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THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS IN A MULTI-CAMPUS POLYTECHNIC SYSTEM

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Abstract
The present study focuses on the role of academic administrators in a multicampus polytechnic system. This was motivated by the numerous problems facing many institutions that run multicampus system, especially in underdeveloped and developing nations (such as Nigeria). These problems rage from difficulties in effective communication between campuses, poor students' acclimation, poor management of information technology infrastructure, unrealistic harmonization policies across the campuses and problems in transportation management. These issues have continuously discouraged maximum utilization of labour, for optimum output, in most educational institutions concerned. The central management would usually be observed giving attentions to only the main campus, allowing the satellite campuses to suffer undue neglect. This attitude of the central administration will not only subject the life of the satellite campuses towards an unwarranted state of helplessness, but will also diminish job satisfaction amongst the staff in the daughter campuses. It was, therefore, important to identify the standing peculiarities of multicampuses (especially in polytechnic systems), with the view of suggesting possible remedies to the challenges facing the system. However, it was identified that the managers of a multicampus institution, including Academic Administrators, also share in the gains and losses of the institution, as much as the owners of the institution. As a result, they are duty-bound to make all needed efforts to keep the Polytechnic in the track of progress, while expecting the gigantic strides from the government, vis-à-vis real owners of the system.

Keyword: Role, Academic Administrator, Multicampus, Polytechnic

INTRODUCTION

Academic institutions are educational institutions that are dedicated to education and research, which grant academic degrees/certificates/diplomas and/or the likes (as applicable) to the certified applicants/students (Alimo-Metcalfe. and Alban-Metcalfe, 2015). The quest for extended knowledge in new discoveries necessitated an expanded demand for advance trainings and acquaintances of varying, but special skills at higher levels. And as applicable to other firms/organizations, these services of Academic Institutions are manned and administered by the collaborative efforts of Academic Administrators. As the demand for advanced knowledge continue to grow very rapidly in the changing world, the need for the expansion of academic institutions become more pertinent, in order to meet the growing applications for academic skills. This phenomena trails through infrastructural, facility, equipment and human capital expansion of the existing institutions, to Multicampus expansions, which creates room for better accommodation of the key factors and encourages grassroot development. The law establishing most Polytechnics accommodates this in good light, with the hopes of cultivating the surrounding goodies for the benefits of the people.

In spite of the expectant befits of multicampus system of running academic institutions, there are a quantum of challenges that the Managers/Administrators of the institutions must braze up to, in order keep the institution afloat in the path of progress. The system must be fully charred with this situation, because administrative team has a huge role to play in this regard.

1.1 ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION AND MULTICAMPUS SYSTEM

Academic Administration (from Wikipedia) is the act of controlling and supervising of academic activities in the academic units of an institution. These involve the relevant administrative duties, such as monitoring of activities of subordinate staff and students, reviewing of course syllabus, monitoring of examinations and oversight functions on all academic duties. An Academic Administrator is, therefore, a person or an individual who holds a tenured or probationary academic appointment, which is usually excluded from the bargaining unit for the duration of the administrative term. The appointment of an academic administrator is usually academic in nature: it is nontransferable to nonacademic personnel by mere virtue of being assigned an academic evaluation duty. Academic Administrators perform administrative duties that typically support the academic mission of the institution, whether in partial or full terms. They are saddled with the duties of development and coordination of academic and students' programs in the institution; they plan and maintain students' records; they provide students' services, and monitor the efficiency levels of the staff under them; they, also, have extended services, like ensuring the welfare of the subordinates, including counseling and social wellbeing (Okoroma, 2000).

On the other hand, Multicampus implies a situation of having more than one campus (Okah, 2019; Rosalind, 2022)). This can apply to institutions, programs, healthcare systems and the likes. Multicampus Institutions have their definite peculiarities. Incidentally, Academic Administrators are at the centre of these peculiarities. The owners of Polytechnics have, as usual, a number of advantages in mind during the initiation stage of the institution as a multicampus one, which include creation of wider opportunities/chances of work and skill acquisition within the reach of the local people. But from a different perspective, there seem to have been very little (or no) will to always rationalize the resources between the campuses. Members of the local campuses, in this situation, are commonly found to be discouraged and demoralized in the quest to attend the targeted efficiency. This is the stage where the academic administrators are mostly required to appropriately synergize to generate the desired output.

1.2 PECULIARITIES OF MULTICAMPUS SYSTEM

Multicampus Educational system, as applied in most Polytechnics, provides a complexity of challenges that are both pedagogical and logistical in nature (Adigun,1995; Covanni, 2023). Logistic issues, in scheduling activities across the campuses, transportation and travel time for staff and students, are usually common feelings observed. Working at the satellite campuses is also usually found to be less attractive than at the main campus. The polytechnic, as a matter of fact, should be challenged by the features of multicampus institutions (such as growth in size, increase in complexity, more international in scope, feasibly impactful in economic welfare of the location areas, and so on), but instead, it is a different case all together with most institutions. The reason for this is not farfetched, but lies within the circle. Some go up to the extent of abandoning their long-term structure, and leave for lower one. This would, in turn, assuaged the values of the multicampus system of the institution to a less-interesting and humiliating state. This is, thus, the point where the Administrators are

encouraged to braze up to the challenges that are staring at us, and descend our skills and expertise on these challenges, with the hope of a resounding outcome.

2.3 POSSIBLE REMEDIES TO THE CHALLENGES OF MULTICAMPUS SYSTEM

There is no doubt that any problem resulting from a system is largely traceable to the initiators of the system, as much as the gains are bequitted to them. As the principal owners of public Polytechnics, the state government remains the principal benefactor to both the gains and losses of the Polytechnic's educational business, and all feasible modalities must be employed to draw its attention to the plight of the institution (Johnson, 2023). But since the managers of the institution (which include the Academic Administrators) also share in these gains and losses, they should be more concerned on the little roles they all need to play, to keep the Polytechnic in the track of progress, while waiting for the gigantic part from the Government. In the light of this, these weakening peculiarities commonly staring at us could be ameliorated by some notable attributes of everyone concerned, who are administrators and form important part of the leadership of the Polytechnic.

2.3.1 Good Interpersonal Relationship

As top-liners in the business of the Polytechnic, one needs to lead and motivate the team members at all times. It is important to guide and support the subordinates, as many of them rely on their principals as their sources of information in the Polytechnic; this chance can be usefully utilized to guide them and make them deliver in their duties appropriately.

2.3.2 Display of Passion for Polytechnic Mission and Vision

As an organized institution, the Polytechnic has a defined Mission and Vision that guide its objectives. One of these centers on the administration of the required skills/talents to the clients, who incidentally are the students they teach. They need to demonstrate passion forth the job they do, to the level that exceeds the expectation (or least the level that follows the expectation) of the Polytechnic values and goals.

2.3.3 Possession of High Morals and Ethics

Academic Administrators are in charge of several high-level responsibilities that are required to keep the Polytechnic functional. It is, therefore, essential for them to have high morals and ethics in handling these responsibilities. They are required to be virtuous in handling the Polytechnic budgets (under our dispositions), storing confidential files, assessing employees' personal information and others.

2.3.4 Value for Collaboration and Team-building

To be successful in their administrative duties, academic administrators need to work to maintain a collaborative environment that is inclusive for all parties under their control. They need to be open and willing to work with others, to develop solutions to the various challenges facing us, especially in our respective units. Good team-building and collaboration encourages team members to put in their best at all times.

2.3.5 Strive for High Quality Work

As academic administrators, there is need to be typical in completing any task we have. Administrators are usually in charge of several tasks throughout the workday, which can require the use of advanced organizational, time-management and multi-tasking abilities to complete all items within the respective deadlines. We are required to employ *'attention-to-details'* mechanism to ensure error-free assignments. Academic Administrators are usually smart, and always willing to accept challenging assignments, and they utilize *'teach-yourself'* style in completing complex tasks.

2.3.6 High Understanding in Hiring Strong Academic Candidates

Many a time, academic administrators are incorporated in the function of hiring staff for the institution, and this requires proper assessment and analysis of the candidates. In this case, they are required to be confident in the goals of the Polytechnic, to ensure that the expectant employees are those that would add value to the standard of the Polytechnic.

2.3.7 Active Listening to Others

As key players in the Polytechnic administration, academic administrators need to be in continuous interaction with others (superiors, subordinates and/or clients). We need to take time to listen and understand all queries brought to us, and work closely with every concerned party to find solutions to the problems, as well as benefits to all parties involved.

2.3.8 Adaptation to New Changes

The typical daily schedules and duties of academic administrators can often vary. One may need to multitask or patronize urgent assignments over the daily/routine or ongoing tasks. Administrators are required to be flexible, and readily willing to accept any change applicable to work environment and statutory functions.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Working as administrators, which allows the concerned to preside over activities of our respective units/departments, gives one the opportunity of using widened organizational skills to ensure that the institution runs smoothly. For all firms/organizations that do the business of Teaching and Learning, especially the ones that are battling with growth, it is important to realize that the Polytechnic System does not just need an optimum participation (but maximum delivery) of the presiding officers of the academic units.

As much as the efforts of the management team is appreciated, in creating liaison offices of important units of the satellite campuses (such as APACUD, Bursary, Students' Affairs, Library, ICT, and others), it is pertinent to remember that most of the institutions in Nigeria are presently toddling in terms of Multicampus Operations; many of the campuses are yet to stand firm, and as such requires continuous, but close watch. Routine (such as quarterly) visits and staggered unscheduled visits to the subordinate campuses by the Heads of Institutions (Rectors/Provosts) will encourage in strengthening the efficiency of work in the campuses, and give the staff and students of these campuses great sense of belonging. All directors of all important units of the Polytechnic (APACUD, Students' Affairs, ICT, Library, and so on) are also recommended to imbibe this same attribute of routine visits. Again recognizing the fact that the business of Academics is a 'sacred one', the administrators are requested

to employ high level of integrity in upholding the norms and values of their institutions. Administrators should be willing to reprimand/sanction any staff (under them) that flouts standard/official orders, encourage/support hardworking ones and sustain any good policy that aligns with the vision and mission of the Polytechnic system.

Generally, Everyone concerned with the polytechnic educational business are all required to cultivate the propensities of their diverse attributes, and be willing to synergize with team members, for the purpose of improving the state of our institutions, as people who are inspired by a common vision and guided by a common goal; this is the sure way to surmount the challenges facing the Multicampus Polytechnic System.

2.5 FURTHER READINGS

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