Review

University principal officers’ functionalism and goals achievement in Nigeria

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This paper explains all the human resources (officers) that contribute in one way or the other towards the goals achievement of universities in Nigeria. It identifies these officers as those with aims, goals and objectives with strong desire for achievement. Specifically, it enumerates those charged and saddled with the ultimate responsibility of ensuring the achievement of both the individual and collective objectives on a day-to-day basis continuously. Finally, the paper concludes that it is only through the individual and collaborative functionalism of the five university principal officers that the effective and efficient achievement of university educational goals could be enhanced in Nigeria, particularly and also all over the world, generally.

Key words: University principal officers, obligation, functionalism, goals achievement, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, universities are well known as educational institutions for the development, growth and transformation of individuals and nations. This recognition accorded to universities arises from the fact that university students acquire their certificates, diplomas and degrees from the universities. In Nigeria, particularly, for example, the least and acceptable qualification for a teacher in the educational system is the National Certificate in Education (NCE) which is only obtainable from higher or tertiary educational institutions of which the universities are at the apex, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). Moreover, all the inputs in the form of students and intakes are the outputs of the other levels of education below it namely the primary and subsequently the secondary levels of education. Again, it is only the doctorate degree holders, that is, only those with the Doctor of Philosophy Degrees who are officially and legitimately allowed to lecture in Nigeria universities (National Universities Commission, 2000).

However, in order to ensure that the goals of universities are achieved, there are officers appointed and entrusted with responsibilities. These officers are specifically mandated to carry out their scheduled duties and perform their legitimate functions in accordance with the laws and statutes that established the particular university (Federal Republic of Nigeria (2001), National Universities Commission (1999). For instance, the roles and functions of such officers like the visitor (that is, the Head of State for a Federal University), the prochancellor, the chancellor, the vice chancellor and many others are well specified in Decree number 84 – that established the federal university in Port Harcourt (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979). Also, in the case of the Rivers State University of Science and Technology in Port Harcourt, the functions of all other officers including the principal officers are well detailed by Rivers State Government (1982) and amplified by Okoroma (2000).

Who are the officers of a University?

Generally speaking, officers are human beings with aims, goals and objectives who desire to achieve them Orewa (2001), Ojo (2003), Okeke (2007) and Igwe (2015). Thus,
the officers in a university would include all the human beings found in a university. In this respect, they may include all the human resources of the university. According to Oni (1999) and Enock (2013), the human resources of the university include all the members of staff, all the various categories of students as well as all the different categories of visitors with diverse reasons and purposes for visitation at one time or the other. Collectively, it is when the goals or objectives of these officers are achieved that it could be reasonably said that university goals are achieved to a certain degree. However, there are those upon whose shoulders rest the daily responsibilities of ensuring university goals are achieved.

Who are the principal officers of a university?

The principal officers of a university are all those officers who are charged with the daily or day-to-day responsibilities of ensuring the effective and efficient achievement of university goals (National Universities Commission, 1999) and (Mgbekem, 2004). They are the gatekeepers of all the other officers within and outside the university (Ekpo, 2005). They are the official, legitimate, lawful, correct, right, acceptable, door, channel or opening through which all the other officers, insiders (within) and outsiders (without) the university see, hear, read, breath and know the university, physically and/or spiritually (visionary/visually). Thus, principal officers (→) are the only legitimate doors through which everybody, human or legal, all the officers inside (→) or all the officers outside (→) the university (U), who is a stakeholder or a potential/would-be stakeholder can obliges by obligation to pass through because it is very obligatory (Figure 1).

To oblige an obligation here implies that it is both according to legality, law, degree, rules, regulation, legislation, obedience, commandment, order, constitution, edict, etc and/or according to moral, conscience, respect, self discipline, feeling, nature, etc that you pass through to or from the university Meenyinikor (2012). It should be noted that it is through the functionism of these principal officers who are the official gateways to and from the university that all can be well in universities. By names or positions, the principal officers of the universities are the Vice Chancellor, the Registrar, the Bursar, the Librarian and the Director of Works according to Aliu (1997). The Director of Works in the head of the Works Department of a University. Although, there are those who enjoy the services of the Director of Works but have no imagination of the personality or functionality, it is an indisputable fact that all the physical structures and aesthetic layout and neatness/cleanliness of the university is the outcome of the daily activities of the Director of Works and the offices associated therewith.

Functions of university principal officers

**Vice Chancellor**

The Vice Chancellor is the highest principal officer in the university (Akpan, 2011). Although, the university is a non-trading organization (NTO) for business operation (Peretomode, 2008), the Vice Chancellor is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is saddled with the day-to-day administration or management of the entire university (Akindutire, 2004). He is responsible to the Chancellor through the Prochancellor. He is the spokesperson of the university to the Governing Council – the highest policymaking body of the university. All other principal officers of the university report to him. He/She chairs the two most important decision making bodies of the University, namely the senate (Academic matters) and the congregation (Administrative matters). His/her office has so many units including the internal audit, the security, the linkage, etc.

**The Registrar**

The Registrar is a principal officer of the university. He is both a member and secretary of the Governing Council (Nwafor, 1998). As an officer saddled with the responsibility of secretariship, he/she is in charge of administrative matters on a daily basis (Agabi and Uche, 2006). It is the general belief, and rightly too, that nobody officially enters, leaves or transacts any official business with the university without a letter from the Registrar.
legally. In this wise, the registrar is the custodian of all the important documents, records and proceedings of all statutory gatherings of the university irrespective of the location, campus, faculty, department, centre or unit. He or she heads all the administrative members of staff including the Deputy Registrars, Principal Assistant Registrars, Senior Assistant Registrars, Assistant Registrars, Administrative Officers, Administrative Clerks, Caretakers, Messengers, Cleaners, and many others (Ebi-Ekiyor, 2015).

**Bursar**

Bursar is a principal officer of the university. He is responsible for the accurate analysis, recording and accounting for all the financial transactions undertaken by the university (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001). As an accountant who practices the accountancy profession, he/she prepares the books, accounts, statements, schedules, budgets, analysis, notes, etc. of the entire university irrespective of the campus, location, faculty, department, centre, unit, etc. for the purpose of internal and external auditors as well as for use by other stakeholders according to the legal requirements of the day. He or she heads the Deputy Bursars, Chief Accountants, Assistant Chief Accountants, Principal Accountants, Senior Accountants, Accountants, Executive Officers, Assistant Chief Executive Officers, Principal Executive Officers, Senior Executive Officers, Executive Officers, Account Officers, Accountants, Account Clerks, Caretakers, Messengers, Cleaners, etc. (Otikor, 2015).

**Librarian**

The librarian is a principal officer of the university (Wodi, 2015) who is charged with the responsibility of safe keeping and Acquisition/purchase all the publications and academic documents either to or from/by the university (Omoike and Ogunu 2007). Such publications include charts, print, film, visuals, books, magazines, journals, research, publications, tapes, manuals, etc. Librarian also provides avenues for private and public reading of all the human resources of the university irrespective of the location, campus, faculty, department, centre, unit, etc. One of the most important functions of the librarian is the procurement or borrowing of required publications into the university at the request of any other officer of the university. The librarian maintains a very strong inter and intra-library connections within and outside the university locally, nationally and internationally. He or she heads the Deputy Librarians, Chief Librarians, Assistant Chief Librarians, Principal Librarians, Senior Librarians, Library Assistants, Library Clerks, Caretakers, Messengers, Cleaners and other library workers (Mercy, 2015).

**Director of works**

The Director of Works is a principal office of the university who is saddled with the responsibility of accommodation/plant layout, infrastructure and facilities provisions, vehicles/equipment purchases, lighting and electrification as well as general and routine maintenance (National Universities Commission, 1999). As a practicing engineer in Nigeria, he/she ensures that all safety standards are met and precautions are taken in accordance with national and international/global specifications. It should be noted that where the Director of Works is unable to supply the manpower requirement, his/her expert advice is usually applied in the engagement of qualified and competent contractors and casuals. He or she heads the Deputy Directors of Works, Chief Engineers, Assistant Chief Engineers, Principal Engineers, Senior Engineers, Engineers, Supervisors, Assistant Supervisors, Superintendents, Technicians, Clerks, Messengers, Cleaners, Casuals, etc. (National Universities Commission, 1999; Akindutire, 2004; Ekpo 2005).

**Principal officers functionalism**

University Principal officers Functionalism would best be understood with the help of an Organization Chart or Organigram. Thus the university officers functionalism as shown in Figure 2, explains the hierarchical structure of the university principal officers. These University Principal Officers are five (5) in number (National Universities Commission, 1999); (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001); (Mgbekem, 2004). At the apex is the Vice Chancellor while the Registrar, the Bursar, the Librarian and the Director of Works who are assumed to be at the same level are horizontal to each other Ekpo (2005); Omoike and Ogunu (2007). All other university members of staff who are not teaching (that is, the non-teaching members of staff), are under these principal officers depending upon their professions, qualifications, levels and experience (Uche et al., 2016); (Akpan, 2011).

**Conclusion**

The university which is the highest educational institution for the acquisition of individual knowledge, required in order to develop and transform nations, needs officers to be responsible for its day-to-day activities and operations. University principal officers therefore perform vital functions on a daily basis for the effective and efficient achievement of university goals. Although, the Vice Chancellor is the highest principal officer and chief executive, other principal officers who function under him/her on a daily basis include

- The Director of Works for all infrastructure and general maintenance;
- The Librarian for all teaching, learning and research material
- The Bursar for all financial transactions and accounting
- The Registrar for all secretarial works and administration
• The Vice Chancellor, the chief executive officer to whom all others report. It is therefore the university principal officers functionalism that enhances the effective and efficient achievement of university goals not only in Nigeria particularly but also all over the world generally.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests

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