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5.   **KEYWORDS**: Abstract must be followed by a list of keywords, subject to the maximum of five. These should be arranged in alphabetic order separated by commas and full stops at the end.

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSIONS

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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APPENDIX/ANNEXURE

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO BOOKS

●   Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

JOURNAL AND OTHER ARTICLES

●   Schemenner, R.W., Huber, J.C. and Cook, R.L. (1987), "Geographic Differences and the Location of New Manufacturing Facilities," Journal of Urban Economics, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 83-104.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

●   Garg, Sambhav (2011): "Business Ethics" Paper presented at the Annual International Conference for the All India Management Association, New Delhi, India, 19–22 June.

UNPUBLISHED DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

●   Kumar S. (2011): "Customer Value: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Customers," Thesis, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.

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THE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF BHIRDAR UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was examining the current status of the information management practices at Bahir Dar University, with particular focus on the academic units and core processes of the main campus. Specifically, the study tried to look in to the practices of the student information management system; the library, and other administrative core processes' (human resource core process; purchasing and property administration core process; and the plan, budget, and finance core process) information management systems. A qualitative research design involving unstructured interviews and focus group discussion was employed in the study. The participants were the academic leaders (deans/directors, program managers, and graduate program coordinators of the five academic units (college of science, faculty of humanities, faculty of social sciences, faculty of education and behavioral sciences, and sport academy) in the main campus; the library director; the human resource core process owner; the purchasing and property administration core process owner; the plan, budget, and finance core process owner; and the system administrators. The qualitative information collected from these groups of participants was analyzed using thematic analysis. It was then found out from the analysis and discussion of results that the information management systems of Bahirdar University is not so strong in that that there did not seem to exist a well organized system for smooth information flow and follow up. Encouraging attempts were made with regard to the practices of student information management system; however, this encouraging practice was not extended to the library and other administrative core processes(including the human resource core process; the plan, budget and finance core process; and the purchasing and property administration core processes). Even the existing student information management system had not been implemented in managing the information of distance, summer, extension, and graduate program students. The institutional arrangements for the student information management system also had not been organized in a way to fully function with the necessary human resources and other desired or required inputs. In this regard, the system administrators were strongly complaining that the university should receive and fully own the system through official inauguration so that they could get free time to design other new systems. The centralized nature of the system, the limited roles of the academic units for correcting technical problems, the lengthy bureaucracy required for correcting technical errors, poor culture of the academic staff in respecting deadlines stipulated in the system, lack of adequate computer skills on the part of teachers or academic advisors and customer relation officers, and the time shortage of the system administrators for responding to the concerns of the academic units were the major challenges encountered in the implementation of the existing student information management system. There was also a challenge with regard to this system that the instructors were required to submit grades on the campus network, and the net work interruptions in the university were forcing instructors to spend two to three days for submitting grades. Hence, it seemed sound to reflect here that the university shall revisit its operations with the existing student information management system. The University shall also take the necessary commitment and initiatives in automating the information management systems of the library; the human resource core process; the plan, budget and finance core process; and the purchasing and property administration core processes just like what it did for automating its student information management system. In this regard, the respective core process owners shall further take the leading role in automating their systems. The already existing information management system shall also immediately be applied to managing the information of distance, summer, extension, and graduate program students(the office the academic affairs executive director should take the lion's share in this regard)so that the university would be able to have a better, comprehensive, and responsive student information management system.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, which we call information age as many technologic developments have been experienced; the biggest task that an organization should shoulder is to stay sensitive to change. Many significant factors such as continuous developments in information technologies, information exchange, increasing expectations of the society, modern managing perceptions and applications cause organizations all over the world to develop new information management systems in order to survive (Demir, 2003). Accordingly, contributions of information technologies to educational institutions have recently been among the mostly emphasized affairs (Webber, 2003; Flanagan&Jacopsen, 2003; Selwood, 2000, Pelgrum, 2001; Yuen, Law &Wong, 2003).

Information systems support not only information process but also innovations to educational institutions (Haag, Cummings & Dawkings, 1998; Bellum, 2003). As being adaptable to changes, these systems are helpful to cope with the demands for change. Therefore, the management of information systems improve the adaptation of the educational institutions to the environment; they enable the institutions to comprehend and define inner and outer information transfer; and thereby, institutional leaders both meet the demands and expectations of its inner (teacher, student) and outer members; and ensures that institutional activities are arranged accurately and on time (Pegler, 1992).

Educational leaders have started to make use of information systems in the gradually-increasing daily management staffs (May, 2003). The reasons for using information systems can also be stated as increasing effectiveness at work by processing information, increasing leadership effectiveness by meeting the need for information and gaining superiority in competitions by directing strategies (Yuen, Law&Wong, 2003). Information management systems in this case aim to provide support for the administrative and educational activities of the educational leaders by processing information. Telem (1999) defines educational institutions management information systems as a management information system designed to match the structure, management task, instructional processes and special needs of the educational institutions. As for a broad definition, contributions of the information systems to educational institutions can be defined as making programs more effective, making the teaching process and the changes in learning environment professional, enabling teachers to exchange their experiences in a more systematic way, working in teams, determining the needs of the students (Gurr, 2000; Pegler, 1992), supporting the educational leaders and other staff in doing their duties, developing their performances, effectiveness and efficiencies (Telem&Buvitski, 1995). In other words, information management systems increase institutions' effectiveness and efficiency by saving time and facilitating development of alternative solutions for sophisticated problems (Vissher&Wild, 1997; Pegler, 1992).

Educational leaders can make more efficient decisions when they get correct and up-to-date information by institutional information management systems (Christopher, 2003). Decision making is the heart of educational management. Daily, problematic conditions that require decision making are based on the complicated and unexpected nature of educational institutions environment. For this reason, as a problem solver, the educational leader has to gather and analyze information continuously (Perez&Uline, 2003). In addition, leaders have been required to make more decisions in short times because of the increasing expectations from the educational system (Christopher, 2003). Moreover, decision making has been faster, more frequent and more complicated in educational institutions of today. In order to make decisions under these conditions, gathering data that is continuous, up-to-date and that can be accessed on time and analyzing and using this data is an obligation (Telem, 1991; Gentry, 2005). Success of educational institutions development studies are mostly based on data based decision making. However, educational leaders are not able to use the data efficiently in this aspect (Gentry, 2005).

Information management systems provide information and various reports from the database in order to make decisions in line with the aims of the institution and facilitate controlling of the activities to achieve the aims (Telem&Buvitski, 1995; Telem, 1991; Christopher, 2003). Information technology helps the leader to

access, manage and report the information quickly and easily (Perez&Uline, 2003). As scholars found out, information management systems have changed the roles of educational leaders (Pegler, 1992) and have changed their methods of working (Christopher, 2003). One of these is to develop a database that includes information on student registration and family, discontinuity, grades, staff and classes, and course information. These are just a step of educational institutions information systems. Other parts of information systems are management of library, finance, fixtures, human resources, schedule planning, standard reports sent to higher levels of administration, etc. These are simple data processing activities that increase efficiency of educational institutions' leadership practices (Pegler, 1992). Moreover, use and analysis of information at educational institutions will not only make leaders realize what should be done in order to develop student performances, but also will ensure success in accomplishing these changes. When leaders use data, they will start to realize innovation efforts on this issue (Christopher, 2003). As a result, it can be stated that by means of information systems educational leaders will be able to determine required information, access the information, interpret the data, use the data in decision making and evaluating, and developing efficient use of the system.

When Gurr (2000) examined effects of information management systems on working of educational leaders in Australia, leaders stated that use of information management systems has introduced them information technologies and the facilities, lessened their workload and made leadership process more efficient, helped them use time more efficiently, made teachers feel themselves more important, made them and the teachers wish to improve themselves more, made important changes in education and teaching, and increased the quality of institutional communication. In their study with higher educational institution managers, Telem and Buvitski (1995) found that institutional leaders believed that institutional management information systems lead to important changes at institutions. According to educational institutions' leaders, this application has increased institutional standards, helped decisions on the level of control and strategy, increased the quality of teaching programs, facilitated student-teacher interaction, increased the coordination between teachers, facilitated systematic and continuous information transfer to parents, and increased communication with other institutions and the central organization. In his study where Gurr (2000) examined effects of information systems on school leaders of local schools, he determined that information systems have largely changed roles of educational leaders; and leaders stated that a leader who does not use the information systems is not able to achieve his duties sufficiently anymore.

However, in literature, there are researches that show that educational leaders had problems in using information management systems for their respective institutions. For example, Visscher and Bloemen (1999) in their study with leaders and teachers working in higher educational institutions in Holland found out that educational management information systems were mostly used in routine works, and leaders and teachers did not have sufficient education on the system. Leaders and teachers indicated that while educational management information systems had positive effects on evaluation of efficiency of the institutions, development of using sources, quality of educational programming and communication, it increased their workload and caused stress. The research indicated that this stress is reduced in institutions where education is sufficiently given on the system and where innovation is clearly stated as a vision. In addition, it was found out that the staff that used the system had higher motivation, was keen to take more education, and adopted the vision of the institution more. In the research where Warren (1998) examined the effects of information systems on educational decision making, he found out that educational leaders have not taken sufficient education on efficient use of the information technologies. Crouse (1994), in this regard, found that education increased the possibility to use the information systems. Also Jacops (1992) claimed that there was a correlation between the amount of education the leaders took, and the use of information technologies.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the practices of the information management systems at BahirDar University, which is one of the oldest and reputable Universities in Ethiopia. The study was made to focus on Bahir Dar University for the fact that it is the university where student information management system has been introduced since 2009. Though no studies were conducted and even no performance reports were organized on the performances of the system, it had already been in place for about four years. Thus, the study was specifically aimed at describing the current practices and challenges of the student information management system introduced; and examining the practices of information management system in the library and other administrative core processes (human resource core process; plan, budget and finance core process; purchasing and property administration core process) in the main campus.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

As it is already indicated in the introduction section, the major objective of this manuscript was to undertake a qualitative study on the status of information management practices at Bahir Dar University. The study employed a qualitative design, which in fact helped for the in depth description of the application of the system to the academic and administrative units in the university, specifically in the main campus.

The participants were selected from five academic units (colleges/ faculties/academies) at the main campus of Bahir Dar University: College of Science, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Education and Behavioral Sciences, and Sport Academy. The participants of the study selected from the above academic units were Deans, Program Managers, and Graduate Program Coordinators. Besides, another group of participants from the administrative wing was included in the study. These participants, selected from the administrative wing, were the plan, budget, and finance core process owner; the human resource core process owner; the purchasing and property administration core process owner; the library director; and the system administrators.

In collecting the desired data for the study, focus group discussion and interview were used and it was found to be interesting as was possible to understand from the participants' reflections during the discussion. The focus group discussion helped the researcher to study the real practices and challenges in utilizing information management system. The interview, on its part, also helped the researcher to collect detailed information from those participants who had active roles in the implementation of the information management system.

Finally, the collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis. This type of analysis is highly inductive in that the themes emerge from the data and are not imposed upon it by the researcher. In most cases, the data collection and analysis seemed to take place simultaneously. Even the background reading formed part of the analysis process for it helped the researcher to explain the emerging themes.

Coding technique was also used to analyze the responses to interview items. In analyzing these data, responses to the interview items were grouped by themes, following the guidelines presented by Creswell and Maietta (2002). In the initial coding, the first step of the coding process, the responses to the interview items were compiled and read in order to determine any dominant themes or patterns in the responses. These responses were used as initial codes for the data. The second phase of the coding process involved arranging the responses into categories that emerged from additional reviews of the data after grouping them for the first time (i.e., categorized according to their affinities into general thematic categories). This yielded a final list of codes for the data. Finally, the coded data were grouped by the emerging themes on the basis of which the thematic content analysis was made. In order to assure trustworthiness of the coding process, a an assistant professor of teaching English as a foreign language took part. The inter-rater reliability was found to be 0.79 in the pilot test, and the inter-rater reliability of the main study was found to be 0.86.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As was indicated in the introduction and methodology section, this study was conducted on the information management experiences of Bahir Dar University with particular focus on the main campus. The participants were deans/directors, program managers and graduate program coordinators of the respective academic units; and the human resource core process owner, the plan, budget, and finance core process owner, the purchasing and property administration core process owner; the library director; and the system administrators.

The data was collected using unstructured interview and focus group discussion. Accordingly, the collected qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis as per the major themes emanated from the field note. Hence, this section is devoted to the presentation of results and discussions. The results and discussions are organized into categories or themes: the student information management experiences; and the library and other administrative units' information management practices of the university.

3.1 THE STUDENT INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The student information management system has been introduced at Bahir Dar University since 2009 Here, I would like to acknowledge the two system administrators for designing and introducing the system and even for their unreserved commitment in supporting and guiding the implementation or the

functioning of the system. The system was introduced with the assumption that any information related to students is managed effectively and efficiently (System Administer "A").

The system records and avails all the information related to students' biography including family background and address, students full academic records, records related to students academic status, and students dormitory placements(System Administer" B"). This participant went on stating that "the students' registration and graduation are also assumed to be processed through the system". More importantly, "the system gives different roles to the students, course instructors, program managers, deans, the academic affairs executive director, the academic affairs vice president, and to the president as per their respective responsibilities" (System Administrator "B"). Hence, these different organs, as per their corresponding roles, have access to information related to the students placed in the system. "However, the type and amount of information, and the authority granted in the system for the different organs do significantly differ. For example, while the academic executive director has a role to approve the graduation of students, the dean does not have such a provision" (System Administrator "A").

The missing elements in this case are the course chairs and the program representatives. According to the perspectives of "program manager A", these two positions have not been given roles despite the fact that they have important stakes in managing and leading the teaching- learning process and there by monitoring students' progress. Similarly, "program manager B" noted that program representatives (sometimes called as department heads or chair of chairs) and course chairs are the closest stake holders in monitoring students' progress and achievements. Another program manager specifically noted the following reflections:

The university has frequently been communicating that decentralization is getting practiced in the sense that decision making has been devolved to the lower levels. The university has also proudly been talking that the lower level managers are highly empowered in making decisions. However, the department heads (program representatives), the lower level managers in our case, have not been given the provision either to approve or comment on the students grades. Instead, the program manager, though a bit far from daily monitoring of students, is approving the students' grades. (Program Manager "C").

This situation, therefore, seem to require minor amendments on the system so that the two important organs will have the corresponding roles and authorities in processing and monitoring the students' information via the system. Besides, the granting of this role to these two organs (program representatives, and course chairs) would augment their responsiveness and moral, and thereby, commitment because the more authority and responsibility you give to people the more they become committed and responsive (, Gurr, 2000; Komives et- al, 1998).

According to the perspectives of the system administrator "A":

Students are given passwords, in the system, to help them see all the information related to their academic status. In this way, the system offers opportunities for parents to see the results of their children at a distance using the password given to students. What is unfortunate in this case is the situation of Ethiopian parents in that most of the rural parents do not have the knowledge and skills for manipulating computers, and even when they have the knowledge and skills, most of them do not have the net work access to visit the system. However, despite all these limitations, the system is found to be very important in processing students' information very efficiently and effectively.

According to the information collected from the system administrators and deans of the respective academic units, the system currently is offering services for: course and curriculum management; student admission, registration, and achievement; online grade submission and approval; academic program management; graduation and certification; student dormitory placement and management system; and cost sharing management system. Besides, the system administrators noted that the system is almost ready to offer services in the near future for: student cafeteria management; digital signage (dynamic information display system); evaluation of programs and teachers' performance system. System administrator "B" particularly expressed that "the university shall not be reluctant in starting these three recently finalized systems because they are supposed to contribute significantly in promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of operations".

An attempt was also made to ask the system administrators about the benefits gained from the system that has already been introduced and implemented. Accordingly, they reflected that the system has increased efficiency in terms of time, money and energy, which corresponds with Pegler'(1992) and Perez and Uline(2003) reflection that a well managed information system increases the efficiency and effectiveness of operations. The participants also noted that the system has significantly increased transparency because the system is protected from any form of personal fraud or abuse, which also corresponds with the reflection of Gurr(2000) that information management systems when managed carefully promote organizational transparency and communication . According to system administrators' reflections, the system has contributed a lot in increasing customer satisfaction. The deans, program managers, and graduate program coordinators also added that the system has increased the satisfaction of academic leaders, teachers, students and parents in terms of efficient and effective service delivery. Most importantly, as already indicated before, students results are displayed and can easily be seen by academic leaders and parents. This situation, therefore, has created healthy academic competition among them. The competition, according to the perspectives of the system administrators, also seems to include the teachers, academic leaders, and academic units. That is, as the system is quite transparent, every activity related to student admission, registration, grade submission, and certification are visible to the University officials, and hence, this situation has created again healthy competition among those organs in terms of time efficiency so that the students records are secured on time.

Though the system is offering such paramount benefits, the university according to the perspectives of deans, program managers and graduate program coordinators, has not utilized for summer, extension, distance, and graduate students. According to their perspectives, the system is serving only the regular students in the undergraduate programs. This situation seems to indicate that there is a reluctance on the side of the academic units as well as the university officials. As the system administrators noted, there is no any factor which inhibits the academic units or the university in general not to use the existing student information management system to the summer, extension, distance, and graduate program students. The academic leaders of the respective academic units on their part also expressed that they are registering the names, and curriculums of the students in those programs in to the system. However, they are not sure when they have to start using the system in managing the information of the students enrolled in those programs. That is why the researcher reflected earlier that there seem to exist reluctance on this regard. May be this resembles with the findings of Visscher and Bloemen(1999) and Warren(1998) that leaders fail in promoting the utilization of information management systems when they do not have sufficient education on efficient use of the information technologies or when they have not taken sufficient education on the system. In any case, the designed system is quite important in facilitating the student information management in the university, and hence, the university in general, and the respective academic units in particular need to have the necessary owner ship and commitment in fully utilizing the system for students enrolled in the different modalities and levels. The university shall also play the leading role in promoting the benefits of the system so that other higher institutions of learning in the country can easily adapt the system, and thereby, a well organized student management information system can be established in the country. In this regard, there is a wide spread notion that the more well organized information management system the institutions have, the more they become effective and efficient in their operations, and thereby, the more they increase their productivity (Robins, 2005).

Further attempts were also made to point out the problems encountered in the implementation of the system from the perspectives of the system administrators, and the academic leaders of the respective academic units. Accordingly, the system administrators reflected that they are getting disappointed with many factors related to promotion and institutional arrangements. Regarding promotion, system administrator "A" noted that: *the university has to promote the system to other universities so that we may benefit from selling our expertise. What should be understood in this case is that the University did not pay for our professional expertise while designing the system. Perhaps, the university tried to recognize our commitment and efforts through awarding an academic rank of assistant professorship. Though this effort of the university is so encouraging, it shall go a step further in promoting the system to other universities so that we could benefit from selling our expertise. This could have been done through officially inaugurating the launching of the system so that the other universities may start giving value to the system though a significant number of them is still coming for experience sharing.*

The other challenge with the system administrators was with regard to the institutional arrangements. As system administrators expressed, they started implementing the system by the year2009. As the system is a new one to the university, the expertise were required to work day out and day in for clarifying any confusions and challenges to the system users. The users are teachers, program managers, deans/directors, and customer relation officers. All these users, as

the system administrators noted, need immediate guidance regarding the implementation of the system, which in fact required the system administrators to avail themselves on line day in and day out. What seems unfortunate here is that the system administrators are still working with a similar tension though attempts have been made by the university in assigning additional ICT experts to support the system administrators. In this regard, the system administrators are still complaining that there need to an institutional arrangement and the necessary ICT personnel who can fully own and operate the system at the level of the respective academic units. Hence, there does seem a need for the university to pay attention to the issue, to revisit the institutional arrangements, and thereby, to give the desired responses to the claims of those committed system administrators who have been devoting their precious time and energy for facilitating the student information management systems of the university. In light of this, it seems sound to express that for the information management of an institution to be productive, there is a need for having a well organized, and transparent institutional arrangement equipped with the necessary resources including human and fixtures, and perhaps, there is also a need for having a well established monitoring and evaluation system (Christopher, 2003; Harling, 1989).

Generally, the deans and program managers noted that the following persisting problems were prevalently affecting the smooth functioning of the existing student information management system: the centralized nature of the system; the lengthy bureaucracies required for solving technical problems; the lack of computer skills on the part of the academic staff and customer relation officers; the limited roles offered for the deans and program managers of the respective academic units in the management of the system; the lengthy chains required for correcting technical problems; lack of responsiveness of the system in responding to the needs of students with special cases or problems; and the poor culture of the academic staff in respecting the deadlines stipulated in the system. In some cases, the reluctance of the system administrators in responding to the concerns of the respective academic units was reflected as one of the recently encountering problems as reflected by the Deans. The deans in fact did not blame the system administrators for their reluctance, and they rather reflected as the university should have owned the system. Furthermore, the network interruptions were also among the pressing problems causing the teachers to spend a two to three days time for submitting grades online. Hence, paying attention to these and similar other problems would enable the university to have a sustainable student information management system.

3.2. THE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE LIBRARY AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

The information management system, as was already indicated in the introduction section, is assumed to be practiced in the library, and other administrative units like the human resource core process ; the plan, budget and finance core process; and the purchasing and property administration core process. The performances of these core processes are key to the university's success provided that there is coherent and organized institutional arrangements for the networked and smooth information flow. Thus, similar to that of the student information management system, there can and should be a well organized information system for managing the operations of the library and the other administrative units of the university.

The library for example, should be networked so that everybody else where could be able to identify books of his/her interest and get the access to read. If that is the case, students and others interested for reading can save time in searching for books, and the books can safely be monitored and controlled (Christopher, 2003). Unfortunately, according to the perspectives of respondent "D", the university library does not have such a system, and things are traditionally operating in a rule of thumb. As per the responses of the academic leaders (deans program managers, and graduate program coordinators), the students have been highly complaining with the inadequacy of the library services that most of the library workers are ill prepared for providing the desired services, because of this fact that the catalogue system is quite disorganized where they do not easily trace books of their preference. The library director reflected that there is a plan to automate the library system, and he added in this regard that they system is in the process of pilot test, but he was not sure when to start the system. This situation, therefore, seem to require the university to make urgent interventions in a way that can maximize effective and efficient service provision, and thereby, ensure strong customer satisfaction. It was reflected by one of the system administrators that the library information management has already been designed, and he was not sure as to why they system was not in place. Universities of the 21st century are highly required to be responsive to the calls of efficiency and effectiveness in their service delivery (Adams, 1986; Bennis and Townsend, 1995). It seems, therefore, sound to reflect here that the university, as one of the biggest in the country and as it is the one striving to be one of the premier African Research Universities by 2025, should be able to implement a well organized and responsive library information management system so that the service provisions would be by far efficient and effective, and thereby, students productivity and achievements would be promoted. That is, this is one of the strategies as to how a vision for becoming a premier research university could be realized.

The administrative units including the human resource; the plan, budget and finance; and the purchasing, and property administration process owners are also expected to be networked through a strong information management system. The university officials and others concerned need to be able to access information about the plan and implementation reports of these units. The system should be able to offer any information about the resources available in each unit, the daily challenges and achievements, the performance status; and about the issues requiring urgent intervention (Christopher 2003). However, as per the information collected from the process owners of the three administrative units, there is no such a system in the university. The reporting system is very traditional using hard copies. The university officials' decisions are highly dependent on the reports of the core process owners. The officials decisions in this case are likely to be in accurate because the source of information is the individuals, not the system.

In such situations, therefore, performances are not likely to be clearly measured because recording and reporting are also dependent on the core process owners' personalities. Institutions of the 21st century, as was already noted earlier, do not accommodate such traditional practices (Adams 1986) for the fact that they are operating in a globalised environment where there are turbulent changes elsewhere. The author also went on stating that these changes are so demanding that the institutions should be so effective and efficient in order to cope up with the changes. The university, hence, seems quite lagging behind the change because it is still operating using rule of thumb.

Had the information management system been started with plan, budget and finance core process; there would have been clear and transparent information flow for every transaction. For example, the president may know the monthly, quarterly and annual plans and the corresponding performances reports through the system without having direct contact with the core process owner (Christopher 2003). The president, as to Christopher, may also know the budget implementation status so that he/she can take timely measures accordingly; the financial flow can also be actively monitored if such a system is in place. In some cases, it may not be unusual to see differences with the financial practices of the different finance offices in the university. Imagine, the existence of different practices within the same university. The core process owner in this regard reflected that there is a soft ware sent from the Ministry of Finance at national level. As per his reflections, this software can serve as a good information management tool provided that all the finance units of the university are integrated in to the University's server. Perhaps, this may require a smaller intervention of the university's ICT office in integrating the finance units in to one server so that information can easily be accessible to everybody concerned, and thereby, monitoring and follow up would be easy accordingly.

The same may happen to the human resource core process in that the system can avail all the necessary information of the human resource in terms of age, experience, qualification, and current engagement. For example, the university gives further education opportunities for a large number of staff each year, and they are supposed to complete their education within a specified period of time so that the university can benefit in return. As per the perspectives of the deans and program managers, however, many of them disappear, and others extend their education for seemingly unlimited periods for there is no a well organized monitoring and follow up system. In some cases, the human resource core process, as the deans and graduate program coordinators noted, does not have the information as to when some staff members started their further education, and consequently, the core process tries to count the number of years required for such trainees as per their consensus. Another challenge associated to this core process was the lack of accuracy in human resource planning in that there need to be an accurate process for determining the number and kind of human resource required at a right time and place. As per the perspectives of the academic leaders, it is common to see a large number of human resources loaded at a certain unit or department; and on the other hand, it was not also uncommon to see high scarcity of human resources in the other units or departments. Apart from the in accuracy in terms of quantity, there also seem to exist a common practice in our case as the academic leaders reflected that the assignment of the right person at a right place is quite futile in that staff grievances were common here and there about placement and related issues. Moreover, there was also high inconsistency on the appointment and transfer of the human resources, and this could possibly be attributed to the lack of a well organized information management system. Had there been such a system, the president could have easily

seen such appointment and transfer cases so that the inconsistencies couldn't have been continued so far. Surprisingly, it took us about three weeks to get the list of academic staffs working in the university in responding to the requests of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education had been frequently calling to the Academic Affairs Vice President Office, but the human resource core process failed to process the data, which was a clear indication of having a disorganized information system. In this regard, the human resource core process owner reflected that an information management system had been designed to manage the information of the core process. As per his reflections, the necessary data of the human resource had been entered into the newly designed human resource information management system, but he was not also sure when to start utilizing the system.

Worst of all, the purchasing and property administration core process was facing serious challenges for lack of an organized information management system. In this case, it was very common to see many computers, printers, photocopy machines, and other equipments stopped working and loaded in many offices in a disorganized manner. On the other hand, as the academic leaders reflected, it was also common to see the university continuously buying new computers, printers, photocopy machines and other equipments without trying to maintain the existing, and even without trying to undertake accurate property auditing. In some cases, for example, you may see staff members taking two laptop computers while the others do not have even one. In general, the university had been operating in a very traditional way despite the fact that there was a sound opportunity to design and implement a well organized information management system for monitoring the utilization of material resources. The core process owner reflected in this regard as she did not know any plan to automate the information management of the core process despite those pressing challenges. So, the university shall take the necessary initiatives in integrating the information management system of this core process.

What seems confusing, in this case was, the failure of the university in automating the information management system in a situation where there were experts who could easily adapt the system. According to the interviews conducted with the system administrators, they were very much willing to design and strengthen the information management system of the university, just like what they did for the student information management system of the university. So, it clearly seemed to indicate a reluctance or lack of commitment on the part of the university to strengthen its information management system, or maybe there was a lack of the necessary orientation on the merits of an integrated information management system, which perhaps, may require further enquiry.

4. CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

For the fact that globalization is requiring countries in general and institutions in particular to cope up with the turbulent changes in the world environment, and for the fact that coping up with this change requires operating with high efficiency and effectiveness, using a well organized and sustainable information management system seems quiet mandatory for institutions of higher learning. Higher institutions of learning in the 21st century are highly required to operate on competitive basis in response to addressing the expectations of the beneficiaries or students who are also required to be competent for the competitive world of work.

In this regard, the study indicated that the information management system at Bahir Dar University is so loose except with the attempts made to automate the student information management system. It was evident that the student information management system of the university had been quite functional and had also been facilitating task related to student admission, registration, academic record, status determination, graduation and certification, and dormitory placements. However, the existing student information management system had not been implemented in managing the information of distance, summer, extension, and graduate program students. The institutional arrangements also had not been organized in a way to fully function with the necessary human resources and other desired or required inputs. In this regard, the system administrators were strongly complaining that the university should receive and fully own the system so that they could get free time to design other new systems. For example, the University could easily assign ICT experts for the respective academic units so that the student management system could be owned by the academic units . Another solution could also be offering the necessary system management roles to the deans and program mangers so that the lengthy bureaucracies and centralizations observed for managing technical problems could shortly be managed at the level of the academic units. Besides, this system had not been expanded to the other core processes like the plan, budget, and finance core process; the purchasing and property administration core process; the human resource core process; and to the library core process.

Thus, there seemed a strong need for the university to revisit its operations in terms of information management so that it can clearly understand that it is not operating up to the standard. The core processes are operating and reporting as per traditional trust in a sense that it seemed the core process owner who was likely to determine the success or failure of the core process as long as he/she was the one to plan , evaluate and report. That is, the higher officials had limited chance to monitor, and support the operations, and they were rather limited to the reports from the respective core process owners. This situation, however, would take the university nowhere. Higher officials need to have fresh and live information about the daily operations of the respective core processes using a well organized information management system. Otherwise, they will be forced to lead from a distance, and leading from a far distance is just like shooting a gun in a dark. The University shall, therefore, take immediate measures in automating its information management system using the experts who already introduced the student information management system so that we all would be able to see a competent university striving to be one of the premier research universities in Africa by 2025.

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