



Civic Entrepreneurship: The Implementation of Civic Innovations in the Governance of the University of Zambia

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores and interrogates the intricacies surrounding the implementation of civic innovations in the governance of public universities with the focus on the University of Zambia. This research employed qualitative case study design which culminated into the use of semi-structured interviews to generate data from 15 participants who were purposively sampled using snowball and convenient sampling. Document review and analysis was used in the generation of data. Data analysis was done on the basis of themes that emerged from the study. The research findings revealed that the university receives a lot of support from various interested stakeholders in the implementation of civic innovations. The study further indicated that the implementation of civic innovations was embedded in the strategies of the university as stipulated in the university strategic plan (2018-2022). The study also revealed that the university carries out sensitization programmes in the implementation of civic innovations. The study, therefore, recommends that the University of Zambia should be inclusive in approach during the planning and implementation of civic innovations through the involvement of various relevant stakeholders.

Keywords: Civic Innovations, Civic Entrepreneurship, Public Universities, Monitoring, Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the governance of public universities and the higher education in general have caught the attention of many interested stakeholders. There is constant check on the performance of public universities. This is as a result of the increasingly and complexity expansion of demands people are pressing on the higher learning institutions around the globe. Public universities are expected to be productive, efficient and effective in the delivery of services they are mandated to provide to the public. In order to meet the expectations of the people, public universities have undergone tremendous transformation- in their governance systems. These transformations have imposed increasingly dynamic demands and changes, not only on the governance and funding of higher education institutions, but also in the logic guiding academic and non-academic activities [4, 21, 25 & 28]. The traditional roles of universities and their management practices have equally transformed largely because of neo-liberalization ideology which promotes free market economics [29 & 23]. Neoliberal principles, according to [4] have become spread in many parts of the world and as a result, many countries have undergone changes in financial arrangements in which accountability mechanisms have compelled universities to reconsider their social missions, academic priorities and organizational structures.

As a counter-reaction to the dynamic transformation occasioned by globalization and neo-liberalism, the concept of civic entrepreneurship has risen to prominence much to the benefit of public institutions, particularly the higher learning institutions. As epitomized by Edwards et al (2002) whose views are equally supported by [27 & 24], the public sector is increasingly utilizing the concepts of civic entrepreneurship given the unpredictability and complexity surrounding the sector. As a result of the effects of neoliberalism on the education system, universities around the world have adopted different governance strategies. [4] contend that universities have undergone restructuring involving serious changes in the governance. This is why, Leadbeater and Goss (1998: 18) advance that, "civic entrepreneurs are at work throughout the public sector, at all levels of many kinds of organizations, large and small, local and national." This development could also be attributed to the rising levels of civic awareness occasioned by some level of Civic knowledge, Civic skills, Civic values and possibly Civic dispositions through Civic Education. Civic Education here is seen to be supporting or providing emphasis on praxis, interaction with tools, objects, experiences, reflections, assumptions among many others to gaining great understanding through hands-on-knowledge on civic issues and actions [15, 17, 18,19, 20 & 22]. This entails that civic innovation only works out on conditions where those who are at the centre of its activities are fully aware of their civic tasks through the delivery of improved services in the institutions they superintend over and this awareness is always supported in the spirit and letter of Civic Education [22, 23, 36 & 36].

The productivity of civic entrepreneurship on whichever landscape it is deployed, operationalized and enacted lies in its composition as well as its orientation to improving an organization's performance in service delivery to the public. Thus, according to Leadbeater and Goss (1998:18), it constitutes three distinctive elements which distinguish it from any related forms of entrepreneurship such as social and business entrepreneurship. These elements are civic innovations, collaborative leadership and political leadership As this study interrogates the implementation of civic innovations in the governance of public universities, more specifically the University of Zambia.

THE PROBLEM AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

While the University of Zambia applies civic innovations in its governance systems, improvement in its performance remains a source of concern. This could result into problems such as staff brain drain, loss of international character, and a drop in enrolment levels of the students. Further, the performance and general governance of the university through the University of Zambia Strategic Plan 2013-2017 and UNZA Strategic Plan 2018-2022 acknowledges the threat posed by emerging private universities whose new products and projects have advanced the commodification of higher education. Therefore, the disparities existing between the implementation of civic innovations and the achievements as well as the performance of the university in service delivery has prompted the need to investigate the implementation of civic innovations in the governance of the University of Zambia.

The research was anchored on the research objective whose thrust was to investigate the implementation of civic innovation in the governance of the University of Zambia

WHAT IS CIVIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CIVIC INNOVATION?

As a distinct form of entrepreneurship, civic entrepreneurship has elements manifested and practised in public institutions. [8, 16, 35 & 38] conceptualizes civic entrepreneurship as, “the free contribution of time and effort to a project for the greater good of society without expectation of financial benefit.” [9 & 10] also have a slight distinctive conception of the term. They contend that civic entrepreneurship is, “the renegotiation of the mandate and sense of purpose of a public organization, which allows it to find new ways of combining resources and people, both public and private, to deliver better social outcomes, higher social value and more social capital.” [9] further notes that civic entrepreneurship is a concept that constitutes diverse activities or elements. These elements are civic innovations, collaborative leadership and political leadership. According to [25 & 30] civic entrepreneurship is the application of a collection or set of civic innovations, collaborative leadership and political leadership in public institution management to improve their performance in the delivery of public services. On the other hand, civic innovation is one of the key elements of civic entrepreneurship. In the context of this study, civic innovations are construed as initiatives the management in public universities put in place to improve the university delivery of services and ensure general good governance of the institution.

LITERATURE REVIEW

[2] look at innovations in higher education with the intent to generate information that would give a better understanding of new developments affecting higher education. The study explores how innovations can support higher education in times of change. Among other overarching questions the research addresses is; what are the core challenges higher education is facing and driving innovation. The findings of the research show some major challenges higher education is facing. Pressures from globalization, the changing supply and demand for higher education and changes in higher education funding are the challenges the research highlights. [2, 35 & 39] strongly argue that these challenges determine the development and implementation of various innovative practices in higher education. Though this research shows that innovations are employed in higher education, it does not shed light on how innovative practices are implemented and help higher education to meet the changing needs of the society. Another significant revelation of this study is the argument that more autonomous higher education institutions which have control over financial resources and distribution of these resources develop bottom-up practices while less autonomous higher

education institutions tend to have a more top-down, state driven approach innovation which might timescale for implementation longer.

The article by [14] explores innovations in governance which they refer to as a special class of innovations in the public sector. In their argument Moore and Hartley contend that these innovations in the public sector are distinctive from the innovations in products, services, and production processes. They involve networks of organizations as well as the transformation of social production system. Furthermore, these innovations also focus on the ways in which productive activity is financed, processes used and standards employed to weigh performance and social production system. Generally, [2, 37] attempted to classify and differentiate the innovations that are undertaken in the public sector from any form of innovations in other sectors. The article acknowledges the ability of innovations to bring about transformation in the public sector. But Moore and Hartley looked at innovations in a broad public sector and not necessarily innovations in specific public institutions. Thus, this research is distinctive from Moore and Hartleys' study because it seeks to investigate innovations in public universities which forms an integral part of the wide public sector.

Further, [7 & 33] examined various forms of knowledge and knowledge transfer in the form of commodified knowledge, human capital and social capital. He explored different governance and policy contexts such as national systems of higher education, national programmes for regional innovation and regionally specific interactions. Charles in his article reveals that national higher education regulatory systems act on many aspects of innovative potential of universities and their effects are seen through the patterns of recruitment and training students. This suggests that innovative practices in higher education are somewhat affected by the higher education regulatory measures the government put in place. Charles acknowledges the role of the government in innovations by stating that government may seek to encourage greater participation in innovation through various grants and incentives, but he strongly denies government to have direct managerial control [7]. The scholar further discussed the institutional autonomy linking it to the role of the university in national economic development. The scholar seems to have focused on discussing the role of universities innovations and the role of government in innovations. He also discusses the university autonomy in relation to its role in national economic development. While Charles looked at the role of universities in innovations in their regions, this study takes a distinctive approach focusing on the implementation of innovations in public universities.

The United Nations publication of 2006 looked at the process, capacities and environment required for the successful transfer, adaptation and implementation of innovations in governance and public administration. The publication clearly revealed that innovations in governance were able to maximize the usage of resources and capacity to create public value as well as encourage a more participatory culture in government which improves good governance in general. It also stressed that innovations could improve the image and services of the public sector, it could help government regain people's trust and restore legitimacy. Additionally, innovation in governance could boost the pride of civil servants working in the public sector as well as encourage culture of continuous improvement. The UN publication is very helpful to this study because it justifies why there is a need for public institutions to innovate and its role in governance and public administration in general. However, it does not particularly focus on governance of public universities to which this study is narrowed so as to investigate the implementation of innovations.

Figure 1 above shows emergent themes within the study namely: Support from Stakeholders, Collaboration with stakeholders, Strategic Planning, Sensitization of Civic innovation, and involvement.

Support from Stakeholders

71% of the participants who took part in this study indicated that the University of Zambia receives support from various stakeholders in the implementation of civic innovations. Participant G indicated that,

We [Unza] are trying to reduce dependency on public funding through many innovative ideas among them the Public Private Partnerships (PPP). We have a lot of support from the government through the engagement and collaboration with Ministries (G, 2019).

Another participant echoed that:

We work closely with student union leaders who support us in implementing some initiatives we undertake in the university (Y, 2019).

Sensitization in the implementation of civic innovations

Sensitization was another theme that emerged from the findings. 66% of the research participants revealed that the implementation of civic innovations comes with a lot of sensitizations. One official stated;

We use posters, we use WhatsApp, Facebook, and we also have a website. Uptake in terms of access to computers. Skills in order to navigate the internet. We have set up a department that helps student to set up (X, 2019).

A lecturer stated:

Yes, management from time to time sensitize the people and remind them to work according to the strategic plan (H, 2019).

One respondent indicated that,

'We have a clear pillar that talks to innovations and research in the university strategic plan (K, 2019).

Similar views were brought out by lecturer F noted that,

In fact, the university has strategic plan which runs for five years, once that is done the implementation plan is put in place but sometimes because of the complexity nature of the institution, there is some inertia from people in catching up with the new development that is taking place (F, 2019).

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CIVIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Interference from political leadership

The findings showed interference in the governance of the university as one of the themes emerged. Participant M indicated that:

There is a strong feeling among the university community that we are not allowing the governance systems put in place to run the institution. e.g., the university council carried out a study to reevaluate the accommodation rates in public institutions. The

council resolved for an upward adjustment of accommodation rates, however, the ministry opposed (M, 2019).

The participant further lamented that, 'there are challenges, the university is not autonomous.'

Inefficient departments

Inefficient departments emerged as a theme. One Lecturer interviewed indicated that, 'they do that but the problem is that information flow to the stake holders is delayed. Some departments are inefficient,' (J, 2019).

Lecturer T interviewed observed that,

Since the university is underpinned by collegial administration management, departments are integral part of the governance system and are expected to be innovative. However, some departments are not productive (T, 2019).

Lack of Innovations

One participant interviewed pointed out that:

The biggest challenge is "everybody knows something". Leadership does not allow for new innovations from people who are deemed lower than them academically. Generally, the way of thinking of staffs is the main challenge the university faces (B, 2019).

Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy was pointed out by the respondents interviewed. One participant indicated that,

'.....However, we face a challenge with bureaucracy, things do not happen as quickly as possible and this frustrates the operations of the University,' (P, 2019). Another interviewee said, 'the university bureaucratic nature affect the effectiveness and efficiency of the university. Things are just done at a slow pace,' (N, 2019).

Lack of Financial Resources

Lack of finance to implement civic entrepreneurship was brought by almost all the respondents who participated in the study. Participants H clearly indicated that,

No, the university has been facing financial challenges. Funding is not adequate to ensure that the university runs in the best way. UNZA needs funding (H, 2019).

A similar view was echoed by a Lecturer A:

The financial resources allocated to higher learning institutions by government is not enough and this affect UNZA which depends on government funding (A, 2019).

Information Barrier

Information barrier emerged as a theme in this study. One of the research participants noted that, 'and we also use emails though unfortunately most students are not on our email list' (C, 2019). Another participant stated that:

The university channels of communication are not accessible by all students, there is need to create a platform where all students can be connected for quick reaching out to them (D, 2019).

DISCUSSION

The University of Zambia is highly supported in the implementation of civic innovations. The university is supported by stakeholders that include the government, the students, the lecturers, and the general public. [2, 3, 31 & 38] documents the partnership between University of Zambia and the Commonwealth of Learning which culminated in the development of an Open and Distance Education Policy after living without a policy for more than 50 years of its existence. The presence of an ODL policy is yet another chancel through which the University of Zambia has contributed to human capital development within the Sub-Saharan Africa [32, 33 & 34].

This entails that the implementation of civic innovations in the governance of the University of Zambia takes an inclusive approach and based on the views of the respondents, it is the responsibility of many stakeholders. This is also well accentuated by [1, 6 & 9] who argue that Civic entrepreneurs (innovative managers of institutions) are aware that they cannot succeed alone. They fully understand that they would only succeed by bringing together people with complementary skills. It is imperative to state that the involvement of various stakeholders in the implementation of civic innovations creates a sense of commitment among the actors. Whether they are directly or indirectly offering support to the institution, it is an ingredient of good governance that would develop a sense of ownership among the participating stakeholders.

This would propel the institution to high performance levels in the delivery of services. Furthermore, support from various stakeholders would make civic innovations gain public legitimacy and understanding which might result into effective implementation, enhance good governance and increase levels of productivity for the university. Therefore, university management should strengthen ties with various partners and, if possible, attract more support in the implementation of civic innovations and the general governance of the university.

One of the key requirements in the implementation of civic innovations is the strategic plan. As such, research participants were asked to state if the implementation of civic innovations was premised on the strategic plan. The findings showed that the implementation of civic innovations is embedded in the strategies of the university as stipulated in its strategic plan.

It is cardinal to put in place a strategic roadmap that gives guidelines on how to achieve something. Civic innovations are not haphazardly implemented, but rather there are well-thought-out strategies that facilitate and drive the implementation process. This finding contradicts what is reported in the University of Zambia Mid-Term Review of the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan. It is strongly stated in the review report that few people in the university regularly refer to the strategic plan in their work. This statement should be seriously scrutinized by all interested parties as it indicates that members of the university work inconsistency with the provision of the strategic plan, the propensity which would render the strategic plan irrelevance and impractical. This is the clear demonstration of poor work culture amongst the members of staff which make the university inefficient.

These mixed views in the university presents a worrisome situation with regard to the implementation of programs including civic innovations which are meant to improve the performance of the university. Non-compliance of the provision of the strategic plan by staff might negatively affect the achievement of the university goals, thereby resulting in poor performance of

the institution. Thus, there is a lot that the university has to do to ensure compliance of the university strategic plans by all stakeholders who contribute in one way or another to the governance of the university. The strategic thinking should be linked to operational delivery of civic innovations in order to ensure successful implementation. It is unthinkable in the modern society for a university like UNZA to operate without proper laid down plan. In this sense, the university management should always orient all members of staff to the provision of the university strategic plan. Also, inculcate in the members of staff the culture of working according to the strategic plan. After launching the university strategic plan, management should be lining up some sensitization and orientation programs within the university.

The noted use of Social Media above is critical in the effective dissemination of civic innovations in the governance of the University of Zambia [11, 12, 23 & 34]. The findings of this study showed that the implementation of civic innovations in the governance of the University of Zambia comes with a lot of sensitization as demonstrated through the use of social media and the institutional website. In addition, the document analysis revealed that there is a tendency by those in the university community to rate the university so highly and yet what is obtaining on the ground regarding the implementation of civic innovations leaves much to be desired. This is affirmed in the University of Zambia Mid-Term Review of the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan by stating that there is slow uptake of e-learning platform to enhance teaching and learning.

Better governed institutions are those that invest in making known their services to the consumers and public universities are not an exception in that activity. Sensitization as postulated by [5, 9 & 13] ensure public legitimacy of civic innovations and subsequent successful implementation. However, the document analysis shows a tendency by those in the university community to rate the university so highly and yet what is obtaining on the ground regarding the implementation of civic innovations leaves much to be desired. This is affirmed in the University of Zambia Mid-Term Review of the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan which indicates that there is slow uptake of e-learning platform to enhance teaching and learning. It should be noted here that civic innovations are successfully implemented if the clients and users are well-informed about them. This ensures people's acceptance of the innovations the institution is undertaking and avoid resistance of civic innovations by the people within and outside the institution. When people have accepted and shown positive attitudes towards any civic innovations, it becomes easier to implement and the probability of achieving the intended goals would be high. It is therefore commendable that the University of Zambia incorporates sensitization as a significant ingredient in the implementation process of civic innovations. Nevertheless, the university should come up with more effective platforms other than facebook and website through which they could reach out to people, especially in the rural parts of the country. Perhaps, the direct messaging system mechanism should be developed. It would probably improve communication system and serve as a quicker way of notifying sponsors of students and other interested stakeholders on the number of activities the university is undertaken.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on investigating the implementation of civic innovations in the governance of the University of Zambia. It is clear from the findings that civic innovations are embedded in the University of Zambia Strategic Plans and their implementation follows the directions outlined in the strategic plan. Sensitization was found to be a key ingredient for civic innovations to gain public legitimacy and ensure their effective implementation. This study, therefore concludes that the

university is in the right path with regard to the implementation of civic innovations in its governance. This positions the university in line with the contemporary ways of doing things which would improve its performance in service delivery to the public. This could help restore the academic reputable disposition of the university which is apparently questionable both locally and globally. As much as the university is implementing well the civic innovations, there is need, however, for the management to be more inclusive and accommodate the innovative ideas from members of staff regardless of their status in the university. This would inculcate a sense of commitment and ownership among the workers and subsequently enhance effective implementation of civic innovations in the university.

Recommendations

The following are the major recommendations of the study:

- i. This study recommends that the University of Zambia should be applying an inclusive approach to the planning and implementation of civic innovations so as to create a sense of ownership in the various stakeholders involved in the governance of the university.
- ii. The University of Zambia should strengthen the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the implementation process of civic innovations to ensure that the activities of all schools and departments are in conformity with the changes initiated in the university.
- iii. Use of evidence in all University of Zambia structures should be prioritised institutionalised.

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