



The Role of Administrators in Efficient Management of the University System in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the role of university administrators in the efficient management of universities. In this study, the concept of efficiency was examined as relationship between input and output. Literature was reviewed for expert opinion relating to the study. This paper focused on the variables or factors that are put in place for the smooth administration of the university system. It was observed that the administrator in performing his administrative duties encountered some challenges ranging from inadequate funding, social vices, economic challenges, poor remuneration of personnel, rising enrollment of students, and politics coupled with the rising tertiary enrollment amidst declining budget demands. This paper acknowledged positive impact of the administrator in the goal attainment of the university organization. The work in addition, recommended that the administrator should coordinate all the units or departments in the university, this is to ensure that both human and material resources are directed towards the effective realization of organization goals. Furthermore, with proper planning and application of the principles of total management, the Vice Chancellor with his/her team of Administrators may improve efficient performance of the system. The paper also suggested the view to strengthen the administrative systems through quality assurance mechanisms. Finally, effectiveness can be enhanced through sharing in a competitive environment and accountability. This study is definitely an additional value for efficient and effective management of the university system. It may also stand as a base for other management and efficiency based researches.

Keywords: Role, Efficiency, Management, Administrators.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is widely accepted as a major instrument for promoting socio-economic, political and cultural development in Nigeria (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009). Universities educate future leaders and develop the high-level technical capacities that underpin economic growth and development (Odekunle, 2001). Ibukun (1997) posited that the main purpose and relevance of university education in Nigeria is the provision of much needed manpower to accelerate the socio-economic development of the nation. Higher education is regarded as an instrument of social change and economic development.

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), higher education is expected to:

- Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training.
- Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society.
- Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments.
- Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.
- Promote and encourage scholarship and community service.
- Forge and cement national unity.
- Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

In the light of the above, the university organization could be seen as one of the agents that can shape the destiny of man and the society. Universities are organizations in which two or more persons work together in a coordinated manner to attain common goals (Norlin, 2009). This definition is useful, because it specifies several important features of universities: it is made up of people; they are goal-oriented in nature; they attain their goals through some form of coordinated effort; and they interact with their external environment. Sanyal (1994) described universities as 'professional bureaucracies, having an academic decentralised department or faculty structure' in what had been described as a 'loosely coupled system'. The university administration is decentralised to smaller academic units such as colleges, schools, faculties and departments or units with varying degrees of autonomy. Furthermore, the administrative unit of a university can be seen as the separate administrative structure consisting of that branch of the university's employees responsible for the maintenance and supervision of the institution and separate from the faculty or academics. However, academic heads of departments are also administrators in a manner of speaking because the day-to-day direction and welfare of their particular units have been devolved to them, either by statute or regulation. Hence, deans and heads of departments are administrators and are bound by administrative rules, regulations and procedures.

Crulich and Urwick (1939) in Nwafor (1998) postulate that, "administration has to do with getting things done with the accomplishment of the defined objectives. The science of administration is thus, the system of knowledge whereby people may understand relationship, produce results and influence outcomes in any situation where they are organized at work together for a common purpose". University administration thus encompasses every other service that facilitates academic pursuits in an organized structure. University administration, whether vertically or horizontally therefore includes these different units and their inter-relationships to

produce maximum desired output: the onus of achieving these lies on the Administrator's efficient management of the resources of the university system.

As a corollary, Nwafor (1998) agreeably postulates that "An administrator is an individual who directs the affairs of an organization in such a way as to achieve its primary goals and objectives, and who get things done quickly and efficiently". In other words, the university administrator is concerned with the efficient management of the resources of the University for Maximum Output. On this premise the role of the administrator defines him or her as one who manages the budgets, personnel and policy, coordinates and ensures the flow of communication, plans and executes developmental programmes, provides infrastructures and facilities for teaching and learning, ensures interaction and relationship with the university's external and internal environment. These identified characteristics must be done rightly, quickly and efficiently.

Efficiency presupposes the act of doing things the right way, solving problems, preserving resources, saving cost and competency with regards to appropriate use of a body of knowledge and skill within a peculiar system (Ukeje et.al 1992). Babalola and Ayeni (2009) further stressed that efficiency is to produce maximum output within a given quality of input. Hence an organization is said to be efficient when desired benefits or goals are attained rightly, in line with policies, within a space of time, minimizing wastages in the overall university system. The concept of efficiency has been on the agenda of universities across the globe for quite some time. Hoy and Miskel (2008) contends that "Both educators and the public, for instance, acknowledge that different schools achieve different levels of success, even with similar student populations." Suffice it to say that different universities achieve different levels of success but this depends on how they perceive and apply the term efficiency.

It is then obvious that the broad aims of producing high-level manpower for national development for which the university organization is established are to be achieved notwithstanding the multi-faceted problem bedeviling the governance of the university system and other challenges. Efficient management of the university system therefore lies on the shoulders of administrators of universities.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of Efficiency

In economic terms, the concept of efficiency can also be defined as the relationship between input and output. Efficiency in an organisation is increased by a gain in units of output per unit of input. This can occur by holding output constant and decreasing input or by deriving greater production from the same level of input. In relation to education, then, we may say that various educational outcomes can result from a variety of different combinations of inputs such as teachers, buildings, class size, curriculum, etc. Wikipedia, (2017), an online dictionary, describes efficiency as "the ability to avoid wasting materials, energy, efforts, money, and time in doing something or in producing a desired result. In a more general sense, it is the ability to do things well, successfully, and without waste. In more mathematical or scientific terms, it is a measure of the extent to which input is well used for an intended task or function (output). It often specifically comprises the capability of a specific application of effort to produce a specific outcome with a minimum amount or quantity of waste, expense, or unnecessary effort." Ajayi, in Babalola and Ayeni (2009) defines efficiency as "minimization of inputs to achieve a given level

of output or maximization of output with a given level of inputs”. Efficiency, of course, refers to very different inputs and outputs in different fields and industries such as education.

Babalola and Ayeni (2009) thus see efficiency as applied to education as the “relationship between the outputs of the education system and the inputs used in producing such outputs”. Oluchukwu (1999) in Babalola and Ayeni (2009), refers to efficiency of the university system as, “the relationship between inputs, (students, teachers and materials), into the school system and outputs; (graduated students, drop-out) from the school system” In other words, if an administrator of the university in performing his or her roles was able to produce maximum output with minimum possible input, he or she is an efficient manager of the university system. Babalola and Ayeni (2009) further emphasized that “it is necessary to make the best huge resources (human and material) devoted to education in order to achieve the pre-determined objectives of education”. This calls for administrator’s efficiency in the use of such resources. Inefficient use of resources in education will usually result in wastage, low productivity and low quality. In essence efficiency in management of the university system revolves around the administrator’s role to maximize limited resources within the system to produce optimum output of educational goals and the schools other objectives or satisfying internal and external efficiency of education.

Efficiency in terms of university administration is measured by the presence of some basic indicators. Thomas (1971), Yoloye (1976), Nwagwu (1983), Fadipe (2000) in Ukeje, Okorie, Nwagara (1992) all agree and identified the following as indicators:

- Quality and dedication of teachers
- Quality and quantity of facilities and infrastructure
- Quality of instruction
- Quality of evaluation procedures, inspectors and supervisors
- Quality and number of students involved
- Quality of motivation
- Quality of administration and management.

This suggests that the degree of quality of identified indicators will determine the degree of the quality of output of the educational system. If the quality of output is higher, then the more efficient the educational system will be, vice versa. Suffice it to say that, inadequate funding, lack or shortage of facilities, infrastructure, qualified teachers, instructional materials, unstable educational policies and lack of effective evaluation and monitoring will militate against the administrator’s efficiency in managing the university system of any given university of higher education.

The Concept of Roles

Roles are acting out of socially defined categories e.g., mother, manager, teacher, and administrator (Wikipedia, 2107). Each role is a set of rights, duties, expectations, norms and behaviors that a person has to face and fulfill. It is observed that people behave in a predictable way, and that an individual’s behavior is context specific, based on social position and other factors. Social behaviour in organisations can be perceived thus:

- The division of labour in society takes the form of the interaction among heterogeneous specialized positions that we call roles;

- Social roles included "appropriate" and "permitted" forms of behavior, guided by social norms, which are commonly known and hence determine expectations;
- Roles are occupied by individuals, who are called "actors";
- When individuals approve of a social role (i.e., they consider the role "legitimate" and "constructive"), they will incur costs to conform to role norms, and will also incur costs to punish those who violate role norms;
- Changed conditions can render a social role outdated or illegitimate, in which case social pressures are likely to lead to role change;
- The anticipation of rewards and punishments, as well as the satisfaction of behaving in a prosocial way, account for why agents conform to role requirements.

Ukeje, Okorie and Nwagbara, (1992) agreeing to this postulation opines that when a person is given an appointment within an organization, he or she assumes an identity based on that position appointed into. The position could be teacher, manager, vice chancellor etc. They opined that the identified positions carry with them responsibilities, rights and privileges (often found in job titles, descriptions, work prescriptions and manuals) irrespective of the individual who occupies it. Howbeit, these positions or identities exist in complementary relation with other identities within that organization. In other words, an administrator's identities are defined in relation to those of lecturers and students. These identities held for an individual's relational behavior when he or she is operating in a particular position is known as role. Suffice it to state that an administrator is represented by his duties and obligations, his perception of his duties and the expectation of others in the organization determines how he behaves which either gives legitimacy or disregard to his position. According to Ukeje, Okorie and Nwagbara, (1992) these expectations of behavior held by both on-lookers and the administrator are known as roles. Thus, role theory provides valuable means of viewing the administrator as he functions, and for predicting behavior in organizations. In this regard, the university vice chancellor has roles (manifest and latent) to play which are defined; which has perceptions and expectations.

Consequently, the role of administrators in universities is primarily concerned with how to efficiently manage resources allocated to them. Administrators manage budgets, personnel and policy, shape institutional priorities and practices, coordinate and communicate. Administration requires constant teamwork and communication. In universities, the need for quality in the operation of the system must be given priority and as a result, an administrator need to always possess skills to focus on the job and to ensure quality standards in job performance. The administrator's function for quality assurance is crucial to the efficient management of higher education institutions.

Implementation of the Goals of the University

As earlier mentioned in this paper, higher education is regarded as an instrument of social change and economic development. According to the National Policy on Education (2004), higher education is expected to:

- Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training.
- Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society.

- Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments.
- Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.
- Promote and encourage scholarship and community service.
- Forge and cement national unity.
- Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The identified goals of higher education can be realized through the proper coordination of activities internally and externally. To this end, universities are organizations in which two or more persons work together in a coordinated manner to attain common goals (Norlin, 2009). External efficiency refers to the success of the educational system in meeting the cultural, social and economic objectives outlined or assigned by the society. Internal efficiency refers to the success of the educational system and its individual institutions in meeting specific operational targets within the resources made available to it. Efficiency in educational institutions defines the level and extent of meeting the goal of educational system resulting from economic and social policy. Efficiency requires not only versatility and relevance but also prudent and visionary resource management within the university system which includes:

Planning: This is an essential aspect of good management. It requires the ability of the administrator to look ahead and be able to formulate policies and select appropriate objectives and procedures to be followed within the administrative system. To ensure quality administrative management, administrators should take active roles in planning and managing activities. An administrator should have a detailed step by step plan on the growth and development of the school to increase classroom, laboratory and residence structures.

Organising: This is the ability of the administrator to create structural work. It involves focusing attention on the structure and process of allocating tasks to achieve a predetermined goals and objectives. However, organizing and allocation of tasks can only take place where there is available fund for mobilization and vis-à-vis the efficient management of the available fund for maximum output thereby minimizing waste and misappropriation of such fund.

Evaluation: This involves the administrator's ability to review performance and outcomes of activities in line with the identified aims and objectives to ensure that, set down goals and objectives are achieved through quality control system. Ogunsaju (2001) asserts that, an administrator should possess specific skills to be efficient. A good communication skill is necessary because it is hoped to ensure the flow of information to the users of the information. He maintains that an administrator should be a good listener, an encourager, dissuader, reporter, watcher, judge, critic and a decision taker in order to achieve educational goals.

Provision of Infrastructure and Facilities

According to Nwafor, (1998), there are two vital areas of higher education administration namely:

- Providing and maintaining funds and facilities for educational progress and functionality (finance).
- Obtaining and developing staff personnel (human resources).

The availability of resources will enhance effective teaching and learning. In other words, efficient teaching and learning has implications for the University's allocation and use of resources. In particular, attention should be paid to provide research grants for staff and students, and to the provision of appropriate technical support. The university administrator must ensure the availability of appropriate learning support services, instructional materials, faculty buildings, offices and classrooms, including appropriate liaison with the Library and other central services, to make available appropriate resource materials. The vice chancellor should ensure appropriate structures and processes are in place in faculties and school to support the development of flexible learning initiatives such as improving funding of relevant research, and organization of seminars, conferences and workshops for updating knowledge. The administrator should be able to manage available physical resources and channel them to right direction for the attainment of university goals, Ekundayo in Babalola and Ayeni (2008).

Staffing

This requires the administrator's ability to search for the right people and to place them on the right job both in quality and quantity which would reflect their experience and capability for achieving objectives. Administrators should also provide and arrange administrative and technical support for staff to perform effectively.

Relationship with the Chancellor

The internal management of each university is represented by a simple organogram. The first is the Visitor who is usually the Head of State or the Head of Government that established it (The President in case of federal universities and the Governors in case of state universities). He usually comes to grace the convocation ceremonies where he uses the occasion to address the academic communities on matters of the moment (Adegbite, 2007). The second is the Chancellor, who is the titular head of the university, who by law, in relation to the university, takes precedence before all other members of the university and when he is present, presides at all meetings of the convocation held for conferring degrees. According to Nwafor, (1998), the Chancellor serves as Ambassador Extra-ordinary and Plenipotentiary on behalf of the university; an embodiment of the personality of the University. The Vice Chancellor as an astute administrator should relate well with the chancellor by keeping him or her fully briefed on the affairs of the university. This is vital as the Chancellor if well briefed continually will intervene in crisis or in communication with high government echelons to the benefit of the university. He must be communicated properly about the convocation programmes of the university

The Governing Council

At the apex of the management structure within each university is the Governing Council, headed by the Chairman (Pro-Chancellor) which is charged with the administrative functions in the areas of goal setting, policy formulation, staff development, general discipline, budget approval and liaison activities with the government. Nwafor, (1998) agrees with the aforementioned but argues that in reality, much of the powers are delegated to the Vice Chancellor and his management team. The council works through the committee system. According to Mgbekem (2004), the universities in Nigeria are run through committees which are either

responsible to the Council or the Senate headed by the Vice Chancellor, among these committees are:

- Finance and General Purpose committee.
- Development committee.
- Appointments and Promotion committee.
- Admissions committee.
- Academic Planning committee.
- Committee of Deans.
- Research Grants committee.
- Ceremonies committee, among others.

An efficient administrator will allow members of the senior staff to help achieve the goals of the university by appointing them to head some of these committees and report to him.

The administrator must ensure careful appointments to minimize internal conflicts. The council however exercises its general control and superintendence by its statutory meetings or meetings of its various committees.

Quality assurance

According to Harvey (1999) quality assurance is based on three main principles: control, accountability and improvement.

- Accountability usually requires meeting the preferences of stakeholders.
- Control means that the institution does not merely control the expenditure of resources but also shows how high quality is achievable with the existing resources.
- Improvement enables the institution to get necessary input, refine the process and raise the standards of output in order to meet the goals set. In this regard, quality is achieved when the expectations of stakeholders are met with available resources through the attainment of set standards.

Relationship with other Principal Staff

The other principal staff of the university includes: the registrar, bursar, deputy vice chancellor, deans, librarian, head of departments, etc. According to Elsie (2001), the success of higher education depends greatly on the role of its leadership. Middlehurst (1995) says that leadership is the domain of those in certain positions of power such as Vice-chancellors, deans, professors, heads of department and heads of functional as such as registry. Higher Education may be used to describe all the members of staff who occupy positions of responsibilities in these institutions. The problem of higher education can be viewed as allowing more staff to run the activities of higher education. The smooth running of higher education depends on division of labour, the sharing of knowledge or ideas as well as the integration of social roles. A single individual or group of men cannot possess the entire skills capabilities, creativity and ingenuity needed to ensure effective resource management infrastructure transformation as well as human technical and moral development.

Also, transformation programmes of the vice chancellor in the university system can be difficult and may yield mixed results. However, if they are implemented efficiently through thorough coordination, it is not uncommon for organisations to realise significant savings, which are often dependent on the maturity of the services being shared, the efficiency of processes and the type of organisational structures involved in the collaboration. Successful shared services leverage the scale of the enterprise, capitalise on skills and resources within, and enhance the quality of service and output. This process of transformation of a university requires commitment from senior staff of the university to deliver organisational change, and a key part of this leadership will involve engaging the workforce – particularly those responsible for managing the targeted functions at an early stage of the development process. This will help to identify potential issues that may arise during the transitional phases. As research on operational efficiency and shared services in different sectors has shown, successful implementation of such schemes requires:

- Leadership at a senior level, with suitable governance arrangements in place
- Clear, timely and tailored communications with all staff affected by the proposed changes
- Good information on the impacts and opportunities that changes will have on employees, staff development and established career paths
- Continuous improvement and a commitment to improving quality to be embedded within organisational culture
- A focus on delivering benefits and managing risk in a sustainable manner.

Managing student's discipline

To reduce the extent of volatile and militant students' unionism in campus, it is advisable that the Vice Chancellor gets the students involved in decision-making particularly on issues that borders on their welfare. Mgbeke (2007) suggested the following as means of curbing students' crises:

- University administrator should avoid being highhanded with students.
- Vice-chancellors should make themselves accessible to students.
- University administrator should establish frequent fora for negotiation, dialoguing and exchanging of ideas between students and university administrators.

Motivation

Motivating staff is important for achieving objectives. Administrators should be motivators in ensuring the quality of work output. They should know how to boost the morale of their workers in order to obtain maximum efficiency from them. Administrators can motivate staff in many ways. This includes constant payment of salaries and other emoluments needed for their welfare. Following the trends of things in Nigeria, not much has happened with regard to staff motivation. The recent strike action by university lecturers in Nigeria is an indication. Incentives are only given during seasonal occasions or to those administrators who are somewhat powerful.

Suggestions

The following recommendations are made, it is hoped to sustain the efficient administration of the university.

- The gross under-funding of the educational system in the country has been rendering the university system incapacitated. According to Odia and Omofonmwan (2007), UNESCO recommended 26% of the total budget of a nation to be allocated to education but the Longe Commission of 1991 observed that the percentage of budgetary allocation to education has never exceeded 10%. Governments should therefore allocate more funds to the universities so that they can be more effective in their day-to-day operations. The universities led by an efficient Vice Chancellor should also seek alternative sources of revenue generation to argument what the government allocates to them. Apart from the release of fund, there is the dire need for an effective monitoring of the management of fund presently being allocated to the sector, as efforts should be intensified to improve on what is currently being allocated to the system. As a means of ensuring effective management of fund, Mgbekem (2007) suggested that reliable accounting system should be established to guarantee accountability, honesty and transparency.
- University education might need a total overhauling and restructuring, this reform is required to improve the performance of the system. Ajayi and Ayodele (2002) posited that a reform in university programme is highly necessary and long-overdue. Better training for university students should be vigorously pursued. The curriculum needs to be reformed in content and in methodology to give room for the spirit of inquiry, discovery and experimentation. Nwadiani in Ochuba (2001) observed that the 60:40 Science: Humanities placement policy has not been implemented resulting in overproduction of humanities graduates while some areas of critical importance have been neglected. It has therefore become necessary to redesign the university education to become purely practical oriented for skill acquisition. Ibukun (1997) suggested that there is the need to make plans projections on the nation's manpower needs in a bid to integrate this into university programmes.
- As a means of ensuring efficient management of fund, reliable accounting system should be established to guarantee accountability, honesty and transparency. Apart from the release of fund, there is the dire need for an effective monitoring of the management of fund allocated to the university, as efforts should be intensified to improve on what is currently being allocated to the system.
- Administrators should initiate serious expansion of physical facilities and equipment to meet the increasing student population. Moreover, there is the need to take serious look at the maintenance culture, and quality assurance as these will go a long way to reduce the rate of decay of the existing facilities and ensure the quality of new structures.
- In order to attract best brains to the university system, the personal emoluments of university staff may have to be revisited.
- That the entire management and administration of the university should be left in the hands of professionals and experts in the field without political favouritism.

CONCLUSION

The Administrator of the university system makes a positive difference and impact on the entire system of input and output. The administrator is saddled with responsibilities such as setting direction by envisioning clear, shared, and understandable courses of action and goals. Efficient Management roles to facilitate organizational goals include planning, adequate welfare of personnel, articulating a vision, generating high performance, and ensuring communication flow, within a harsh environment, without adequate funding, corruption and other socio-economic

worries. The paper further revealed that efficient management actions are needed to help make the transformation which include offering intellectual stimulation, giving individualized support, and supplying models of best practices and beliefs, redesigning the university organization by making it work to ensure that a wide range of conditions and incentives support teaching and learning, providing facilities and infrastructures for teaching and learning. Administrators must act to advance organizational change, strengthening university goals, policies and objectives, and building corroborative processes. Furthermore, the role of Administrators in the efficient management of the university system includes policy developments and practices, methods and complex accountability approaches to effectiveness and systemic educational reforms. This study is definitely an additional value for efficient and effective management of the university system. It may also stand as a base for other management and efficiency based researches.

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