

Politics in staff representation and democracy in higher education institutions in Uganda: extricating the actors' intentions

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Abstract

The article examines the influence of representative politics on democracy in higher education institutions (HEIs). The research attempted to answer three main questions: (1) What are the intentions of the aspirants in their struggle to represent their constituents? (2) Why do electorates decide to or not to vote for the competing aspirants? (3) How has representative politics promoted democracy in the institutions? The study employed an ethnographic research. A qualitative approach was supported by a longitudinal design to collect data in two HEIs - Makerere University and Uganda Management Institute - from November 2009 to April 2015. Results revealed that aspirants had both personal and constituent-related desires as pushing factors for them to stand for elective positions. Ideological pursuits, academic achievements, personal gains and friendship with aspirants were also identified as motivating factors. The study was guided by the Theory of Rational Choice and Bandura's Model of reasoned action. The article concludes that representative politics in HEIs did not enhance ideals of accountability and responsiveness as desired in democratic institutions; rather, it served the personal interests of representatives.

Key words: *Aspirants, Constituents, Democracy, Election, Higher Education, Representation*

Introduction

The history of employee representation or participation dates back the 18th century and it arose due to the need for employees having recognized that individuals need a common voice to bargain employment matters (Wilkinson et al, 2004), to get involved in the decision-making process of institutions. To achieve representation, elections have been the usual mechanism by which democracy operates since the 17th century (Vieira, Brito and Runciman, 2008). Elections have been for long used to fill offices in the legislature, the executive and judiciary (Mathieson & Pendleton, 2007). At the turn of the 19th century this process was adopted by other organizations, including higher education institutions. This development has led to different organs having representatives of different categories of staff to ease communication between employers and employees on a regular basis. Hence there was a need for organizations to embrace workers' unions at the beginning of the last century, to facilitate communication between employers and employees (Butler, 2005; Lupia, McCubbins and Popkin, 2000). Given its importance, employee representation has become

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a mandatory requirement (Bewley, 2006) in higher education institutions which requires effective leadership if these unions or associations are to gainfully benefit staff and the institutions. Bewley (2006) finds strong justification for employee representation which is founded on a strong formal system to elect staff representatives. For example, representation makes employees' views known to management; and strengthens both management's and employees' understanding of workplace issues and other matters affecting the institution. Hence, formal systems would help create an atmosphere of mutual trust between employees and management and therefore improve workplace relations (Dickens and Hall, 2006). It is important to note that employee representation is not uniform across organizations, categories of staff and across countries. Wood (2008) explains how employee representation takes many forms that range from full workers' union recognition to ad hoc groups.

Disappointingly, the existing literature did not provide satisfactory explanations of the intentions of both the aspirants as well as the voters, although research on staff representation has basically concentrated on the usefulness of employee representation, processes of electing staff representatives, roles of staff representatives, larger-scale political representation, and the decisions to vote for those representatives (Dundon and Wilkinson, 2006). This research adopted an ethnographic paradigm to attempt to unravel hidden intentions of the actors which in their view was extremely critical. Although Ackers et al (2006) found employee representation to be an important and a mandatory requirement in most organizations to bridge the gap between the management and staff, many did not pay special attention to its management and organization.

Nonetheless, although this article examines the role of staff representation in enhancing democracy in higher institutions of learning, it at the same time explores the politics that surround election processes by extricating the actors' intentions in these processes. The article discusses the dynamics involved in staff representation processes that have become more despicable than anticipated (Ladd & Lenz, 2011). This research was motivated by the circus, drama and acting during processes to elect staff representatives in these institutions. Explaining these dynamics, Dickens and Hall (2006) found these campaigns marred with revulsion, hatred and trickery, and adds that even the presumed respectable aspirants sometimes make physical attacks (Dickens and Hall, 2006). Brader (2006) found that these aspirants many times make empty promises and too much exaggeration, present unrealistic manifestos and raise false expectations among their constituents. He found that, actually, some even change their positions "over-night" depending on who they are trying to convince. How then is representation perceived by those claiming to represent others? Such conflicting intentions by potential representatives stimulated this question. In a similar revelation, researchers (e.g. Marchington, 2005; Marsden, 2007; Mathieson, Pendleton, 2007) found hiccups during presidential and parliamentary campaigns which, in the authors view, was logical given the numerous benefits that go along with such positions. Nonetheless, competition for members to represent their colleagues in HEIs remained unexplainable. An attempt was made by Dundon et al, (2006) to conceptualize the dynamics of information and consultations which could be closest to the concerns of the current authors. However, they were mainly concerned with how information is often transmitted from the representatives to the constituents and from the constituents to the management. Further, research on representation in higher education has oftentimes been either inconclusive, or has not addressed the motivations of the actors – both the aspirants and the voters - which this research attempted to address.

There are different categories of associations in these institutions, and formal systems to elect employee representatives in Uganda. There are different categories of employees who are either represented through their unions, associations or not represented at all. At the same time, there are different organs in HEIs in Uganda that require representation of staff. These formal structures guide the election process to enable representatives participate in various decision-making processes, information and consultation which are part of a general framework of employee participation. The

current primacy of trade unions and staff associations as the channels for employee representation is outlined in the Uganda's Constitution (1995). The Constitution, under Article 29(1)(e) and Article 40(1), defines and stipulates this mandate as a specific workers' right. Other enabling statutes exist under that major source of laws, to promote and regulate the enjoyment of those basic workers' and trade union rights. Hence, at Makerere there is Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA), Makerere University Non-Academic Staff Association (MUNASA) and a Workers' Union for Group Employees. At Uganda Management Institute, there is Uganda Management Institute Academic Staff Association (UMIASA) and Uganda Management Institute Non-Academic Staff (UMINASA). The specific bodies include: Council, the supreme executive body; Senate, the supreme academic body; and other related committees dealing with different functions of these institutions. In the two institutions, all these organs and associations are led by different categories of elected staff and are guided by institutional structures; and the elective positions have term limits that are not uniform.

Methodology

This research was qualitative in nature, and took an ethnographic approach in order to understudy the election trends of representation in higher education institutions in Uganda. This approach required the researchers to "participate as observers". This method is highly recommended by Bryman (2004), because it enables the researcher to fully engage with the participants. This method was able to build trust since the researchers were colleagues, not neutral third parties. Further, the approach permitted full interaction with participants, although they knew our role. An ethnographic approach was supplemented by a longitudinal design. Given that elections occur every after two to five years, the researchers wanted to follow up the reasons advanced by the electorates and what they had to say when their terms expired.

Methods of investigation consisted of in-depth interviews, review of relevant documents and participant observation. In-depth interviews were intended to ascertain the motives that influence aspirants to want to lead others; and for those to be led, to establish factors that influence employees' voting choices in both institutions. Non-random sampling that included purposive and convenience were employed. Council and Senate minutes were reviewed to establish the trend, and Human Resource manuals were examined for policy guidelines. Thematic and content analyses were adopted to enable the researchers draw logical conclusions on the issue of representation. Literature search was also used to corroborate empirical findings. A total of 19 aspirants (former and current), three executives in these institutions and 67 electorates were interviewed.

Conceptual Orientation

Employee representation has been defined differently by different scholars (Bewley, 2006). However, the meaning is often determined by the context. Nevertheless, there is a consensus among various scholars (e.g. Butler, 2005; Dundon et al, 2005; Inman, 2006) who affirm that employee representation is the right of employees to seek a union or an association or individual to represent them for the purpose of negotiating with management on such issues as wages, hours, benefits and working conditions. In the workplace, workers may be represented by a trade union or other representatives; on disciplinary and grievance matters or other consultative bodies; for the collective bargaining of terms and conditions; for making workforce agreements and sometimes on joint working groups. Employee representatives may be chosen by their fellow employees or appointed by management (Gollan and Wilkinson, 2007a). Although their roles vary, most receive information from and give information to management; pass on information more widely within the workforce; and are consulted by management over certain workplace matters.

Equally, representative politics has been described by Gonzales and Tyler (2008) and Harder and Krosnick (2008) as self-serving and manipulative behaviour of individuals and groups to promote

their self-interests at the expense of others, and organizational goals. They argue that representative politics manifests through struggle for resources, personal conflicts, competition for power, leadership and tactical influence executed by individuals and groups to attain power, build personal stature, control access to information, not revealing real intents and building coalitions.

Remarkably, although the phenomenon of representation and its process dates way back the 17th century, the motives and intentions of the contestants for leadership positions have not been exhaustively explored (Bewley, 2006). Oddly, research has found that even some of contestants in the race may not be clear about their own intentions (Kersley et al, 2006), which has led to various, yet inconclusive attrempts (Ackers et al, 2006). Elections may fill offices in the legislature, sometimes in the executive, judiciary, or institutions. The universal use of elections as a tool for selecting representatives in modern democracies is actually in contrast with the practice in many organizations (Fishbein & Cappella, 2006). Consequently, electing representatives involves identifying and selecting aspirants who will influence policy or institutional decisions (Krueger & Acevedo, 2008). Ackers, et al (2006) further explain how the election process involves competition for the votes of the constituents, through implied and expressed campaigns, using numerous strategies (call them tricks). It also involves supporters for a campaign to be either formally organized or loosely affiliated, and frequently utilize campaigns – showing face, from office to office, door to door or individual to individual (Kersley et al, 2006) soliciting for votes, in search of 'democracy'. Yet, scholars (e.g. Gerrig& Zimbardo, 2010; and Ladd & Lenz, 2011) have found that although democracy requires commonality, accountability and effective representation, the process has become more rhetoric than reality – a challenge that has crippled "the-would-be" democratic processes. So, if elections are considered 'a democratic-development process then a lot is desired.

Theoretical explanations and Literature Review

This research was guided by The Theory of Rational Choice by Downs (1957), The Theory of Planned Behavior and Bandura's concept of self-efficacy. According to Brogan (2001), Downs' (1957), rational choice has been an influential paradigm in electoral decision making. Rational choice theory presupposes that individuals make their decisions. The theory of planned behavior holds that only specific attitudes toward the behavior in question can be expected to predict that behavior. Consequently, Fishbein and Cappella (2006) explain that intention is the cognitive representation of a person's readiness to perform a given task, and it is considered to be the immediate antecedent of behaviour. This intention is determined by three things: their attitude toward the specific behaviour, their subjective norms and their perceived behavioral control. Consequently, to predict someone's intentions, knowing these beliefs can be as important as knowing the person's attitudes (Dundon and Wilkinson, 2006). Hence, a general rule, is the more favourable the attitude and the subjective norm, the greater the perceived control, and the stronger the person's intention to perform the task in question. A high correlation of attitudes and subjective norms to behavioral intention, and subsequently tobehaviour, has been confirmed in studies of Sniehotta (2009), Vieira, Brito and Runciman (2008) and Williamson (2002). The concept was proposed by Ajzen (2002a) to improve on the predictive power of the theory of reasoned action by including perceived behavioural control. The theory contends that attitude toward a task, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control - together shape an individual's intentions. According to the theory of reasoned action, if people evaluate the suggested behavior as positive (attitude), and if they think their significant others want them to perform the behavior (subjective norm), this results in a higher intention (motivations) and they are more likely to do so. Finally, the theory of evidential decision making developed by Krueger and Acevedo (2008) was adopted to explain issues of intentions, because it recognizes that no individual voter has a detectable causal effect on the outcome of a large-scale election. They argue that voters' belief in a difference in the outcome is negligible, and truly has no significant impact.

There are numerous reasons why people vote the way they do. Many may go to the polls and select the most familiar-sounding names (Sniehotta, 2009; Vieira, Brito & Runciman, 2008), while others could have undertaken significant research to arrive at their decisions. First, the early representation studies focused on the link between a constituency and its representative (Cox, 2003). If representation leads to democracy, then it is important to note that democracy is not a single event, but an ongoing process. Consequently, once elected, people judge their representatives not just by what they said in the campaign, but by how they actually govern and by the decisions they take that affect their representatives' lives (Sniehotta, 2009). Sometimes the gap between campaign rhetoric and the reality of leadership can be large. This research examined the intentions of the contestants, what they undertook to offer to their constituents at the time of campaigns and what they actually offered after the expiry of their terms of office. Quite possibly people may be influenced without being aware of it. According to Lau (2007) incumbents may play a role in the way one votes or does not vote. For example, are they voting what they believe, the way their idols vote or are they voting against the way their friends vote? Consequently, Lau (2007) elucidates how electorates are most likely to be influenced by two things; (i) to maintain the status quo and; (2) change to restore justice in the institution.

On the other hand, Longley (2008) found that most decisions were influenced by grapevine information when it comes to making voting decisions. Since it would be expected that each voter would indeed vote the issues that would be most important to them, then does the voter vote in his or her own self-interest or what is best for the whole. It would be nice, as suggested by Ajzen (2002a), to think that voters see the big picture and vote for what might be in the best interest of the institution rather than vote a single issue. Wilkinson et al (2004) found that some actually vote for the person who is more popular or attractive. Yet, according Longley (2008), campaigns often seek to instil positive emotions such as enthusiasm and hopefulness about their candidate among party bases to improve turnout and political activism, while seeking to raise fear and anxiety about the challenger. Vieira et al (2008) found that enthusiasm tends to reinforce preferences, whereas fear and anxiety tend to interrupt behavioral patterns and leads individuals to look for new sources of information. This is the reason why during campaigns contestants and voters spend so much time attempting to win electorates' votes and creating fear and anxiety among the challengers.

According to Gonzales and Tyler (2008) and Harder and Krosnick (2008), there are two prevalent justifications that include expressive voting (voting feels good and it contributes to one's reputation as a responsible citizen) and civic-duty voting (to vote is to pay the price for living in a democracy). These are two probable reasons why anyone would want to vote and would consider it worth their time and effort to do so. Conversely, Krueger and Acevedo (2008) opine that people believe it may be in their own best interest to vote, because if they do not vote, they feel they do not have the right to voice any disapproval of the outcomes of elections at all.

Stein, Leighley and Owens (2005) examined countless reasons why people do or do not vote. Reasons may range from the inconvenience of voting at a designated time and place, to their being required to register well in advance of election day. They explain how for some people the expected benefit from casting their vote was far greater than the inconvenience of election hassle. According to Cox (2003) and Holbrook et al (2001), people who are especially trusting of others are more likely to vote. Perhaps distrustful people think of the entire system as corrupt, which might sap their motivation to participate. But low levels of interpersonal trust might also sometimes inspire higher turnout if lack of trust motivates people to take action to minimize the damage they might fear others might inflict (Harder and Krosnick, 2008). One of the findings in this study was that one reason a person is more likely to vote is the difference between the candidates. If they have a definite preference for one candidate over the other, the more likely they will be to see their vote as having value.

Results and Discussion

Representation in higher education institutions (HEIs) is an important part of -- and plays an important role in – society, much like any other organization. It becomes more critical in this kind of organization given the diverse categories of the actors. This is because effective representation is believed to create stability (Gollan & Wilkinson, 2007), trust and confidence. These institutions are societies unto themselves, but they are also part of the larger society. For example, if they remained only societies unto themselves, they would be locked up in the proverbial ivory tower and their future would most likely be considerably shorter than their past. Conversely, HEIs without some distance from society at large would run a serious risk of losing their capacity to reason in terms of principle, to take a long-term view somewhat detached from the immediate issues of the day and to identify sustainable solutions to the most serious and long-term challenges facing our society (Blyton & Turnbull, 2004). The sets of issues in which higher education institutions have a role to play, as institutions and through their individual members, include: the academic community of scholars and students; institutional decision-making; institutional life in a wider sense, including the study process; and higher education institutions as multicultural societies (Gollan & Wilkinson, 2007). Therefore, democracy through such acceptable processes should be part of higher education institutions.

Although representation has been found in all forms of organization (Pitkin, 1967), this research found that HEIs have their peculiar demands given their diversified categories of staff and different organs that require different representation. For example, University Councils or Institute Councils have representatives for academic staff, administrative staff, people with disabilities and students' representatives. Senate in these institutions also follows the same trend. Hence, such dynamics in HEIs required answers for questions such as: Do these processes for electing staff representatives necessarily lead to democracy? Why do staff offer to represent others? What does it mean to be represented? What informs our decisions to vote or not to vote? Are our expectations always achieved through those representations? Are such promises legally binding? These are heavy-laden questions that the authors set out to resolve.

This study took on two higher education institutions to (1) establish dynamics of staff representation and (2) to explore intentions of the actors in the representation process (contestants, electorates and institutional leaders).

Our analysis of the composition of the respondents by gender which indicated that there were more males (70-78%) than females (19-21%) that participated in this study.

This finding showed that males were more active in representation politics than females. The election of employee representatives has been a dramatic process and has often led to uncertainty and mistrust among voters according to Wilkinson et al (2004). Whereas previous studies (Mathieson & Pendleton, 2007: Marsden, 2007) found mistrust and uncertainty, the current study found this politics breeding hatred, intrigue and divisions among staff. Indeed, as pointed out by Hall (2005), while much scholarship has sought to explain this dynamism in the voting process of employee representation, the intentions of voters and aspirants have received comparatively little attention (Meyers, 2008).

Conversely, employers have been found to prefer softer counterparts to negotiate with, and for this matter, Butler (2005) explains how the governing bodies and heads of institutions alike sometimes feel nervous and uncomfortable working with 'radical' employees. "…some staff struggle to bring down institutions so they can discredit one's leadership…" Notably, the current study found that even heads of these institutions had preferences among the candidates and some had gone out of their way to campaign for them directly or indirectly. The same finding was made by, for example, Andreadis and Chadjipadelis 2005; Annesi, 2005; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Parker and

Isbell, 2010; where leaders in many organizations had involved themselves in staff campaigns and even gone ahead to fund those campaigns. Bewley (2006) defended the involvement and interest of top management or central executive as a measure to maintain harmony and coherence in these institutions. They need representatives from whom they can seek advice and counsel on employment related policies and other issues. Although various researchers (e.g. Butler, 2005; Blyton & Turnbull, 2004; and Price, 2002) found challenges of the processes and outcomes of elections, Bewley (2006) found considerable tension among policy makers during election period that was difficult to explain. This study found a similar challenge. The question remains, "What is it that causes this tension among policy makers, if the representatives are only conveyors of information? True, employers and employees find this representation critical since employment-related issues cannot be negotiated directly with employees, either individually or in any other forums.

Although HEIs, like other organizations, have defended their actions, arguing that shared governance was critical for their activities, it did not guarantee harmony or agreement with employee representatives. Therefore, Cox, Marchington and Suter (2007) in support of this action argued that the involvement of the top management in the election processes of these representatives was a way of guarding against saboteurs. They found that leaders felt more comfortable working with those they could trust and those who could embrace change for the good of the institution. Vieira, Brito and Runciman (2008) and Williamson (2002) found that competition for such positions had left institutions in a state of quagmire, where the actors' intentions had remained a mystery since, management unswervingly signalled their preference; the staff aggressively fronted their candidates; and the contestants employed all the trickery to win elections (Kersley et al, 2006).

Answers to the question of what inspires those aspirants to contest results were conflicting as different aspirants advanced different reasons for their drive to lead their constituents, and there was no single model that could explain aspirants' intentions. For example, on why people offer to represent their colleagues, these were some of the answers:

I just want to prove my worth… I don't just like the candidate who is standing, but I do not have any specific reason why I want to stand other than challenging my opponent. However, along the way I lost interest because I realized that my opponent was more popular.

This explains the numerous fights, squabbles, backstabbing and vengeance during the process of campaigns. This finding was affirmed by Annesi (2005) who found that sometimes intentions change at various moments as needs change, which confirms our earlier finding that most aspirants do not think a lot about their intentions before acting. Consequently, the lack of knowing the actual intention could mark the difference between success and failure in any situation. One respondent had this to say:

"I was a target in this institution. My head of department had issues with me and this soured my relationship with the executive. My only savior was my being on the most important organ because, I will be able to prove my worth during my four years."

Another one said:

"It is all about profile building…even in church, these things happen. There are potential opportunities when you interact with important people. But, I am aware of the implications because my opponent pleaded with me to step down and I refused."

This finding has been confirmed by Kegan and Lahey (2010) who found hidden commitments among those aspirants which have as much power as our conscious and "nobler" aspirations. They found that those with hidden commitment were more likely to meet their constituents' expectations; such people do not usually make appealing manifestos. In another revelation, another aspirant had this to say:

"*...if society was stable and our leaders not corrupt, I would not bother ….but I want to make a difference, I want to represent my people, I want to talk for the voiceles...*"

One could clearly read through the lines, that there wasn't any truth in such an argument because no explanation was advanced on what kind of corruption was in that institution and how it would be fought. The majority of the respondents (electorates) advanced their reasons for voting as "remaining relevant" or "wanting to fit in". Others argued that to participate was a way of demonstrating their rights as employees whose voices should be heard through such representation. Others consistently advanced patriotism as being the driving factor for their actions. This finding was supported by the findings of Sniehotta (2009). He found that voters often advanced different motives for their actions, and the two prevalent justifications include expressive voting (i.e., voting feels good and it contributes to one's reputation as a responsible citizen) and civic-duty voting (i.e., to vote is to pay the price for living in a democratic environment.

Opp (2001) boldly argues that there is a widespread cognitive illusion among ordinary people that participation in an election makes a difference. In other words, citizens more or less assume that they can influence the outcome of an election. Additionally, on why electorates make their electoral decisions, Ajzen (2002), Winkielman and Knutson (2007), and Sniehotta (2009) found some indication of personal choice; an attempt to resist dictatorial leadership; and an attempt to deny or block vindictive aspirants. However, there was no common agreement among scholars on the actual intention. This research found no conclusive explanation either, since different voters provided different reasons for voting their candidates. Like Sniehotta (2009), this study found that some electorates would do anything to block those closest to the management – explaining that this category is vulnerable and easy to manipulate or be compromised. Like Ajzen and Fishbein (2005), the authors doubt whether this kind of spirit would lead us to democracy.

Nevertheless, rather than rejecting the notion of rational choice outright, the authors seem to agree with Downs' (1957) argument on how the lack of involvement in the political process can actually be perceived as rational in terms of the belief that the voter has made a conscious decision that he or she has enough information to make a voting, or non-voting, decision.

Although institutions should be beyond voting basing on ethnicity, some electorates considered ethnicity to be very important when making a decision to vote or not to vote. They argued that, to them, representation means just that. This finding was supported by Gomez and Wilson's (2001) finding that, essentially, there is far greater heterogeneity in electoral behaviour than the literature suggests. For example, electorates said that they were generally happier in identifying with people they share culture with and believed they could always have these representatives as fallback positions when employment hardships arose.

Apparently, although tokens or gifts were not perceived to be some of the drivers for decisions to vote or not to vote, some respondents' decisions were driven by some handouts. Indeed, the study found that some aspirants move around distributing material handouts and simple gifts. Others have been promised promotions, better incentives, jobs for relatives and, most shockingly, some aspirants promised to deal with the electorate's "enemies". However, this was found to be more common in the category of non-academic staff who actually believed that those representatives could make a difference in people's lives.

Additionally, there were situations of opting out completely. For example, some senior members of staff perceived the process of electing their leaders as useless.

Consequently, the findings and the aforementioned discussion from previous studies, this study found a weak significant relationship between representative politics and democracy in these institutions. In support of this study, Crockett and Wallendorf (2004), also found that the normative political ideologies sometimes provide explanations for behavior in areas as diverse as decision to vote, nonetheless, this may not necessarily bring about democracy. Hence, The theory of planned behavior could provide some explanation about only specific attitudes toward the behavior

in question can be expected to predict that behavior which in the long run will be accepted by the majority.

Conclusions

Several variables have been proposed that may moderate emotions, intentions of actors and actual voting; and, different explanations of several specific emotions have had an impact on votingbehaviour. Nevertheless, people's decisions to offer themselves to represent their colleagues was to a large extent personal as reasons ranged from building individual profiles; interacting with those who matter; fighting enemies, and many other selfish reasons. Yet, electorates' decisions to vote or not to had been affected by internal processing systems of political information and external influences such as smart manifestos, ethnicity, friendship, reputation and ability to represent employees' views. Such external influences altered the quality of making truly democratic decisions – logical or otherwise. Electorates who were externally influenced when making choices, would spend more time seeking information on the less preferred candidate to use that information against that candidate more, instead of using such information to make informed decisions. Hate, vindication and vengeance in representative politics has led to bad choices that often torment electorates for a period of time. Preference for one candidate over the other enabled electorates to make decisions, and often perceived their vote as having value. This is a move away from scenarios whereby people were voting for contestants who were giving them handouts, to voting for a contender who showed that he/she had the welfare of people at heart. Although, to some extent, handouts in the form of money, small gifts and other forms of tokens may have yielded results for other categories of staff, itthey did not work for the teaching staff in higher education institutions.

Other influences for voters' decisions were close associates, relatives or friends to vote a preferred candidate. Yet, candidates with similar attributes had little influence with the way voters made their choices. Nonetheless, usage of negative campaigning caused many voters to become disenchanted with the whole system, while with others it spurred them to the polls. Similarly, those who attempted several times to no success, and those who believed that their representatives betrayed them, did not find any reason to continue participating. Consequently, representative politics in higher education institutions has not enhanced ideals of accountability and responsiveness as desired in democratic institutions, but rather, served personal interests of some individuals, because the flow of information was not reciprocal. In other words, intentions of the actors were found to be as diverse as the people who participate in representative politics themselves.

Recommendations

Actors in these institutions should identify issues that need to be addressed and then find out whether the aspirants will be able to address them (and how) or not. Manifestos of the contestants should be clear and in accordance to the needs of the people. Voters should demand for proper representation by making their views known to management; help strengthen both management's and employees' understanding of workplace issues and other matters affecting the institution; help create an atmosphere of mutual trust between employees and management and hence improve workplace relations. Basically, we should remember that we elect our representatives to perform a service for us. So we should be very clear on what we expect from our staff representatives. If it is a policy issue that affects a whole group, the problem should be discussed with the representative. The representative should then take the matter up at a higher level. In the case of an individual problem, the representatives are expected to take the matter up directly with the other party concerned and mediate to reach a solution before it is too late and the problem degenerates irrevocably. Whether or not you received support from a section or individuals of the institution, the representative must represent all. All the differences during the election process should left behind in order to achieve true democracy. Since this is a purely staff affair, employees should manage their own affairs, unless otherwise – that is democracy.

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