

Administrative Functions of Registry Staff of Government Tertiary Institutions: Through the Lens of An Administrator

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Abstract

This study examined the administrative functions of registry staff of government tertiary institutions. The purpose of this study was to highlight the nature of administration and analyse the administrative structure and roles of registry staff in tertiary institutions. The Administrative Theory was used in explaining the relevance of administrative principles in tertiary institutions. Existing literature reviewed revealed that the administrative structure of tertiary institution is highly bureaucratic and the registry staff are pivotal in all administrative operations and work under the direction, supervision and guidance of the registrar who is the most senior registry/administrative employee of the institution. This study concludes that registry staff are the lifeline and productive forces behind the survival of tertiary institutions as no policy, academic and learning can maintain itself without the input of the administrators in an academic environment, more importantly, is the fact that they make students experiences worthwhile. This study recommends that government should pay more attention to staff development and welfare.

Keywords: Administration, Administrative Functions, Government Tertiary Institutions, Registry Staff

INTRODUCTION

Tertiary institutions are organizations of higher learning and training that offers post-secondary degrees or diplomas (Igwe, 2010). Its traditional roles among others are teaching, learning, research and public service aimed at enabling students acquire degrees or diplomas. However, beyond the traditional roles, a plethora of factors such as having purpose-oriented registry staff defines tertiary institutions. The registry staff are employees that work in the registry arm of the institution under the overall supervision of the registrar who is the most senior administrative employee of the institution (Otto, 2021, Abubakar, 2010) and are in direct line of succession to the Registrar. Their function strictly is administrative and secretarial and most often provide counselor services to the number one clients of tertiary institutions-students. The registry staff are most often referred to as administrators/administrative employees and are undeniably the heartbeat of tertiary institutions (Obeki, 2016). These category of staff as administrative service providers to other staff, students, units, departments, faculties and every stakeholder to the institution are the first point of contact

both at entry or exit either as a staff, student, visitor or stakeholder. The registry staff are notable for all significant activities in the work life of all who passes through tertiary institutions. Government tertiary institution according to Madu, Oparanma, Nwaeke & Gabriel (2020) is a post-secondary education institution that is founded, funded and controlled by the state. Igwe (2010) revealed that in Nigeria, the structure and administration of tertiary institutions owned by government, private or religious organization follow or have the same or similar management structure, service delivery, governance, administration, category of employees and are regulated by established laws (statutes), policies, and articles of service. In Nigeria, tertiary institutions are highly structured and bureaucratic. Obeki (2016) submits that registry staff of tertiary institutions are skilled administrators who carry out administrative functions and other services outside teaching and research in tertiary institutions. Numerous studies attest that this category of employees are the powerhouse of all administrative operations and are wholly responsible for the achievement of the administrative goal of tertiary institutions (Otto, 2021, Obi, 2020, Obeki, 2016, Igwe, 2010).

However, despite the widespread testament of the importance of administrative employees in tertiary institutions, research findings reveals that some registry staff of tertiary institutions perform below expectations in executing their statutory roles for which they got employed. For example, Otamiri (2023) established that some administrators are incompetent and described them as threats to an institutions' ability to achieve its administrative goal and objectives. It is on this note that this study aims at reviewing the administrative functions of registry staff of government tertiary institutions with specific objectives to: (i) examine the nature of administration in government tertiary institutions (ii) analyse the administrative structure of government tertiary institutions in Nigeria and (iii) provide an understanding of the roles of registry staff of government tertiary institutions. This study consequently would contribute to the paucity of knowledge and literature on the roles of registry staff of government tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- (i) What is the nature of administration in government tertiary institutions?
- (ii) What is the administrative structure and roles of registry staff of government tertiary institutions?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework: The Administrative Theory

The administrative theory is among the classical management theories of the scientific management era propounded by Henri Fayol (1918) to provide guidance to administrators in the course of carrying out their duties at the workplace (Jaja and Zeb-Obipi, 2005). The theory is fundamentally concerned with corporate administration and highlights administrative procedures in organizations aimed at collaboration guided by established principles that administrators adheres to in order to accomplish set goal and objectives. The theory advocates that for

organizations to function effectively and succeed, administrative principles should be adhered to in the management of employees and the organization in general. The idea birthed a blue print of action commonly known as the Henri Fayol's 14 principles of management targeted at achieving administrative excellence in organizations. Jaja and Zeb-Obipi (2005) and Nwachukwu (2006), for instance submits that the administrative theory highlights the nature of administration and its influence on employees and as a result provides the theoretical basis for organizational administrative excellence. The administrative theory concisely captures administrative procedures in educational organizations such as tertiary institutions.

Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria is highly bureaucratic and its administrative procedures religiously adheres to Henri Fayol's 14 principles of Management. These administrative procedures according to Jaja and Zeb-Obipi (2005) and Obeki (2016) are: (i) division of labor: this call for tasks to be divided among employees based on qualifications, experience and output with the aim to increase efficiency and speed (ii) authority: this embraces the right to command and be obeyed implying that one cannot have authority without responsibility (iii) discipline: for organizations to function effectively, there must be respect to constituted authority which in turn ensures discipline amongst all stakeholders of the organization (iv) unity of command: to avoid conflicts, employees must receive instructions from only one superior at any given time (v) unity of direction: this principle highlights that there must be only one administrator and one plan to guide every operation with the same objective (vi) supremacy of organizational interests: the interests of employees must not take precedent over those of the organization (vii) remuneration and rewards: implies that employees should be fairly and equitably remunerated and rewarded as stated in the employment letter or agreement (viii) centralization of authority: for the best interest of the organization, decision making should not be over-centralized. Tertiary institutions use of the committee system and staff meetings as its decision making mechanism is highly commendable (ix) hierarchy: this practice encourages the order of rank/seniority from the highest to the lowest (x) orderliness: with regards to materials and employees, employees are encouraged to be orderly and be at their duty posts during work hours while materials should be kept and maintained in the right places for ease of retrieval. (xi) equality/equity: equal treatment should be applicable to all administrators, while maintaining justice, fairness and impartiality with all staff and stakeholders (xii) stability of employee tenure, this suggests that employees should be given reasonable time to adjust to work roles for satisfactory performance and appraisal (xiii) initiative: organizations should allow and encourage administrators to use their initiative to execute a given plan or task and also show appreciation. (xiv) Esprit De Corps (Team Spirit): encouraging and or upholding unity and teamwork between or among all employees builds peace, harmony and healthy work relationships within the organization. The relevance of administrative management theories to educational organizations lies in the guides it provides in the management of tertiary institutions and its employees and stake holders. One among many other guides it provides, is the committee system that is run by tertiary institutions that is set up to facilitate the organization of resources in order to attain its mission and objectives (Obasan, 2014).

The Nature of Administration in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

According to Obasan (2014), the word administration was coined from the latin word ‘administere’ which in translation means manage the concerns or affairs of people or organizations. Administration is perceived as an organized means of achieving desired goals through and with people and refers to the activities of a group of individuals cooperating to achieve a common goal. Administration is pervasive and cuts across every organization, both public and private. Its nature depends on the organizational setting or structure mostly tailored towards the desired goal and objectives. Nwachukwu (2006) defined administration as the principles, practices and rationalized techniques employed in achieving the aim and objectives of organizations. In the same vein, Ibodje (2000), opined that in workplaces, administration, takes place within the context of a planned system and requires supportive efforts of employees with specific functions or tasks assigned. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, the administrative process is bureaucratic, official communication is mostly top down, written and committee system based. The committee based system is set up to facilitate the coordination of resources in order for each unit of the institution to achieve its mission and objectives and is key in its governance and administration (Igwe, 2010). Employees who hold administrative positions at various levels in Nigerian tertiary institutions are responsible for directing, influencing, motivating, guiding, controlling and supervising the performance of their subordinates as they work together towards achieving predetermined goal (Jaja and Zeb-Obipi, 2005). Laws/statutes governing the establishment of every tertiary institution in Nigeria is strictly adhered to in its operations. A thorough knowledge of its vision, objectives and goal enables tertiary institution administrators to function optimally. A consensus among scholars is that, for administration to be meaningful, there must be a predetermined goal and achieving the set goal, requires the pulling together of all resources needed to achieve the predetermined goal (Agunwa, Owan & Ekpe, 2019, Ibodje, 2000, Nwachukwu, 2006). The resources needed in attaining the set goal are assets such as humans, materials, machinery, capital, technology, etc harnessed in a systematically cooperative manner geared towards organizational success. The most vital of these resources are the employees who play crucial role in all operations of the organization. Within the context of this study, the employees whose core task is administration are called registry / administrative staff. They form the administrative base of organizations and are saddled with administrative coordination, service delivery, records keeping etc (Oyeyinka, 2010).

The Administrative Structure of Government Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

According to Ladipo (2012), Igwe (2010) and Abubakar (2010) tertiary or higher institutions are organizations offering post-secondary degrees, certificates and diplomas whose traditional roles are teaching, research and community service. These Institutions are categorized into universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and other institutes and are established and owned by governments (federal or state), private individual(s) or religious organizations. Its establishment is for the purpose of research, teaching, learning, administration and public service whether public or private, their governance and management are similar and are regulated by established laws (statutes), policies, and articles of service. They have same or similar category or class of employees, its management or administration is stratified, committee system based, highly

structured and bureaucratic in its coordination of activities and service delivery. Odeki (2016) opined that the administrative structure of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is made up of the Visitor, Chancellor, Governing Council - headed by the Pro-Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor & Chairman of Senate, Principal Officers (Registrar, Bursar, Librarian, Deputy Vice-Chancellors).

The Registry/Administrative Staff of Nigerian Tertiary Institutions and their Functions

For the purpose of this study, the senior registry/administrative staff are the subjects of analysis under this exploratory study. The online-oxford learners dictionary (2025) defines registry as a place where official register or documents are kept for safety, retrieval and use. Collins online dictionary (2025) defined registry as a collection of every official record that are relevant to an individual, group or organization operations, activities or businesses are stored and used when needed. Ladipo (2012) referred the registry as a repository of tertiary institutions records, seals, articles of authority and other documents and records relating to the governance, administration and management of the institution are kept and administered. Borrowing knowledge from these definitions, it is safe to refer to registry staff as custodians of records, culture, traditions, artifacts and who administer official documents, and provide guidance to administrative policies, rules, regulations and procedures.

The registry is headed by the registrar who is the highest officer and functions as the chief administrative officer of tertiary institutions (Obeki, 2016). Registry staff includes the secretarial, clerical and core administrative officers and executive cadre administrators. According to Otto (2021) and Abubakar (2010), tertiary institution registry staff are employees who work in the registry division of the institution under the direction, supervision and guidance of the registrar who is the most senior registry/administrative employee of the institution. These category of staff are service providers who carry out clerical, secretarial and administrative functions. They are known as operators and facilitators of administrative functions and most often perform advisory and secretarial duties. They generate, receipt, emit, keep/store records, administer the records, traditions and documents that actualize the academic and administrative values of tertiary institutions. Registry staff are known to also interpret and enact the university policies, rules and regulations and guide other staff based on the enshrined administrative principles and procedures governing administrative practices under the institutions Act. Obeki (2016) and Ladipo (2012) asserts that the registry is headed by the registrar who is the Chief Administrative Officer of the institution and all other registry staff are field officers of the registrar that assist in the daily administrative functions of the institutions and are termed the productive forces behind all administrative activities no plans, academic and or student matters or affairs can hold without the participation and contribution of the administrators in an academic environment. More significantly, is the fact that the registry staff contribute positively to student's experiences and make great impact on the overall state of tertiary institutions through timely and quality service delivery. Obeki (2016) further noted that the registry staff are inter-mediators between students, heads of various departments, deans of faculties, other units/divisions and the institution in general, this implies that, they function as liaison officers between the tertiary institutions and their

stakeholders. They also ensure that the purpose of teaching, learning and research and community service upon which the institution was established are achieved and sustained. This they achieve by guiding and directing the students and other stakeholders on the right things to do that are beneficial to all parties of common interests.

According to Obeki (2016) and Otto (2021) registry or administrative staff of tertiary institutions are those who manage the registry and rise through the ranks of administrative levels. The core administrative levels are designated Administrative Assistants (AA), Administrative Officers (AO), Assistant Registrars (AR), Senior Assistant Registrars (AR), Principal Assistant Registrars (PAR), Deputy Registrars, Deputy Directors (AD), Directors (DR), Registrar (REG). These category of staff are ranked and ascend to the next level after putting in some years and gaining adequate experienced on the job. Each administrative level prepares one for the next level as tasks are executed and experience gained therefrom. The uniqueness of administration and its practices and procedures affords registry staff the opportunity to learn on the job, be mentored by superiors, gain experiences, make new friends due to redeployment form one unit/department/faculty to the other and eventually rise to the zenith of the registry cadre. Nevertheless, irrespective of the administrative designation or levels, all staff within this category perform same function at one point in time of their existence on each particular level or in the institution. Generally, all registry staff perform same function and as they advance in rank and experience, they assume leadership positions and perform advisory roles, in addition to general administrative functions.

Statutory Functions/Roles of Registry Staff of Tertiary Institutions

The functions/roles of the registry staff are numerous. Each unit, department or faculty has its administrative officers tailored towards achieving the immediate goal and objectives of such unit. The numerous functions to a large extent impact on the overall goal of tertiary institutions. However, a few of the statutory functions/roles of registry staff as listed by Ladipo (2012) and Obeki (2016):

(i) Records and Record Keeping: Administrators are custodians of all records of their institutions. They deal largely with papers (documents) referred to as records that are received, registered, grouped, filed and stored appropriately for ease of reference and retrieval when needed. Records such as statutes establishing the institutions, articles of administration, nominal rolls, official gazettes, minutes of meetings, employees' personal files, record of service, students' files, other stakeholders' documents etc. are documented and kept by the registry through its schedule officers - the administrative staff.

(ii) Official Correspondences and Handling: Administrators correspond or communicate officially in form of letters, memorandum, gazettes, circulars etc within and outside the university community. They produce, receive, respond to reports, memos and dispatch official correspondences and classify mails according to the degree of their importance and contents. They prepare documents for management meetings, process applications and requests of employees and students etc.

(iii) Secretarial and Committee Servicing: Tertiary institutions are administered through the committee system and administrators serve as secretaries of committees, Boards and panels by taking minutes of meetings, providing guidance, interpreting statutes and policies when needed.

(iii) Interpretation of Rules and Regulations: administrators are up to date with the statutes establishing the institution, articles of service, rules and regulations governing employees conditions of service, appointments and promotions, retirement, students examinations etc, when there are doubts or conflicts, administrators are turned to for the correct interpretation.

(iv) Handling of Students Matters: administrators work closely with students from the first day to the last stay of every student's stay on campus. They process students applications, requests, respond to their inquiries, offer appropriate advice and counseling to students on how to go about their accommodation, clearance, faculty, departmental course registration, examination and record matters etc.

The Registrar is the highest ranked registry position and is the chief administrative officer, secretary to council and other statutory organs of the institution who plans, organizes, directs, coordinates all administrative operations of the tertiary institutions with the assistance of the administrators positioned at every unit or division of the institution for administrative service delivery functions. The Registrar is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the daily administration of the institution, interprets, and executes all policies, decisions and statutes governing tertiary institutions (Obeki, 2016, Ladipo, 2012). The roles of the registry staff of the suggests that they are those who carry out general administrative services, ensures the smooth running, coordination of all administrative activities of the institution, and assist in making students experience worthwhile (Otto, 2021).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that tertiary institution registry staff or administrators are the lifeline and productive forces behind the survival of the system as no policy, academic and learning can maintain itself without the input of the administrators in an academic environment, more importantly, is the fact that they make students experiences worthwhile. Therefore, this study recommends that government should (i) pay more attention to staff development and welfare by adequately training and retraining registry staff and paying salaries commensurate with the efforts put on the job and in tune with the economic state of the nation (ii) honor and award registry employees for the hard work they put on the job while ensuring the administrative goal, vision and mission of tertiary institutions are achieved.

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