

The Impact of the University of Namibia merger on staff and students:

The case of Hifikepunye Pohamba Campus

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Abstract

The merger of the University of Namibia (UNAM) with the four Colleges of Education in 2010 was necessitated by an Act of Parliament for tertiary institutions. This study aims to identify the challenges for staff and students to cope with the merger, in order to bring the merger process to the attention of the stakeholders. This study is important because, while history is being made, one needs to establish the human experiences of those going through these changes. It is intended to capture the merger's impact on the academic, administrative and auxiliary staff and students. Participants responded to open-ended questionnaires and interviews designed to assess their perceptions of capabilities in their new roles, as well as the responsibilities, constraints and opportunities availed for personal and professional growth. The students who participated are the former BETD (Basic Education Teacher Diploma) students who were articulated into the B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education) Lower and Upper Primary program during the merge. Preliminary results indicated that the majority of the participants had positive experiences after joining UNAM. Challenges in the following areas were highlighted: infra-structure, unreliable communication technologies, the breadth and depth of work covered in some modules, diminishing philosophy of learner-centered education. A few participants voiced their concerns regarding some anomalies. A number of suggestions from the different stakeholders to make the merger even more effective and efficient are offered.

Keywords

Merger; Quality; Staff/students' experiences

Introduction

Mergers and transformations take place frequently in public and private sectors, businesses, markets and the like, both nationally and internationally. Many institutions undergo changes of one kind or another, thus necessitating mergers at all levels of society. Institutions of Higher learning are no exception.

As of 2010 the four Colleges of Education in Namibia, namely Ongwediva, Rundu, Katima and Windhoek, joined the University of Namibia. These colleges were offering teacher education and the BETD (Basic Education Teacher Diploma) program to their graduates. In order to make colleges accessible to all the previously deprived and disadvantaged populations, the criteria were to some degree compromised to accommodate the largely disadvantaged and marginalised individuals within the society. As of 2011 the four campuses started with the new B.Ed. program. According to the policies of the Ministry of Education (1993) which emphasise the goals of access, equity, quality and democracy, the colleges were to provide access to the many high school graduates who could not previously be admitted to any programs at either the University of Namibia or the Polytechnic as an option for higher education; this was because the entry requirements were higher than that of the colleges. Accessibility versus elitism based on eligibility, however, is an issue that was not addressed in this study due to the specific scope of this study.

The quality of teachers produced by teacher training colleges and the University of Namibia before the merger has been questioned and rebuked at several platforms. Areas of main concerns have been the lack of academic content, wrong content, inappropriate methodology that affected the quality of teaching and academic achievements in schools as evidenced in the National Grades 10 and 12 results. The Advisory Council on Teacher Education was tasked to come up with a comprehensive teacher education reform plan that will address teacher qualifications, the curriculum and the mandates of teacher training colleges (ACTET report, 2006 - 2009). The Advisory Council on Teacher Education contracted the University of Namibia Central Consultancy Bureau to conduct research and make recommendations on various aspects affecting the quality of teacher education programs and the training of teachers. One of the major findings that resulted from the study was a need for consistent teacher education nationwide to enable the University of Namibia to exercise full responsibilities of overseeing the overall professional training, development, monitoring and evaluation of teachers. It is against this background that the merger of the colleges and UNAM was born to improve the educational standards in the country. This research study aims at generating experience-based evidence that will focus all the stakeholders in the merger on its intended goals and objectives. Such knowledge is important for proper planning and would suggest some areas that need the attention of the stakeholders in order to achieve success. Research questions were: What have been the experiences of the different stakeholders since joining UNAM? What are the positive

and negative aspects of the merger? Furthermore, we asked participants to rate their personal and professional growth since joining UNAM and, finally, to give suggestions for improvement of the present status quo. The questions were slightly changed to address the issues relevant to the different groups of participants such as staff and students.

Background and importance of the study

This study was conducted at a prime time when history was in its making, as former colleges of teacher education were merged with the University of Namibia with the hope to improve the educational standard in the country through the development of consistent teacher education nationwide. While the merger was envisaged to increase the University of Namibia's responsibilities of overseeing the overall professional training, development, monitoring and evaluation of teachers, its implementation was expected to present some challenges and opportunities that, if timely captured, would enable the stakeholders to stay focused and integrate action research projects that would add value to the successful achievements of this well-intended educational project. The goal was to illuminate challenges and chart the way forward, focus the merger on the improvement of the country's teachers and teacher education. Mergers of this kind are not new global initiatives. In Zimbabwe, for example, private and state colleges were unified under the Department of Education within the University of Zimbabwe (Ndume, 2012).

Cockran, Smith and Vries (2001) view teacher education reforms as being influenced by debates from two contesting movements. One camp is proposing the professionalisation of teachers and teacher education (Hammond, 1999); the other camp (Ballou and Pedgursky, 1999) supports the deregulation of teacher preparation to break up the monopoly of teacher education by devising alternative entries into the teaching profession.

The professionalisation camp requires high admission requirements on entry. Standard-based teacher education, teacher assessment based on performance, state teacher licensure and teacher professional development are fundamental aspects in the professionalisation process. The idea is to get higher education students to join the teacher training institutions and provide them with a quality teacher education programme that is well aligned to the National standard of teaching and has defined the contents and skills that would characterise an effective teacher. Their graduates are not allowed entry into schools without having passed a licensure test to demonstrate contents and skills in their subject majors. It is also recommended that teachers' professional development programs should be linked to what is offered at the teacher training institution to maintain workshops during their working careers in the teaching profession. They are contesting deregulative views that anyone can teach and that teachers are born and not made. The task should be that of discouraging average school performers to join the teaching profession. The deregulation of teacher preparation camps recommend the breaking of the monopoly

of teacher education through finding alternative entries into the teaching profession. Requirements for high standard school education for admission and state licencing are deemed unnecessary (Ballou and Podgursky, 1999, p. 57).

Both camps conducted meta-analysis of emperical work in order to make policy recommendations that, when implemented, would yield value-added investment to the state and federal resources. Supporters for deregulation camps claim to have made a meta-analysis of 400 hundred studies that found no significant relationship between the professionalization agenda and quality of teachers produced through its process.

On the other hand, more than 200 studies were analysed to support the professionalisation of teachers and teacher education (ETS). Conclusions are that “none of these camps’ views are apolitical, neutral or value free”. Professionalisation supporters were criticised for using the public good of teacher education to deny educational opportunities to the poor and advance the agenda of the privileged groups through accountability projects to secure state funds. In their statements of educational outcomes, both camps agree that teachers must have knowledge of the subject matter, as well as pedagogy, and must also be able to teach, so that all children can achieve a high learning standard in all subjects (NCATE, MTASC, NBPTS, 1999, p. 7).

On the other hand, the supporters of deregulation accuse their opponents as using the outcomes as a means of identifying schools and teachers as the sole culprits for poor academic achievements in schools. They propose flexible hiring systems that would allow schools to make their own decisions to hire and replace the non-performers. They advise that indicators for the intended outcomes be available for teachers to pursue and students to be assessed based on that. Successful schools should be rewarded while the unsuccessful ones should be sanctioned.

The University of Namibia has a general entry requirement for their Teacher Training Program of 25 points, which disallows the majority of Grade 12 applicants to be able to apply or be admitted. On the other hand, the colleges’ general entry requirements were for those Grade 12 applicants with 22 or 23 points, thus making it more accessible to the majority of Grade 12 graduates. There were also other differences in the programs offered by the University of Namibia and the colleges of education. The number of students admitted to the colleges allowed them to have small class-based, interactive experiences with time to practice the many skills required by the ‘teachers to be’, while the University admission, with large numbers of students, allowed for more lecturing type tuition, with less time for practising the many skills needed. The University of Namibia program had more lecturing time, thus was more knowledge-based, while the colleges were more skill based-training because of the smaller numbers of students in classes. The philosophical underpinning of the two programs were different as well. The University had

a more traditional view of education as reflected in their other programs. This is indicated by the large number of students and the entry requirement for getting the “cream” and the “elite”. On the other hand, the colleges, through the Ministry of Education, were partnered with Sweden and their universities that were more research-based and in line with accessibility and the constructivist philosophy. There were other differences as well that fall out of the ambit of this paper; however, the “common” comments regarding the University of Namibia graduates were that they had the knowledge, but did not have the skills to transfer information to the learners; the college graduates were very skillful but lacked sufficient content knowledge of the subjects. One could also add differing levels of English language proficiency of the students to this. Thus both programs were criticised. The University took the best applicants but did not provide enough experience in teaching skills, while the colleges gave accessibility to the majority and even minority groups and tried to bring them up to standard but with less content or subject knowledge. The two different camps, as defined in the literature, could be seen in Namibia by the contrast in entry requirements and other factors.

The merger is one of the important teacher education reforms in Namibia that is intended to provide highly-qualified B.Ed. Honours degree holders to improve the quality of teaching and academic performance in schools. It has been stated that many of those who introduce and manage educational changes ignore both the practical and emotional dimensions of change that might have a reverse effect on the good intentions of change.

According to Goedegebuure (1992), Millet (1976) and Mulvey (1993), merger processes are time-consuming. They demand many resources, especially in the short term; this is often underestimated. A merger needs much planning before, during and after the implementation process. Experiences from the USA, Australia and the Netherlands demonstrate that it can take up to ten years before the situation is normalised after a merger (Skodvin, 1999, p. 70). Thus, in the researchers’ view, there is a need for continuous evaluation to determine whether the merger is proceeding according to plan and to address issues arising from the evaluation.

Research Methodology

The study was approached from the constructivist philosophical paradigm which resists the existence of a single objective reality that is to be discovered through uncontaminable measures. The researchers and the researched are part and parcel of the merger and they co-constructed the findings of the study. The researchers are lecturers at Hifikepunye Pohamba Campus who intended to explore the impact of the merger not from their own perspectives but from the perspectives of other participants’, while they also responded to the same questionnaire to ensure the inclusion of their experiences and values in the findings and to eliminate researcher bias. Paradigms were not apolitical and their

choice also implied value-laden decisions. The paradigm of choice thus acknowledges the researcher and the researched as active agents in the construction of the multiple realities.

Qualitative methods of collecting data were employed to investigate participants' experiences of the merger. An open-ended questionnaire was designed to explore their positive experiences and challenges, their attained personal or professional growth, and to recommended improvement. Participants were purposefully sampled to include all staff members in different roles, as well as students who transitioned from the BETD into the B.Ed program, as they were believed to have a comparative view of the new and previous program. Eighty participants were purposefully sampled to include all staff members in their different roles. The sample consisted of 34 lecturers, 33 students, 10 administrative and auxiliary staff and 3 members of management. The questionnaires were posing similar questions, with some variations for each group. The questionnaires for students, lecturers, administrative/auxiliary and management personnel had just a few varying questions related to the specific group. The questionnaire was piloted before it was administered to the different groups. The researchers used open coding and comparative methods to insert codes parallel to the participants' narratives.

Participants talked about their experiences derived from their daily interactions with their changing educational and cultural environment. They were the actors in their environment who were hoped to have experienced the merger and who could construct knowledge grounded in these experiences. Knowledge is a result of experience and it is subject to change with time and space. The evidence of their experiences should be treated as important knowledge that, if considered, could enable stakeholders to improve aspects that need improvement and collect more data on other identified areas in the current study to ensure that the merger achieves its intended objectives.

Findings

The following findings are based on the analysis of the data provided by the different participants.

Lecturers

The following categories of data emerged from data obtained from the lecturers. To the question of how they would describe their experience of joining UNAM, lecturers responded by stating that communication technology, infrastructure, decentralised teacher education to regions, remuneration and fringe benefits, better admission and student promotion policies, library facilities, opportunities for research and further studies needed to be improved. Of the participants, 24 used words such as 'stressful', 'worse',

'confusing' to describe the merger. Nine lectures used words such as 'exciting', 'smooth', 'positive', 'uplifting', 'good experience' and 'progress' to describe the merger.

One participant stated *"It fulfilled my dream to teach at the University and has changed my status"*. Lack of proper planning was indicated as a factor. "Change" was described as

- Rapid with little preparation as to what was lying ahead.
- Scary, not knowing what would happen.
- Lack of tangible plans.
- Lack of proper induction and curriculum orientation.
- The program was not readily available.
- No books and materials in most subjects.
- Infrastructure such as lecture halls.
- Lack of proper consultation between the stakeholders.
- The satellite campus was not involved in the decisions.
- The line of reporting became blurred in 2010 whether it was to the Ministry or to UNAM.
- No proper induction at registration; hence, a feeling of guilt and embarrassment when not having all the required information to guide the students.
- No clear directives of how to align the BETD grading, as well as school-based studies grades, to that of the University.
- Directives were confusing and inconsistent.

Other lecturers expressed change as *"worse academically; changed teaching style, Learner-centered philosophy is dying slowly, lecturing is popular"*.

These comments indicate a range of feelings and experiences felt by the participants right at the beginning of the merger. As can be seen by the verbatim samples, some were positive and some were negative. Change is always accompanied by mixed feelings for the participants and it was important to see how they felt at the time of responding.

Positive experiences about the merger

To the question regarding their positive experiences, the participants summarised these as follows:

- a) Improved infrastructures such as offices for every lecturer, access to computers and internet connectivity, office furniture as well as the use of power-point presentations.
- b) Opportunities available for further studies, research and community projects.
- c) Better working conditions, employees' salaries and fringe benefits.
- d) Unified institution, having brought higher education to the regions. The program now attracts more bright students than before.
- e) Common examinations.
- f) Better management and leadership.

As indicated by the lecturers, the positive changes have been noticed and recorded as such.

To the question regarding some of the problems experienced, here follows a summary of problems experienced:

- Large groups and lack of classrooms to accommodate them. Learner-centred approaches become difficult. Too much marking. Heavy workload for some lecturers and less workload and lower numbers of students in areas where students have a choice.
- Lack of basic materials in most modules. Sharing and collaboration between lecturers teaching the same module across the campuses were not easy, with some lecturers only expecting it to come from others.
- Inconsistent instruction. The BETD assessment became complicated.
- Too much criticism and stereotyping of former colleges as lazy, incompetent, underqualified with students' reports taken above those of the lecturers.
- Teaching subjects while not being professionally trained to teach them. Less support and professional development.
- Less consultation in decision-making.

As can be seen from the comments, the constructivist philosophy and learner-centered approach which were applicable to the colleges before the merger, were no longer possible because of large classes. Colleagues felt sidestepped in decision-making and felt the criticism they received was not justified in the absence of some training.

When asked for suggestions how to improve the situation, the following were mentioned by the lecturers:

- Building of lecture halls to accommodate 300 students or more.
- Introducing smaller groups or training lecturers to sustain learner-centred approaches in large groups.
- Development of basic materials for every module taught.
- Recruiting of more lecturers in areas where the student numbers are high.
- Having frequent across-campus meetings between lecturers who teach the same modules to plan uniform teaching and assessment activities.
- There is a need for a special art block for all the Arts components.
- Revisiting entry requirements where 2/3 subjects are required.

Table 1: Rate of Satisfaction of Lecturers

Ratings	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
Personal Growth	0	6	39	56	20	121	3.6
Professional Growth	1	8	24	72	15	120	3.5

(1: least significant, 2: less significant, 3: Average, 4: more significant and 5: most significant)

Students were asked to indicate their positive and negative experiences since joining UNAM and whether the program met their needs and expectations. While participants seemed to be positive about their choices of specialisation, the question whether the program was meeting their needs, elicited some positive and negative reactions.

One participant states *“In the beginning it was a wonderful experience because moving from the college to University was an awesome feeling but later on I discover that it is a worse nightmare than before, we are getting little support, the program came as a surprise, I have been more stressed, feel lost, confused, having much to handle at the same time”*.

- Most lecturers lack content knowledge of the subjects that they teach.

- Lack of prescribed books and modules; also not available in the library.
- Not enough time to study as there are too many tasks given at the same time.
- Administration and Finance: Administrative problems take time to be solved. The campus relies heavily on answers from the main campus. Tuition fees are high and not all students get their loans on time. It is difficult to buy materials and copies are expensive.
- Administration is mixing up modules. Students are forced to follow unacceptable rules which prevents them from doing some modules.
- Lack of computers for students.
- Renovations disrupting lessons. One participant put it this way, “Renovations takes place while we are in lectures or in hostels but when we are in holiday they do nothing.”
- Lack of lecture halls and overcrowded classrooms.

There seemed to be a discrepancy between what examinations emphasised and what was in the course outline, as one participant put it, *“Being taught with the course outline from the main campus but they do not apply in the examinations. Receiving different notes from lecturers teaching the same modules.”*

Another student put his feelings into a question form: “How does the University evaluates a lecturer who can fail 95% of the students? Wanting examination scopes.”

The following are some of the problems faced by students:

- Lack of resources, prescribed books, library books.
- Lecturers lacking understanding of what they teach.
- Decisionmaking centralised at the main campus.
- Overcharged module fees.
- Administration mixing the modules, preventing them from doing some modules.
- Why is Basic Mathematics at UP? - Not seeing the necessity for Upper Primary.
- Different notes for the same topics at different campus, especially in Maths.
- Copies are too expensive.
- Too much work, no time to study. A lot of modules.
- Lack of classrooms, lecture halls to accommodate larger groups.

As stated before, the students were those who enrolled in the B Ed program from the former BETD program. We specifically asked them to participate in this study to be able to compare how it was previously at the college, and the effect the merger had had on them. Centralised decisionmaking and lack of infrastructure such as larger classrooms, photocopying etc. were also indicated by the students, as well as by the lecturers, as problem areas.

Rate of Satisfaction for Students:

Ratings	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
Personal Growth	2	0	15	40	75	132	4
Professional Growth	6	4	21	44	30	105	3.1

(1: least significant, 2: less significant, 3: Average, 4: more significant and 5: most significant)

Administrative and Auxiliary Staff

Eighteen (18) questionnaires were distributed to the administrative and auxiliary staff of which 10 were returned. Regarding the question what they liked most since joining UNAM, they mentioned the benefits, salary and allowances, as well as opportunities for staff development. These had also been stated by the lecturing staff.

From responses to the question regarding positive experiences since joining UNAM, the following aspects were noted:

- Opportunities for further study.
- Material support.
- Gaining skills and knowledge.
- Access to information and communication.

One compared working for UNAM and the college, and stated that *“some things are done faster and are more efficiently done; for example, staff appointments are much faster in 3 to 4 weeks whilst in the government it can take up to 6 months or more for that”*. One stated that it is a learning experience and communication and support had been good and conducive.

When asked about the problems faced, some stated that communication was not good and that activities were totally disorganised; there was no proper induction done so no-one knew what to do; poor mentorship, communication and induction. There was much

red tape and bureaucracy, a poor work ethic among staff and poor administrative skills amongst supervisors. The fact is that satellite campuses are far from the main campus and need more support. If there was a query and the person was not in the office on the main campus, things had to wait. Suppliers were not paid on time, documents sent to Windhoek kept disappearing into thin air, staff were underutilised and not knowing what they had to do, due to a lack of training. The main campus had poor communication with satellite campuses as emails and phone calls were rarely answered.

Responses to the question regarding what could be done to improve the situation were as follows:

- More and proper training was needed to be able to access and log into the system to effect changes or to be able to make changes/ amendments.
- There should be continued collaboration to enhance performance.
- Communication should be improved as some staff members had negative attitudes towards others.
- Staying motivated at work could be the key to improving job performance and team work.
- There should be upgrading through opportunities.
- There should be mentorship.
- Red tape needs to be removed.
- More resources are needed.
- Empowerment of staff members through training in ITS (Integrated Tertiary Software) which is the system used by UNAM.
- A specific person in the main campus should be allocated to be responsible to assist people at the satellite campuses. Supervisors are stationed in Windhoek, main campus. The supervisor at the satellite campus is a line manager and not an operational one. UNAM needs to empower these people so that they can make decisions.
- There are restriction to the ITS system; not everything can be accessed; this hampers the work.
- A specific or senior person could probably be allocated to each satellite campus rather than a fake department.

There should be a senior person in Finance who would be responsible for HP (Hifikepunye Pohamba Campus). Everybody at HP will know who it is and will go to this person. There

is a need for more training in new technologies. Whatever is done for the main campus should also be done at the satellite campuses so all will know what to do.

Some departments, like Finance, need to be decentralised. This will release the tension that exists between the main campus and the satellite campuses. The PVC (Pro-Vice Chancellor) Admin and Finance previously vowed to decentralise the Finance Department from April 2013. Till now this has not happened.

As can be seen from the responses, administrative staff at satellite campuses (ex-colleges of education) had to rely completely on central offices for getting or entering information. The lack of training was also stated by the lecturers. It also corresponds with students' responses about administrative staff mixing up modules and not being able to solve their problems locally, as everything had to be resolved by the central office. Communication problems were also indicated by the lecturers and administrative staff as an area that needed to be improved upon.

Rate of Satisfaction for Administrative and Auxiliary staff:

Ratings	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average
PersonalGrowth	0	0	15	16	5	36	3.6
Professional Growth	2	2	12	12	0	28	2.8

(1: least significant, 2: less significant, 3: Average, 4: more significant and 5: most significant)

Management/Leadership

Seven questionnaires were distributed to those who were in management positions. Many had no time to complete them and finally we could only get 3 back.

To the question of how joining UNAM has impacted on their roles and responsibilities, the answers were:

- It has made the person to be more focused on academic issues such as research
- Another answered that it brought confusion and lots of work, both in teaching and administration
- One stated that he learned a lot procedurally compared with how the college was working.

On the positive side, it was stated that UNAM had empowered the managers/leaders to act and make some decisions and if they were wrong, they could rectifies the decisions

later. It created many opportunities for growth in research and service to community, the learning of management skills in dealing with people, learning to manage the department, the need to follow strict procedures, the need to have strict due dates.

Regarding the question of challenges facing them, the following was stated:

- to bring into balance teaching, research and administrative work;
- too much stress related to administrative work to the extent of not having time for teaching or doing own reading, study and research;
- no proper induction for managers especially in 2011: we were really operating from nowhere, there was no basis set that this was how things had to be done; in most cases we had to go the college way;
- some of the procedures at UNAM being fine, but others not, especially when it comes to ordering teaching and learning materials. That was quite difficult for us. In the past, in the college time, we had our money here, so if I wanted to buy something for my students I could go to management and complete a requisition, then a cheque would be signed and I could buy my things. But with financial issues, at UNAM it is a long process and it still is and it takes a long process, it delays lecturers and it puts lecturers in a difficult position. We are told the figures but someone is controlling them; this is a disadvantage. It delays our work.

To the question of how UNAM has empowered the management, on the positive side it was stated that *“UNAM has given us opportunities whether we are in administrative or academic. We can upgrade our qualifications, skills. Maybe because we are new to the system and are not clear in our minds and comfortable, especially to go for research, community service. Honestly there are many opportunities that can make us grow. We just need that courage to be confident to ourselves; we are not comfortable to do some of the above-mentioned. But opportunities are there.”*

“There is not much empowerment, there is too much bureaucracy and most decisions are done at the main campus. In general, the academic issues are managed here, but the campus is still run from Windhoek. One stated: “the only thing we are not empowered is the financial issues. It is like someone is doing everything for us. Someone in the main campus. We don’t have posts, chief buyers, we need those. We need Finance to decentralize to handle our own issues here.”

“When it comes to big events, “everything is done for us. Graduation even the organizing is in Windhoek. The four campuses can do their own affairs. We talk about decentralization, but it is not. Why not empower the administrative and auxiliary staff at the satellite campuses? These are done by the same people in the main campus and our staff is told

that they don't know how to do things. They are not empowered. The administrative staff is not fully utilized. The load is heavy at certain times of the year, not throughout. Only at the beginning and at the end and at the times of examinations. They can be directed to do other staff. But now we send everything to Windhoek, so they do not have enough to do. When it comes to registration of students, it is fine, we can register them, handle the forms here. However, if the students want to change, cancel a course, etc. our assistant faculty officer cannot have access to do that. That doesn't show we are empowered. UNAM needs to look into this seriously, the true sense of the word 'decentralize'. If lecturers want to link to their site, they cannot, and the faculty officer can't either".

Some of the suggestions of how to improve the situation are: *"the management of the campus to have full responsibility in terms of academics and general administration, we do not need to consult the main campus about each and everything as long as we do so within the policies and regulations of the university."* Another suggestion was to be released from other responsibilities. Also training for managers, *"we need to undergo training at least once a year, end of the year. A retreat is happening at the end of the year, but it is more of a reflection on what went right/wrong and what the way forward is. We need to receive training on managerial issues, how to run the institution, the departments, we all need: deputy deans, HOD's, coordinators, to refresh our skills that will help. The other thing that can be done is rotation. Just to go for a week or ¾ days to Katima or Windhoek to see how our counterparts are doing on the other side, we can learn from one another and it will also build up a good relationship among managers unlike when we only see each other in workshops. We can become brothers/sisters at least one family and not separate, Khomosal, Windhoek, Rundu, HP, Katima. We can learn our institutions much better."*

"Give more responsibilities to the administrative/auxiliary staff. There must be checks and balances, do the auditing, but you are empowering them. Things like ordering or filling the requisition, the administrative staff can do this, not lecturers who are busy with teaching and students. It is a lot of work. Coordinators are complaining, even at the main campus. They have to leave their offices and have to go to the finances asking where is my requisition, to find out about their requisitions."

As can be seen from the comments, centralisation is an aspect indicated by lecturers, administrative staff, students and management as causing problems for handling issues at the campus and delaying delivery of service. Lack of training has also been stated by lecturers, administrative and management as contributing to the problems faced.

Discussion

Looking at all the data given by the different stakeholders, we could see the following:

1. Positive aspects since joining UNAM

- a) Overall satisfaction: all the stakeholders seem to share the view that joining UNAM has been a good learning experience, though not without the usual feelings of uncertainty, confusion and anxiety that accompany any merger.
- b) Opportunities for growth: many stakeholders are of the opinion that joining UNAM has provided them with ample opportunities for growth in the fields of study, research and service to the community. The learning opportunities are immense; it is just that things should be more organised so that they can pursue their studies and fully contribute to the university.

2. On the negative side these are areas that need to be improved; this has been stated by all of the stakeholders:

- a) Communication is an area indicated by all the stakeholders as an issue that needs to be improved upon. Satellite campuses feel that there must be a designated person to address the issues pertaining to HP Campus. It is frustrating when staff has to contact a department without any identified person to deal with the real issues. In the same vein, bureaucracy and red tape have been stated by stakeholders to be a debilitating factor. When no particular person is assigned to deal with the problems of a satellite campus, then 'everyone' and 'someone' is responsible. Papers go missing, and phone calls are not returned, making the work incomplete or impossible to complete.
- b) Access: stakeholders seem to state that they have access to assist students and staff to some extent, but they are not capable of accessing the ITS when they really need to change or cancel a Module. Lecturers also indicate that they are unable to access the system when they need to, for example, at the time of entering CASS (Continuous Assessment) marks, exam marks, etc. The security of the system against fraudulent practices is appreciated but so is the necessity to access the info on time.
- c) Amalgamation of duties and responsibilities: there seems to be no clear-cut boundary for what the lecturers, coordinators, management and administrative/auxiliary staff are supposed to do when it comes to some pertinent issues. Purchasing of the necessary items is one of these. Lecturers, coordinators, management have to get quotations, while the administrative

staff seems not to be given this responsibility, despite having more time to do it.

- d) Decentralisation of finance: despite promises to do so, this has not yet taken place, with the result that everyone who needs anything must do it himself/herself. This is time consuming and ineffective for lecturers, coordinators and management. There is a need to have buyers or purchasers at the satellite campuses so that they can do this under one umbrella and not everyone doing a small bit, resulting in numerous visits, phone calls to the dealers, etc. Time and money will be saved if this is looked into.
- e) Incapacitating some of the staff: there are capable administrative and auxiliary staff members who are underutilised. Instead, many of their duties and responsibilities have been given to the lecturers or teaching staff who are to focus on teaching, research and community work. This has brought frustration to many who feel bored with the very little that they have to do.
- f) Proxy management: The administrative and auxiliary staff members are responsible to the departments at the main campus, making it difficult for the management at the HP Campus to have directed supervisory and distribution of work where necessary. This is a recipe for sloth, lethargy, frustration and feelings of inadequacy. If the management is empowered to allocate duties and responsibilities as deemed fit, this would not happen and there would be more contentment on the part of the administrative and auxiliary staff.
- g) Training: all the stakeholders were of the opinion that training should be done on a regular basis so that they could be up to date with the latest in their fields. Staff dealing with the ITS system need to be trained at the main campus, even working there for a week or two before being stationed at the satellite campus. All should be trained in the latest technologies and no one should have to learn to do something over the phone, which is costly.

According to Skodvin (1999, p. 77), "If an educational system is to adapt to quickly changing demands from students, industry and society, it appears that educational authorities must either delegate these and corresponding decisions to the institutions themselves, or offer alternative procedures which make it possible to instigate academic changes at a faster pace." Distance between the main institution and the 'merged one' has been indicated as an area that causes many problems. This has been validated through the discourse by the stakeholders and the need for actions on the above.

Recommendations

In order to have successful mergers, some of the areas that need to be addressed are to have goals and objectives which are shared by the majority of staff through discussions and open communication. “The skepticism and insecurity of participants were reduced by including them in the decision-making process where both advantages and disadvantages were discussed, and there was extensive use of informal face-to-face communications” (Skodvin, 1999, p.76). Another area that seems to be validated by literature in mergers is that it will take about four to five years after the mergers for the administration to be efficient, fully functional and operational (Skodvin, 1999).

Based on these preliminary results, there are some recommendations.

Lecturers’ recommendations:

- Decentralisation of offices at all the campuses. Allowing lecturers who teach the same course to come together on a regular basis to plan and set up assessment tasks beforehand to avoid delays.
- Infrastructural: the internet and the different soft ware, the printers, photocopy machines that are usually down when the internet is down should be up to standard.

Managements’ recommendations:

- Empower the administrative/auxiliary staff to do more than just being busy at the beginning and end of the semesters and practically having nothing to do in-between.
- Give more responsibilities, for example, requisitions done by the lecturers should be done by the administrative staff. The lecturers and coordinators are too busy with academic activities to continue with requisitions too.
- Decentralise and redistribute the work: do not overload the management with so many tasks that can be done easily and efficiently by the administrative/auxiliary staff.
- Decentralise the Finance department to assist in the above by creating posts for chief buyers and relieve the lecturers/coordinators with getting 3 quotations, and all the bureaucratic channels.
- Give more authority to the management of the satellite campus to decide and perhaps allocate different responsibilities to the personnel and not to rely on the distant management in the main campus for the different administrative and auxiliary assignment. This will bring a balance instead of being a meaningless

distance-monitoring of affairs. This will avoid boredom to some and overwork to others. Managing by distance does not work and alienate some very motivated and capable personnel.

Auxiliary/Administrative staff recommendations:

- Give more and regular training to deal with the different issues.
- Train staff at the main campus for about 2/3 weeks before they actually take up their posts at the satellite campuses. Let them learn on the task. Some are underutilized; that leads to boredom: Give them more responsibilities and duties to do.
- Assign a specific person in Finance, administration, etc. to each of the satellite campuses so that things are done accurately. As is, there is no transparency and the satellite campuses have to wait till “someone” gets back to them. While, if a specific person is assigned, they will know who and there will be more transparency.
- Give ITS training or other new technological training to the satellite campus staff as well. All should be trained on this important system and not only the staff at the main campus.
- Decentralise finance: the system is too frustrating as is.

Researchers’ recommendations:

- Mergers need regular impact studies such as this to keep up to date with the needs and feelings of the staff.
- The Strategic Management Plan should be based on the needs studied regularly for optimum quality.
- All the stakeholders should be consulted and their needs should be taken into consideration.

Conclusion

Through this study we could identify not only the positive aspects of the merger, but could get first-hand information on the challenges faced by the different stakeholders. Our aim in identifying these areas was to bring it to the attention of the university community in order for them to have these addressed and rectified. To our knowledge, no study or survey of this kind has been done to establish the problematic issues and to address these comprehensively at our campus. Our venture into this research should be seen as an endeavor to try and solve issues for the betterment of the merger and the success of it.

The impact of the merger on the staff and students has been enormous in terms of personal and professional changes. We have been able to capture some of its early impact, and as years pass, we should be able to continue studying it. It would be interesting to find out after a few years, what are the perceptions of the participants. But the stakeholders in charge of the merger should also use this study and conduct further research on this topic to address the shortcomings of the system.

Hence, further research to record, and reflect on, new experiences on a continuous basis will always provide an essential viewpoint to any future venture by being aware of the many dimensions of a merger, including the physical or infrastructural ones. It needs regular and timely evaluation to address the needs of the different sectors that make it whole and efficient. Future planning should address the shortcomings of all the stakeholders, as identified by the lecturers, students, auxiliary/administrative and management staff.

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