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The Perceptions of Lecturers on the Matrix Structure's Effectiveness in Enhancing Lecturer Effectiveness in an Open Distance Learning University Like Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU): A Case Study of ZOU Midlands Regional Campus

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Abstract:

This study was undertaken to establish how effective the Matrix organizational structure adopted by the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) was in enhancing lecturer effectiveness. The study was a result of the fact that there are three types of the matrix organizational structure that an organization can adopt each with its own advantages and disadvantages different from the other hence there was need to establish the type of the matrix the ZOU had adopted. The study was also a result of a realization of a multiplicity of problems identified by staff informally and through studies carried out. A qualitative methodology was employed. A case study design was adopted. The sample of the study was 11 lecturers who were purposively chosen. The major findings were that the matrix was hit by shortages of resources, there were conflicting directives from the two managers leading to confusion of the lecturers, performance evaluation was not very helpful in as far as objective evaluation and identification of training needs of the lecturers was concerned and functional managers leaving all work to project managers. The study recommended fund raising to boost resources, training of both managers and employees on issues regarding the matrix to avoid conflicts between managers and equip personnel with interpersonal skills as well as equipping functional managers with their roles, adopting a multi-rating performance appraisal system and establishing key result areas as standards for performance appraisal.

Keywords: *Matrix organizational structure, Lecturer effectiveness, Zimbabwe Open University, Lecturer performance Areas*

1. Introduction

The Zimbabwe Open University was established by an Act of Parliament (The Zimbabwe Open University Act Chapter 25:20, November 12/98). It became fully operational as a university in 1999 on 1st March (Zimbabwe Open University General Information and Regulations 2007). Since its inception the ZOU has adopted a dual reporting system (matrix structure) for its lecturers. The lecturers report to the Regional Directors in the ten campus regions and also report to the faculty Deans regarding the functional aspect (Kolodny, 2017). This dual reporting system has not been without problems. The researcher joined the ZOU in 2004 and has realized problems of power struggle between Regional Directors and Deans which have had adverse effects on the effective execution of duty by the lecturers. There were times when the Deans requested the lecturers to get to the national centre to mark examinations or deliberate on boards for examinations and some Regional Directors could not allow the lecturers to go because they said they were not informed. At times some Regional Directors protected some lecturers who had failed to compile examinations and assignment items in time and who could not write modules allocated to them in time.

The other area noteworthy was that some Regional Directors created unhealthy competition between Lecturers in the same department and in different departments under their charge. This was done through acknowledgements of certain lecturers and non acknowledgement of the good work done by others. At times because some lecturers were favourites of the Directors these were praised even for good they had not done. This greatly discouraged these hardworking lecturers who did not receive such accolades but felt they were worth them.

The other area was the area of research. In this area lecturers were selectively given permission, time, and vehicles to go and carry out research. Others were refused these everytime they indicated they wanted to go and carry out research.

The other area noted was in performance appraisal where the Regional Directors appraised lecturers in areas which are not specialist areas for them. One Regional Director remarked that he was made to appraise lecturers in areas that could be best done by Deans or the Chairperson on behalf of the Deans.

A lecturer at Zimbabwe Open University is to effectively attend to five areas namely teaching, research and publication, course designing and development, university service and community service. The issues pointed out above affect the effective execution of duty by lecturers.

A matrix structure if instituted well is supposed to enjoy the following advantages according to Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1997), an efficient means of bringing together diverse specialized skills, minimization of the co-ordination, understanding of the diverse areas in a team and a lot of cost saving but the structure however becomes problematic if there is lack of good interpersonal relationships, flexibility and cooperation (Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert, 1997). Johnson (2015) also posits that matrix structures may cause unhealthy competition between managers because of sharing employees and that sharing of scarce resources may cause hostilities.

In early May 2015 the issue of the dual reporting system was on the agenda of the ZOU regional Directors workshop. This could have indicated problems with regards the operations of the matrix structure were noted. It would appear no study has ever been carried out to the knowledge of the researcher regarding how the matrix structure was functioning. This study was aimed at establishing whether the matrix system capacitated lecturers in effectively carrying out their work.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

There seem to be problems in the operation of the Matrix structure in the ZOU as evidenced by power struggles between the Regional campus Directors and the Deans or Chairpersons standing in the place of Deans and there is promotion of unhealthy competition and favoritism that could lead to lecturer being adversely affected in the execution of their duties. The main research question was therefore how was the Matrix organizational structure capacitating Lecturers in the execution of their duties in the Zimbabwe Open University?

1.2. Sub-Problems

The following sub-problems drove the study:

1. To what extent does the matrix structure promote lecturer effective teaching?
2. How does the matrix structure in the ZOU promote research and publication by lecturers?
3. To what extent does the matrix structure lead to effective community service by lecturers?
4. How does the matrix structure aid the lecturers in effectively undertaking university service?
5. To what extent does the matrix structure lead to lecturer effectiveness in course designing and development of materials?

1.2.1. Purpose of the Study

The study was intended to establish the type of matrix structure in operation in the ZOU in order to identify the strengths of the structure and the weaknesses as they relate to the enhancement of lecturer effectiveness.

1.2.2. Significance of the Study

The study is of importance to the following groups of people:

- The ZOU management would identify the weaknesses in the structure and therefore take corrective action.
- Other Open and Distance learning institutions would take a cue from the weaknesses of the structure of the ZOU and design structures free from these weaknesses.
- Lecturers will benefit in that problems will be weeded out and this will most likely lead to lecturer satisfaction and effectiveness.
- Students will benefit from an effective delivery of services and hence experience better value for their money.

1.2.3. Limitations of the Study

The study was a case study so generalisation to other ZOU Regional campuses was not possible.

1.2.4. Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to the ZOU Midlands Regional Campus. It focused on areas to do with the lecturers' key result areas of operation.

2. Review of Related Literature

In reviewing related literature the following views are made, conceptual framework, theoretical framework and review of empirical literature.

2.1. Conceptual Framework

The term matrix organisational structure has to be clarified with all its related issues. Lecturer effectiveness has to be clarified as well.

2.2. Matrix Organisational Structure

There are a variety of organisational structures. One of the organisational structures is the matrix organisation structure. Usmani (2017) views a matrix organisation structure as a combination of two or more types of organisational structures, such as the projectized organisation structure and the functional organisational structure. Davis (2015) views a matrix structure as one in which both functional and geographical or product structures are implemented simultaneously and resources are shared between the two structures. The geographical (or product) managers or functional managers have equal authority within the organisation and employees report to both of them. Johnson (2017) states that the matrix organisation structure brings together employees and managers from different departments to work toward accomplishing a goal. It is a combination of functional and divisional structures.

The former divides departments within a company by functions performed, while the later divides them by product, customers or geographical locations. What comes out clearly from the above definitions is that employees are under two managers the project and the functional manager. The project manager is responsible for co-ordination of the project and the functional manager provides technical expertise and organisational stability. Employees have two bosses in other words; they work in two chains of command. One chain of command functional or divisional while the other is a horizontal overlay that combines people from various divisions or functional departments into a project or business team led by a project or group manager.

Horney and O'Shea (2009) point out that the matrix organisational structure shares power among two or more dimensions. It entails achieving a functional and product or process focus. The process or product dimension operates business processes and projects, work cross- functionally and is accountable to produce something for a customer while the functional dimension provides resources and maintains resource capacity and capability, aligns with process/product dimension and maintains technical standards and finally is accountable to ensure resources and technical capabilities are available.

Figure 1 below presents a diagrammatic representation of a matrix structure.

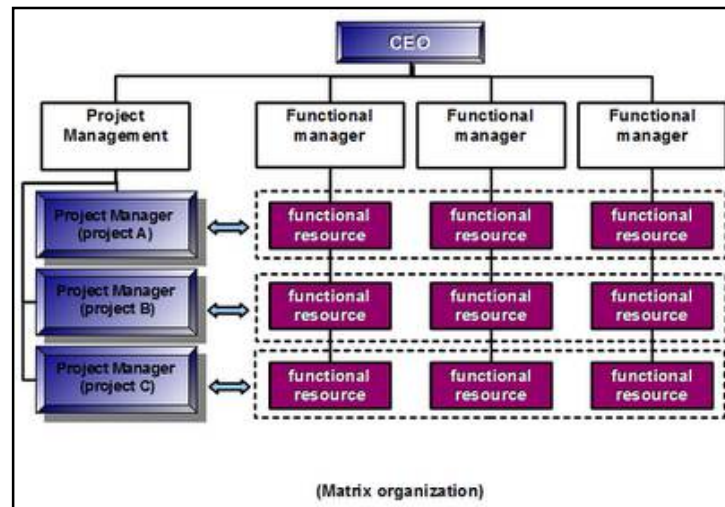


Figure 1: A matrix structure

Source: Wood, C. (2013). *Best Practices in Matrix Organizational Structures*, Hanover Research, www.hanover.research.com, Retrieved 08/08/17 p.9.

There are three forms of Matrix Organisational Structures namely functional matrix, balanced matrix and project matrix Kuprenas (2003) and Sy and D' Annunzio (2005). In a functional matrix staff involved in the delivery process remain under control of the functional managers, while project managers are formally designated to oversee the project across different functional areas. Project managers have limited authority over functional staff and primarily plan and co-ordinate the project. Under this form functional managers retain primary responsibilities for their specific segments of the project Kuprenas (2003); and Sy and D' Annunzio (2005).

In the project matrix the functional manager's authority is the smallest, with the functional managers only assigning resources for the project and providing technical consultation on an as-needed basis. Project managers are assigned to oversee the project and are responsible for the completion of the project (Kuprenas,2003; Sy and D' Annunzio, 2005).

In the balanced matrix the functional manager and the project manager share responsibility for project resources. Project managers are assigned to oversee the project and interact on an equal basis with the functional managers. Functional managers and project managers jointly direct the project work and approve technical and operational decisions (Kuprenas, 2003).

Usmani (2017) posits that a balanced matrix structure is a strong matrix structure than the functional matrix structure and the project matrix structure. Wood (2013) also points out that the matrix structures can be a partial matrix or an ad hoc matrix. Partial matrix could be temporary inter disciplinary task forces and ad hoc matrix are also temporary sometimes created to solve a project problem. There are basically four reasons why organisations adopt a matrix structure according to Sy and D' Annunzio (2005) namely that:

1. Matrix structures allow organisations to focus on multiple business goals,
2. Matrix facilitate the management of information,
3. Matrix enables companies to establish economies of scale and that they speed response to environmental demands.

Matrix structures are not formed at once.They take various stages. Horney and O'Shea (2009) posits that there are five stages in the evolution of a matrix namely ; traditional/functional hierarchy, a temporary project overlain by a dominant functional hierarchy, a permanent project overlain/functional matrix organisation, a mature/balanced matrix organisation and going beyond matrix/unique forms.

Horney and O'Shea (2009) also state four reasons for introducing the matrix organisation and evaluation. These are characteristics of organisational environment this is complexity because of size and technology, task characteristics because of the duration, complexity, degree of novelty, urgency, degree of risk and importance characteristic of the organisation that is the increased complexity as a result of size and technology and motivational and ideological reasons that is the 'human' participative and flexible forms of the organisation.

Horney and O'Shea (2009) contend the manager in a matrix has the following new roles which are; the manager is a trustee for a set of resources to be used for organisational good, uses organisational systems such as goal alignment, accountability and performance management to get things done, uses influence and negotiation to get things done, uses a collaborative approach to leading, leads teams and provides tools for the decision making process. Pushes decision making down to the lowest level possible, develops expertise at lower level, empowers others, provides primary accountability for business processes and projects and the managers primary focus is external.

2.3. Effectiveness

Chakanyuka (1999:76) defines school effectiveness "as the extent to which the organisation achieves its goals". In case of lecturers, lecturer effectiveness therefore implies the lecturer's ability to fulfill tasks he/she is supposed to undertake. The ZOU lecturer is supposed to teach, do research, design courses and design course materials, offer university and community service and undertake administrative tasks.

3. Theoretical Framework of Study

The study adopted the human capital theory. Mapolisa, Chiome and Mupa (2015 p.115) contend that "when individuals get education they acquire knowledge and skills which they can sell to the world market and earn money". This is the basis of the human capital theory. This theory was propounded by Theodore Schultz. This theory regards human beings as a form of capital that can be invested and reap rewards. Lecturers need the matrix to develop knowledge and skills in them for them to be effective in their areas of operation and this could lead to them contributing maximally.

4. Empirical Review of Related Literature

A number of studies have been undertaken regarding various aspects of the matrix organizational structure. Some of the studies centred on such aspects as the advantages and disadvantages of the structure, challenges associated with the structure and their solutions and performance evaluation in the structure.

Appleby (1994) advances the following advantages of the matrix structure:

- Better control of the project, greater security.
- Better customer relations and higher morale of staff.
- Lower programme costs and higher profit margins.
- Shorter project development time and higher aiding to the development of managers, as the work includes wider responsibilities and that it can work for an organisation operating in several regions.

Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1997) posits that the matrix structure is an effective means for bringing together the diverse specialised skills required to solve complex problem and that there is cost saving as a result of avoidance of unnecessary duplication.

Johnson (2017) reports of the following advantages of the matrix organisational structures:

- There is efficient information exchange in that departments work closely together and communicate frequently.
- There is encouragement of motivation of workers in that members contribute to decisions it ensures satisfaction of employees. Managers are involved in day to day operations of employees.

Schnetler, Steyn and van Staden (2015) contend that matrix structures promote communication, team work and collaboration.

Davis and Lawrence (1978) contend that matrix structures provide better preparation for an individual to run a huge diversified institution, they facilitate a rapid management environment that has a changing market and changing technical requirements and it helps middle managers make decisions from a general management perspective.

Usmani (2017) advances some of the advantages already discussed above but adds that employees can broaden their skills and knowledge areas by participating in different kinds of projects. So the matrix provides kind of projects. So the matrix provides a good environment for professionals to learn and grow in their career.

Saylor organisation (2017) indicates that matrix structures have the benefits of providing quick responses to technical problems and customer demands and that the existence of a project manager keeps the focus on the product or service provided. Wood (2013) apart from emphasising some advantages of the matrix organisational structure such as that it is flexible, has efficient allocation and sharing of resources, that it provides for increased flow of information also adds that it provides for increased autonomy. Chakanyuka (1999) add the following advantages that there is more extensive and precise planning co-ordination and evaluation of work, that members concentrate more creative energy on problems to be resolved, that team work is encouraged and that it reduces attachment to personal vested interests. Kapfunde (2000) concurs with the advantages raised by Chakanyuka (1999) above.

The matrix organisational structure has been documented as having numerous shortcomings or limitations as well. Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1997) contend that the structure has the following disadvantages that;

- Not everyone adapts well to the system.
- The team members must have effective interpersonal skills and be flexible and cooperative.
- That morale could be adversely affected and that there could be danger of conflicting directives and ill-defined responsibilities.

Appleby (1994) advances the following disadvantages of the organisational structure that

- There are more complex internal operations
- There is lower staff utilisation.

- Functional groups may neglect their job and let the project organisation do everything.
- There could be too much shifting of staff from project to project that may hinder training of new employees.

Wood (2013) agrees with the limitation of the matrix advanced by Appleby above but adds resource scarcity. Davis and Lawrence (1978) posits the following ills of the matrix organisational structure that;

- They lead to tendencies towards anarchy.
- There are power struggles, severe groupitis.
- It can collapse during economic crunch.
- There is excessive overhead.
- There is a tendency of sinking to lower levels.
- Uncontrolled layering, navel gazing and decision strangulation.

Usmani (2017) agrees with the disadvantages pointed out above by Davis and Lawrence. Chakanyuka (1999) emphasizes the need of a lot of training of managers before the adoption of the matrix structure and need for teachers to undergo training in behaviour change.

Apart from the discussed disadvantages matrix organisational structures have found to face some challenges Sy and D' Annunzio (2005) identified the following challenges of the matrix organisational structure, diffusion over roles and responsibilities that could be resolved by creation of a summary lists of roles and responsibilities for both managers, of a reporting system to monitor functional managers commitment that could be resolved by creation of a project design in cost templates or all types of projects and implementation of new project reporting and control system, the functional managers politicisation of assignment of scarce resources between projects leading to projects delays/changes and to change in project prioritization with the solution of development and use of a project prioritisation protocol, the dual authority with managers who are not adaptive and comfortable with ambiguity with the solution of staff training in human relations specifically pertaining to change, communication and working in teams and the functional side of the organisation becoming more powerful than the project side with functional managers not gaining a project focus with the solution of formalization of an annual project, planning process that evaluates functional group performance based upon project based goals. A study by Shava and Ndebele (2014) on how to move towards quality education in the ZOU established the university was hit by lack of resources and lack of quality management funding. This could militate against lecturer effectiveness.

Regarding performance appraisal in a matrix organisational structure Johnson (2017) points out that this could be done in matrix system through agreeing on performance goals and metrics by the functional managers and the project manager. This could be done at the beginning of the year during the objective setting processes. Appelbaum, Nadeau and Michael (2008) through a comprehensive review of related literature on performance evaluation in the matrix organisation found out that ineffective evaluation methods within matrix organisations can lead to lower employee morale as well as ambiguous understanding of employee roles within the organisation.

They recommended a multi-rater system. The rating should follow clear job description and a co-operative structure, followed by a review of performance by both functional and project managers. Additionally, peer evaluations are to be employed. These are constructive and contribute to the development of the employee. The multi-rater system should generate data about an employee's performance that should be combined and this should lead to an effective, intergrated and complete assessment of the individual's strengths, weaknesses and areas of improvement. What the above imply is the necessity of team evaluation to determine an employee's performance level. Appelbaum, Nadeau and Michael (2009) present a job analysis for developing performance criteria in a matrix that managers could adhere to in coming up with an effective performance evaluation this is shown in figure 2 below:

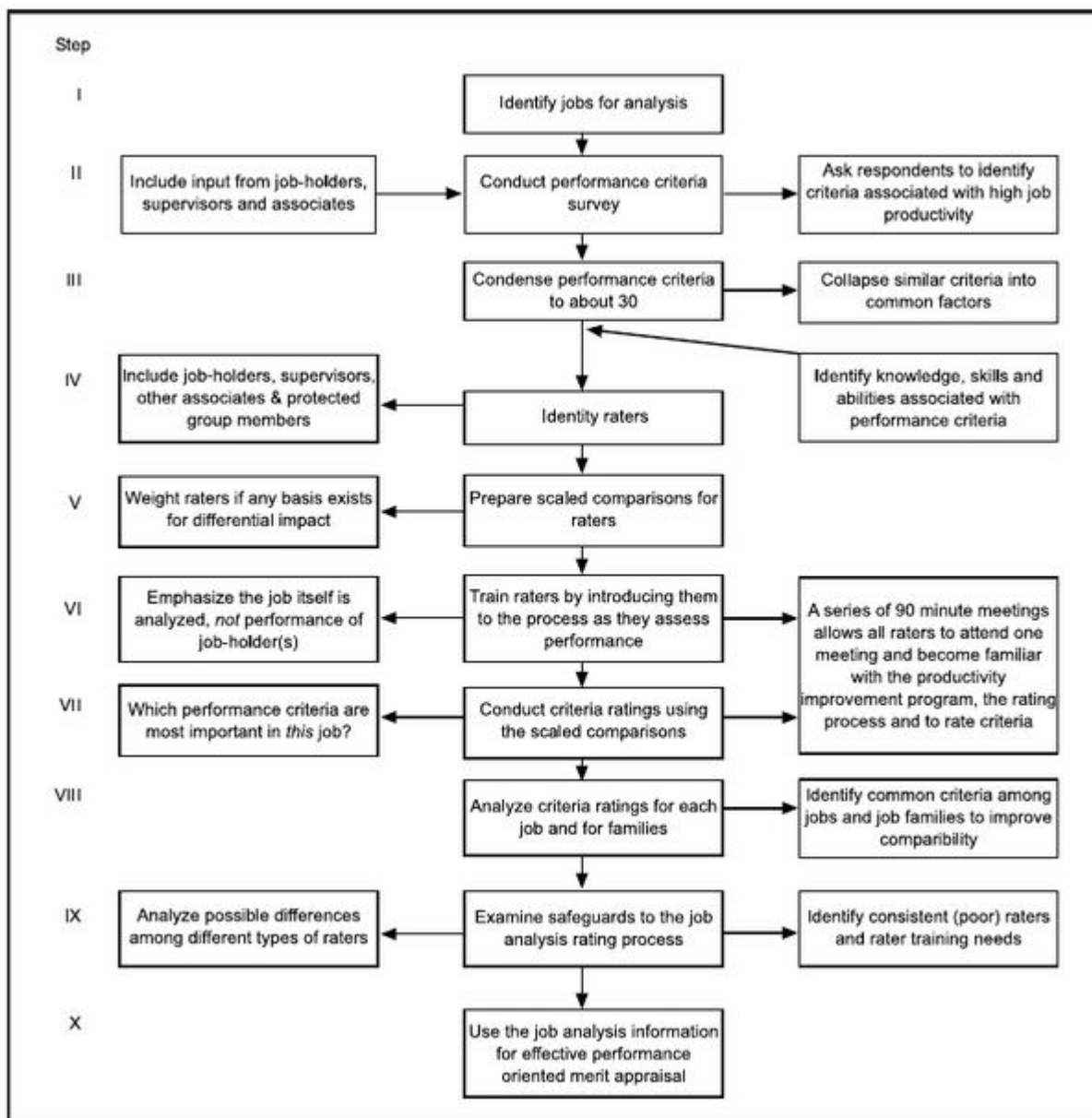


Figure 2: Job analysis for developing performance criteria in a matrix

Adopted from: Appelbaum, S. H., Nadeau, D. & Michael, C. (2009). Performance Evaluation in a Matrix Organization: A Case Study (Part 3). *Industrial and commercial Training*, vol 41 issue 1p. 11.

Appelbaum, Nadeau and Michael (2009) raised the following points with regards performance evaluation in a matrix:

- Multi-rater helps to eradicate a halo effect by project manager in determining the value of performance of new teams as they relate to previous experiences.
- A cynical view of the rating system could potentially have negative acceptance of the results if employees that are being evaluated do not have faith in the system, they will likely have difficulty accepting the results.
- One inherent advantage of a multi-rater assessment lies in the ability to compare one's self awareness that can lead to "unfreezing" process in which a manager is motivated to rethink his or her behaviour and its impact on others.
- Multi-rater system is more costly to integrate than the normal supervisor evaluation. They require a large/ complex infrastructure and training, but benefits outweigh costs however.
- An overall appraisal form to be directly linked to the specific job description of the employee to avoid a disconnect in expectations.

5. Methodology of the Study

The research used the qualitative methodology drawing largely on the Case Study. The Case Study design was adopted because the study was an intensive study of the conception and views of lecturers and how they understood the phenomenon under study. Yin (1994:23) defines a Case Study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context,

when the boundaries and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used". The study was an intrinsic Case Study where no attempt is made to generate beyond the single Case Study or build theories (Silverman, 2010). The researcher investigated the issue through a variety of data generation instruments that is open ended questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussion schedules. The instruments were pilot is run to ascertain whether the approach was correct and helped refine the questions. The Case Study involved collecting information from participants in in-depth interviews and focus group discussion and informants of open ended questionnaires. These provided the triangulation needed. Triangulation was necessary for authenticity of the research results. Data was collected from 11 lecturers purposively chosen. Data was analyzed following Miles and Huberman (1984) four stages namely data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification.

5.1. Findings

This section on findings and discussions will include biographical data of respondents, findings of the matrix structure and its effect on teaching, the matrix and its effect on research and publication, the matrix and its effect on University service and community service, the matrix and administration of programmes and finally the matrix and performance appraisal.

Gender		Age					Experience								
Male	Female	20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41+
7	4	0	1	3	7	0	1	5	1	0	0	3	0	0	0

Qualifications			Status					
1 st Degree	Master's Degree	PHD	Lecturer	Lecturer Tenure	Senior lecturer	Senior lecturers 2	Associate professor	Full Professor
0	7	4	1	6	1	2	1	0

Table 1: Biographical data of respondents (N=11)

Table 1 reflects that the respondents constituted seven (7) lecturers and four (4) female lecturers. The age ranges of these respondents are from 31 to 60. One respondents age is between 31-40 years, three (3) respondents age range are from 41-50 years while seven (7) lie between 51-60 years. One (1) respondent has 1-5 year experience, five (5) have an experience of 6-10 years, one has an experience of 11-15 years and three have an experience of 26-30 years. The qualifications of the respondents are Master's Degree and Doctor of Philosophy degree. Seven have a Master's degree while four have a doctor of Philosophy. The statuses of the respondents range from untenured lecturer to associate professor. There is one untenured lecturer, six tenured lecturers, one senior lecturer, and two senior lecturers 2 and one associate professor. The information on that respondent reflects data was gathered from mature and highly experienced and qualified respondents. These could have provided valid data regarding the issues that were under study. That there were more male lecturers and few female lecturers reflected the gender imbalance that existed in educational institutions at independence and shortly after independence where the gender was skewed towards the males.

5.2. The Matrix Structure and Its Effect on Teaching

5.2.1. How it helps in Teaching

The respondents or informants raised a number of issues related to the matrix structure and its effect on teaching. Some of the issues were that the structure ensures supervision of lecturers at both the local level which is at the Regional campuses and national levels 100% (N=11). This ensures dual supervision and monitoring enhancing teaching. This ensures quality. The matrix structure also enhances sharing of ideas on teaching across various faculties and departments especially at the regional campus level 100% (N=11). The Regional campuses the respondents pointed out takes care of provision of modules though some of these modules are received late due to delays at the national centre in the production of these modules respondents pointed out 60%. The respondents also pointed out that red tape is reduced because some decisions are made at the Regional Campuses thereby ensuring decentralization.

5.2.2. The Matrix Structure and Delivery of Tutorials

The respondents pointed out that the structure enhances two programmed assistance. The pointed out that the national centre is interested in getting marks from Regional Campuses and does not have much input in terms of the conducting of tutorials. The Regional Campuses and does not have much input in terms of conducting of tutorials. The regional campuses ensures that suitable places for tutorials. The regional campuses ensure that suitable places for tutorials are secured the respondents pointed out. The regional campuses also provide the lecturers with teaching materials 60% (n = 7).

5.2.3. The Matrix Structure and Assessment of Student's Work

The respondents pointed out that the structure ensures that the lecturers set questions and compile marking guides for courses allocated by the national programme leaders and the regional compasses directors monitors the setting of items and compiling of marking guides. It is noted however, that some regional lecturers do not provide the questions and marking guides in time and when these are needed they are not available. The marking guides and questions are for assignments and examinations. The regional campus lectures also monitors marking of assignments by part-time tutors in terms of the turnaround period and the quality of marking. The

respondents indicated that marking of examinations is normally done by three regions that are in close proximity to the national centre.

This is so because funds for travelling and subsistence allowances and accommodation are in- available for lecturers from regional campuses that are far away. The region where the study was carried out is one such region. This denies lecturers the chance to mark examinations and this has a negative effect on the way lecturers assist student's preparation for examinations. The respondents also pointed out that while the regional campus lecturers produce the questions and marking guides the national centre programme leader's quality assures the items and guides ensuring quality items and guides. The assessment of students is standardized through the use of the same marking guides throughout the University for Assignments and examinations.

5.2.4. How the Matrix Structure Impedes Teaching

The respondents pointed out the following issues as impeding teaching that it confuses because one is required to take orders from two superiors at the same time making it impossible to meet the demands of the two, that there is too much paper work in terms of reporting, that immediate feedback especially from the faculty is not assured, who to report is sometimes is not clear and the supervisors at the regional campus and the one at national centre will be in conflict. The conflict might arise from lack of communication between the two supervisors.

5.2.5. Suggestions on how the Matrix Structure might Enhance Teaching

The respondents indicated that the matrix system need co-operation between the two supervisors which could be enhanced by constant consultation. Some respondents suggested the regional campuses should focus on administrative issues while the faculties should focus on actual teaching. The respondents also suggested effective communication between the functional and operational departments.

5.3. The Matrix Structure and Research and Publication

5.3.1. Aiding in Research and Publication

The respondents indicated that too many work duties impede on research output. They also pointed out the regional campuses and the national centre post notifications for call for papers and names of journals which one can publish with assisting lecturers to produce abstracts for conferences sending articles for peer reviewing by the various journals. They also pointed out that both regional campuses lecturers are encouraged to present their papers and fellow lecturers to research. At regional campuses lecturers are encouraged to present their papers and fellow lecturers critique the papers. The regional campuses encourage hybridity in research in that researchers from across faculties can work together and produce quality researches informed by their various research expertise stated the respondents.

5.3.2. How the Matrix Impede Research and Publication

The respondents point out that there are too many centres of authority with each of the two centres having its own standards and requirements. This tends to confuse the lecturers. The respondents also point out that the lecturers are made to compile a lot of reports by both the regional centre campuses and the national centre eating into the time lecturers are to research. The regional centre normally requires the lecturer to stay in the offices to attend to students who visit the centre in most cases without appointment so the lecturer will not have time to get into the field to gather research data said the respondents. The respondents also indicated that the national centre does not give adequate support for research and publication in the form of making lecturers aware of researches completed by other lecturers whose papers have been published.

5.3.3. Suggestions on How the Matrix could Improve Research and Publication

The respondents suggested there need to be common goals from the Regional Campus and the National centre. They also suggested red tape needed to be reduced and control of time needed to be reduced. Lecturers should be allowed more time for research as in conventional universities to do research trips. They also suggested fund raising activities for research activities at both Regional Campuses and the National Centre. Presently there is very little of research funding at both regional and National levels. The respondents also suggested the funding of researchers to conferences to present their papers.

5.4. The Matrix Structure and Course Design and Development

5.4.1. Aiding Course Design and Development

The respondents reflected that the matrix structure helps in that one ends up having a wider understanding of the students' needs ending up developing courses relevant to students. The programme leaders and regional co-coordinators work together in developing courses and course materials, the respondents pointed out. The matrix structure affords other regional coordinators from other subject areas to work together with the area coordinators in designing and developing course materials where they have expertise. Other specialists from other universities are also given the chance in the course designing and course development resulting in high quality courses and course materials, the respondents pointed out. The process of materials development is enhanced by editing and content reviewing of material by specialist editors and specialist content reviewers from the department and also other specialist content

reviewers from other departments and also other specialists from other universities, indicated the respondents. This ensures the production of high quality learning materials.

5.4.2. How the Matrix Structure Impedes course Design and Development

The respondents indicated that the lecturers spend a lot of time in administrative work at the Regional Campus affecting their time on course design and development. There is need for communication on course design and development. There is need for communication on course design and development between the Regional Campuses and the national centre assignments of course designing and development, indicated the respondents. Lecturers end up overwhelmed by work at the regional campus and demands of departments at the national centre.

Sometimes lectures are not given time to design courses and develop course materials because this is felt as personal that is, it will be used in the promotion of an individual lecturer and not being of immense benefit to the university, the respondents indicated.

5.4.3. Suggestions for Improving Course Design and Development using the Matrix Structure

The respondents suggest that there is need to open communication about course design and development between the Regional Campuses and National Centre so that lecturers will not be overwhelmed. There need to respect the fact that course design and development is not only for lecturers' personal growth but it is growth of the whole university, expressed the respondents. The department should take charge of course design and development while the Regional Campuses should ensure the work is given resources so that it is completed on time, also suggested the respondents.

5.5. The Matrix Structure and University Service and Community Service

5.5.1. Enhancement of University Service and Community Service

Because of various subject disciplines at the Regional Campus community service activities are held jointly, revealed the respondents. There are however, times when there is conflict between the Regional campus centre and the national centre over the provision of resources for community service, stated some respondents. Such resources include the provision of vehicles and power point projectors. Because researches are done by lecturers jointly across subject disciplines community service emanating from researches is quite fruitful. Lecturers from various disciplines provide the community with solutions to their problems from various perspectives, indicated the respondents.

Lecturers from various disciplines are involved in committees of a variety of forms that make the university to tick. Such committees include the part-time lecture recruitment committee, library committee, research committee, social welfare committee and environmental committee to mention a few, revealed the respondents. This is the case at the Regional campus. Though lecturers are to take part in departmental board meetings and faculty board meetings they rarely do so because of the fact that funds are not available for Regional campus lecturers to attend marking of examination sessions. Lecturers in this region are not afforded the chance to be involved in the departmental and faculty board meetings stated the respondents.

5.5.2. The Matrix Structure and how it Impedes Community Service and University Service

The respondents stated that community and university service are given low priority because of other duties the lecturers have to carry out like administrative duties. Another impediment is that lecturers are tied to their offices to attend to students all day long. This does not give the lecturers time to carryout community service regularly, the respondents pointed out.

5.5.3. Suggestions on how to Improve Community Service and University Service in the Matrix Structure

The respondents suggested the creation of an on-line reporting system and allocation of resources like fuel, cars and time per week to carry out the activities. The respondents also suggested the involvement of all lecturers in departmental and faculty board meetings. This helps the lecturers to be fully aware of departmental and faculty issues.

5.5.4. The Matrix Structure and Administration of Programmes

5.5.4.1. How the matrix structure enhances the administration of programmes

The respondents stated that the Regional Campuses and the national centre carryout complementary roles. The National centre provides policies and the Regional Campuses implement the policy. The Regional centres actually administer the programmes. This is where the students are and student services are provided at the Regional campuses. The region does the orientation of the students, distribute learning materials and ensure that tutorials take place, revealed the respondents. The Regional Campuses also ensures that assignments are handed in and marked, using marking guides from the national centre. Library and internet facilities are provided at the regional campuses. The respondents said that all support services are provided by the Regional Campuses. At times, though, learning materials are supplied late and there is inadequacy of materials like bond paper, revealed the respondents.

5.5.4.2. How the Matrix Structure Negatively Affects Programme Administration

The respondents pointed out that sometimes there are conflicting directives from the Regional office campus and the national centre leading to confusion. Regional centre lecturers might point out certain issues that the national centre might disagree to. The other issue is that lecturers are overloaded by producing information for two offices revealed the lecturers.

5.5.4.3. Suggestions on How the Matrix Could Improve Programme Administration

The respondents suggested there should be more co – ordination and one centre at National Centre that should be sending out information. They also suggested a shared platform by Regional Campus and at the National Centre in decision making that is the National Centre should not craft policies without involving the Regional Campus centres. Total consultation is therefore needed.

5.6. *The Matrix Structure and Performance Appraisal of Lecturers*

5.6.1. How the Matrix Structures Enhances Performance Appraisal

The respondents indicated there is monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the lecturers at the Regional campus and at the National Centre. They pointed out however, there is little communication about the monitoring and evaluation results between the Regional Campuses and the National Centre. They pointed out that the lecturers are appraised at two levels on the same aspects. These levels are the Regional campus level and at National Centre level. This they feel could be done jointly enhancing objective evaluation which might lead to lecturer growth.

5.6.2. How the Matrix Structure Adversely Affects the Performance Appraisal of Lecturers

The respondents pointed out that the National Centre does not have physical contact with the lecturers. It becomes difficult for the National Centre to objectively appraise personnel they are not in daily contact with. The respondents also pointed out that the Regional Director at the Regional Campus cannot objectively appraise academic aspects of the lecturers because these areas they might have little knowledge of.

5.6.3. Suggestions on How the Matrix Structure Could Positively Affect Performance Appraisal of Lecturers

The respondents suggested that there ought to be regular meetings between faculties and Regional Directors so that there is planning of monitoring and evaluation information on lecturers. They also suggested the Regional Campuses should appraise lecturers on administrative issues while the faculties should appraise lecturers on academic related issues.

5.7. *General Comments*

The respondents raised the following general comments; that there be regular communication between the Regional Campus and the National Centres, that there be better relations between administrators and academics and in that vein that there should be one centre of power particularly with regards performance appraisal and that there should be proper communication channels between the two levels that is, the operational and functional levels.

6. Discussion of the Findings

There is evidence that the matrix enhances a two programmed assistance regarding support to the lecturers in as far as delivery of tutorials is concerned. This support however, is skewed towards the regional campuses rather than the functional managers who only receive marks from the Regional Campuses confirming some of the challenges stated by Appleby (1994). There is also supervision at both Regional Campuses and national level confirming the findings pointed out by Appleby (1994). With regards teaching therefore, there is dual supervision and monitoring enhancing quality a view corroborating the views by Chakanyuka (1999) and Wood (2013). The matrix is also seen as enhancing ideas on teaching across various faculties and departments corroborating the advantage of the matrix pointed out by Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1997) and Chakanyuka (1999). Regional Centres play their part on the procurement of modules but the National Centre managers sometimes do not do their work related to the production of modules a weakness pointed out by Davis and Lawrence (1978). There is reduction of red tape because some decisions are made at the regional campuses an advantage corroborating the views by Appleby (1994).

Regarding assessment there is evidence of elaboration between Regional Campuses and national Centre in ensuring examination and assignment items and guides are compiled. This corroborates findings on the matrix enhancing collaboration by Wood (2013). Because of shortages of funds marking of examination is left to regional campuses that are in close proximity to the National Centre. This denies lecturers who are in faraway regional campuses from staff development afforded by marking of examinations. Shortage of resources has been advanced by Sy and D¹ Annunzio (2005). The matrix on the whole has been seen as confusing lecturers because of taking orders from two bosses confirming findings by Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1997). Lack of communication between the two managers is blamed for confusion and giving conflicting orders. Under normal circumstances the matrix should enhance proper communication (Usmani, 2017).

There is also a problem of whom to report to between the managers an issue pointed out by Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1994) regarding the matrix structure.

Regarding research and publication the results reflect too much work duties as impeding on research output. This implies work overload an issue revealed by Davis and Lawrence (1978) regarding the matrix organizational structure. The regional campus centres encourage lecturers to research by organizing session where the lecturers present their research work for critiquing across faculties enhancing the idea of cross pollination of ideas across faculties in a matrix (Usmani, 2017) and Chakanyuka (1999). Lecturers are not given time to go out to research because they have to attend to students who visit the centre from their work places. Lecturers are also not afforded the chance to view researches done by others by the functional departments which could enthuse them to research. Financial resources for research activities are also lacking at both regional campuses and the national centre corroborating findings by

Shava and Ndebele (2014). Block allocation which used to be there previously is no longer in existence the same as funding for approved research projects.

With regards the issue of course design and course material development the findings reflect that programme leaders and lecturers at regional campuses work closely together. Various lecturers from across faculties work together necessitating sharing of expertise an issue highlighted by Usmani (2017) and Chakanyuka (1999) regarding the matrix structure. Lecturers' skills are enhanced through content reviewers' comments and editors' comments. Administrative work is a stumbling block in lecturers' production of course materials resulting in long periods being taken to produce the materials. There is a negative attitude by the Regional Centre Campuses staff who regard this task as benefiting the individual lecturer rather than the institution. Sometimes secretaries do not feel at home typing the course materials.

Regarding enhancement of University service and Community services, these are held jointly resulting in effective community services. This confirms the fact that team work is enhanced (Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert, 1997). Resource shortage affects the community service provision corroborating the issue of resource shortages in a matrix provided pointed out by Davis and Lawrence (1978) and Shava and Ndebele (2014). Effective university service is provided through committees made up of members from different departments of regional campus centres. This is team work (Johnson, 2017). Shortage of funds negatively impacts on lecturers from faraway regional centres taking part in departmental and faculty board meetings. It means that views that could enhance effective departmental and faculty activities are shut out and growth of these lecturers from the ideas of other departmental and faculty board members are denied. Community and University service are also given low priority and hence little time.

Administration of programmes is done jointly by the Regional Campus Centre and the National Centres. Administrative work is also affected negatively by resource shortage. The issue of conflict emanating from conflicting directives was revealed corroborating ideas advanced by Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1997).

With regards performance appraisal of lecturers there seem to be lack of objectivity. The performance appraisal therefore does not give the proper picture of the performance of lecturers and is therefore not helpful to the lecturers. It does not also help in the identification of lecturers training needs. The performance appraisal system goes against ideas advanced by Johnson (2017) and Appelbaum, Nadeau and Michael (2009).

7. Conclusions

From the findings it could be concluded that;

- The matrix structure used at the Zimbabwe Open University has its share of advantages namely that there is cross pollination of ideas across departments, lecturer skills are enhanced and there is encouragement of team work in researching problems.
- The matrix structure at the Zimbabwe Open University has its share of disadvantages and challenges namely resource shortage, conflicting directives from the two bosses and poor relations between support staff and academics.
- Performance appraisal is not helping the lecturers in obtaining the correct picture of their performance and unearthing their deficient areas.

8. Recommendations

It is against the above conclusions that the following recommendations are advanced;

- That the University should find ways of resource mobilization.
- That job description of the managers should be clearly stated to avert conflicting directives.
- That the managers both functional and project should be trained on the operations of the matrix.
- That staff both support and academic should be trained on behavioural changes required by the matrix.
- That performance appraisal should embrace a multi-rater system following a job analysis criterion.
- Further studies could embrace the regional Campus Centre directors and department chairpersons on the issues that were the focus of this study.

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