an artisan became an artisan, etc. it was unconceivable that a son of a pastoralist becomes a fisherman. It was strictly the family which determined one’s scope of information access.

4.2 The Importance of Transparency in the HRM

In our endeavour to understand how transparency is perceived in Higher Learning Institutions and its benefits, from our discussion it became evident that transparency has both individual and institutional advantages. Among the individual advantages which were underlined by the majority of the participants during our interview and in the written questionnaires is that transparency if exercised, it yields a lot of benefits to an individual staff member as part of the institutional HRs. For example, one of the participants noted “If you know what to expect you will be able to work confidently”. This statement was meant to demonstrate that a number of advantages on an individual basis proceed from knowing what to do and what to expect in return as an employee. Other benefits of transparency which were revealed in this study included promoting a sense of belonging to the institution, stability at work place, confidence and increased trust on the management as well as meritocracy. That is, every staff member gets what he/she deserves. Merits are clearly stipulated in the university’s policies. Therefore, transparency in the management of HRs is a basis for justice and fairness in the institution. Based on this background, one of the participants argued, “We are given opportunity to develop our carrier according to our ability and desire, and thus make greater contribution to the development of the institution. This idea was also reflected in the words of another participant who noted that “the institutional objectives are aligned with the needs and ambitions of the human resources so that both can be achieved at the same time”. Hence, in our understanding of these arguments, it is evident that transparency is highly beneficial because it facilitates the realization of the university strategic plan which is always aligned with the mission and vision. In addition to individual benefits of transparency, our findings indicate that transparency has evident institutional benefits. As was raised in this study, institutional benefits include good management of HRs, improved performance and institutional credibility. On good management of HRs, the findings indicate that transparency in management facilitates good resource allocation, organization, supervision and control of resources in the process to achieve the organizational goals. Thus the institution can be efficient in the sense that it uses the scarce resources to realize a maximum output. Speaking to this one of the participant noted, “Transparency has helped in saving of resources and its proper utilization, leading to timely realization of the institutional vision and mission. it has facilitated the balancing of employees’ objectives with the organizational goals”; In addition to this, most of the participants were of the view that transparency was for them the basis for fairness in all areas of dealing with the HRs such as in recruitment, selection, procedures for selection, for placement, probating – to query the behaviour, carrier development, incentives, empowerment, and administering justice. They also saw transparency as a sure means for good management of time and other resources as well as the promotion of hard working, commitment, and accountability.

Furthermore, on institutional benefits, it was expressed how transparency enhances improved performance and productivity as a logical consequence not only of good management but also of the wellbeing of the HRs in the institution. All evidences supporting good management of HRs and benefits of individual staff members are relevant to this point; just as the participant of this study highlighted; “Transparency has improved creativity and innovation among workers and hence the general performance and productivity of the institution have been increased”. It is also true as it was revealed in this study that the institution benefits from close confident relationship with its stakeholders as well as having a positive image to the public. It helps the university to improve its performance by adopting good practices and correcting errors. It enables the institution to make informed decisions. It facilitates the achievement of strategic plans according to the time frame; and ultimately the realization of the institutional vision and mission. The findings have indicated that transparency as a good practice creates good habit, a good habit begets good organizational culture, a good culture contributes to the realization of the strategic plans and ultimately, organizational vision and mission. Institutional credibility was another benefit which was highly underlined by most participants. According to the findings of this study another institutional benefit from transparency is credibility. The findings have indicated that transparency is the basis for fair competition, reputable image, and credibility within and beyond the virtual borders of the institution. In relation to this benefit, some participants in this study noted how transparency in their view promotes involvement of the stakeholders in strategic planning and implementation, policy formulation and decision making. Others saw transparency as a tool which enables proper allocation of resources. Transparency has also helped institutions to conduct fair competition with other organizations of equal status and thus won credibility and esteem. Hence, transparency as found in this study is the key to the promotion of a given institution; because it creates a good name and positive image of the institution. The institution gets confident HRs and the service delivered is improved because through transparency more skilled and qualified workforce is attracted.

4. Higher Learning Institutions: Challenges due to Lack of Transparency

Universities like any other organization face a number of challenges in Human Resources management due to limited or lack of transparency. Under this section we present such challenges according to different categories of people in the institution due to the fact that the level of transparency, its benefits and challenges are determined by its very context. In this study the participants noted that they encounter challenges in different ways as their contexts differ from support staff, academic staff and administrative staff. Some of them however, are common to all groups and ultimately those affecting the institution in general. The challenges are basically the same but they affect the HRs differently. For example the way in which the teaching staffs are demotivated by lack of transparency is different from that of the administrative staffs. The staffs are challenged differently by the delay in correction of mistakes and managing conflict, by loss of teamwork spirit and working morale, loss of trust and confidence. Unlike scholars who tend to generalize the challenges related to lack of transparency in institutions including Budu, (2000) whose views suggests that the most frustrating challenge emanates from the mismanagement and misallocation of resources by the HRs. This kind of challenge is also a result of lack of transparency which has further negative impact on the organization. Lack of transparency and mismanagement of resources go hand in hand and they have deleterious impact on communication and implementation of the mission and vision of the organization. Like wise, organizational strategic plan is also impacted negatively as the HRs loses direction and hope, finances are squandered, and finally, the organizational vision and mission cannot be met in time deadlines or not achieved at all (Budu, 2000).

The chain of negative impact does not end up there and then. It goes further to disappoint the expectations of stakeholders in different ways given the fact that the failure or success of any project lies in the hands of management. If transparency in the management of HRs is missing success is compromised. That is why as was articulated by the participants in this study, the relationship between the institution and the stakeholders falls at stake due to lack of transparency. There occurs mistrust between both of them, rights of the employees are easily infringed, contracts violated and the loss of the sense of belonging or being part of the institution diminishes considerably, meanwhile relationship and cooperation are jeopardized. It was in the like manner Sison and Vaccaro (2011) argued that without transparency productive cooperation and relationships among the HRs are compromised. Good relationship in the institution is based upon the principle of solidarity, according to which organizational solidarity must be built from the intra and extra-institutional dimensions enhanced by transparency. Transparency thus becomes a catalyst and reason for solidarity among the HRs in an organization and between the organization and external stakeholders as well as the bond of inter-institutional mutual cooperation (Sison & Vaccaro, 2011). These claims were confirmed by Ouston (2003) who found out that relationship was affected by globalization and recommended for more transparency in school setting. In the study which was conducted in the United Kingdom there is a fundamental change of relationship between the governments, the schools’ management structures and the parents brought about by globalization (Ouston, 2003).

The stakeholders in this case the parents and the government were complaining to schools' management which did not return back the value for money. Transparency was highly recommended as an inevitable value in the global age that could help schools' management to move one step ahead in the effort to achieve the organizational goals. Staff members like any of the stakeholders wish to have a predictable future. They want to have a job security and certainty. The practice of transparency is the basis upon which predictable future, job security and trust can be founded. The quality contribution of the HRs into the achievement process of the institutional vision and mission is determined by reliable and strategic information disclosure as well as career development. Moreover, if the procedures for recruitment and promotion criteria are conspicuously stipulated, staff members will be motivated. Wright and McMahon, (1992) as cited by Collins and Smith (2006) contended "There is a widely held belief that an organization's survival and success are at least partially dependent on the effort, behaviours, and interactions of employees as they carry out the mission and strategy of the firm" (p. 1). In the light of this ideology, a motivated and spirited workforce contributes greatly to achieving the organizational goals.

Hence, the factors which motivate the HRs need to be taken care of or else the relationships in the institution will be jeopardized. It was for such circumstances that one of the participants emphatically expressed that "before employees quit their jobs, they quit their employers first". This psychological and moral departure of the employees lowers their performance and inevitably the productivity of the institution will be questionable. Ouston (2003) argued that good relationship is a key factor for success in the management of human resources. In connection to those challenges, participants also noted that in a non-transparent institution conflicts make their homes; errors and mistakes are not corrected in time, wrong and uninformed decisions are made, while judgments are drawn unfairly and impartiality is replaced by favouritism and discrimination paving the way for tyranny and deceit the enemies of truth and honesty. Once the competitors have taken advantage of that situation the institution falls apart. These findings are in line with the statement of Lewis (2011) that "Oftentimes it is the problems that are not openly discussed that are the greatest threats to a workplace environment" (p. 8). According to Lewis a culture of transparency will help to reduce many of the issues that produce negative employee sentiment in a company's workplace like losing motivation and hardworking morale.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Ensuring transparency in Higher Learning Institutions is paramount to the success of the organization. Therefore, the management of such institutions should strive towards promoting transparency among all its members. They should always remember that at the heart of the organization are the individuals who populate it. Therefore, just as the heart in a human body cannot function properly if one artery is lacking, the members of the institution should be well informed and connected to the entire organizational system. Moreover, it should be remembered that, each person in an organization has a crucial role to play which no one else, can in the same manner. Individuals together form the backbone and the pillar on which success stands and therefore they all deserve to be informed. Transparency is the means to build and strengthen positive relationship which organization require for productivity. That is, the more informed the members of an organization are, and engaged transparently, the more innovative they get in their effort to contribute to the wellbeing of the institution to which they belong. Hence, for managers of Human Resources to be successful in their work, they need to focus on improving the relationship and flow of information within the workforce. Transparent HRs recruit people who seek for employment in a transparent manner and taking into account the criteria provided by the institution and not the other way round. It is in our view that, where transparency prevails, corruption which often hinders the employment and the proper management of the institution will not exist. Human Resources managers must be dynamic in their way of thinking and be willing to accept change. They must be at the forefront in showing the change they expect their subordinate staff to adopt. They should also bear in mind that diversity is healthy and conflicts are indicators of progress and organizational growth. Hence, Human Resources managers must also consider that customers are the people in charge in organizations. It is also true that transparent Human Resources systems promote group and team work which is indispensable for the success of the organization. Likewise, transparency, when well understood and practised, can allow employees to acquire a free and direct access to customers and consider them as hands-on managers. They also promote a strong organizational culture in which the vision, mission, and objectives of a given organization are cascaded into sectional and personal objectives and shared values. Transparency is the measure of accountability and responsible innovation. It facilitates individuals as well as institutional development. Transparency should therefore be cultivated as a key value of every organizational culture through which organizations can be identified and differentiated.

Finally, in this paper we call upon the management of Higher Learning Institutions to embrace the principles of transparency as much as is required; in terms of policies and standing orders such as governance regulations, academic affairs, admission requirements, staff qualifications, staff recruitment as well as retention.

We also recommend broader transparency in matters of connected to the organizational vision, mission, goals and values. In so doing, significant contributions from its stakeholders would be promoted. Moreover, we strongly believe that transparency would bring together the efforts and resources directed to the development not only of the individual members but also the prosperity of the institution at large. Transparency though often avoided by management of Higher Learning Institutions as it was evident in our findings; it is indispensable for the success of the organization. Hence, managers and Human Resources in Higher Learning Institutions should strive towards developing their ability to trust others, to communicate effectively and to engage them honestly in the pursuit of organizational vision and mission. With all these in mind, we strongly argue that transparency is the key in building trust, strengthening relationship among stakeholders, enhancing innovative minds which are necessary in increasing productivity and promoting Excellency in Higher Learning Institutions.

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