

Critical Evaluation of Personnel Management Problems in the Nigerian School System

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ABSTRACT Every social organization such as the school is an embodiment of human beings who interact with one another in one way or the other and having specified roles to perform in line with their assigned duties. However, there is need for effective personnel management so as to avert conflicts and equally manage conflicts when they inevitably occur. This paper examined the management of personnel in the Nigerian school system. The implementation of every policy and programme in the school system requires the contribution of the efforts of members of staff at various levels, but this cannot be achieved unless there is unity of purpose and proper coordination of activities of all the staff by the school head. The success of any organization is not only determined by the quality of personnel available, but how well these human resources are harnessed and coordinated towards realizing the goal of the organization. Among the problems that militate against effective personnel management in the Nigerian school system were disagreement on policy matters, disparity in salary structure, dictation from the political class and violent trade unionism. To this end, there is need for greater competence on the part of the management staff to enhance success.

INTRODUCTION

The role that education is expected to play in a society is multi-faceted. It is expected to build the character of the learner, to get him informed about what is worthwhile, socially acceptable, desirable and purposeful about himself, his environment and society. It is also expected to make the individual worth living and worth living with (Tella 1990). Education is not only a social service, but an instrument of political socialization that informs the learner as to his privileges and basic human rights (Taiwo 1980).

According to Ogunsaju (2006), personnel management is the effective mobilization of human resources based upon appropriate recruitment, selection, training and placement of appointed staff in order to achieve the organisational set-down goals and objectives. It could also be defined as the effective utilization of human resources in an organization through the management of people and related activities.

In the school system, both students and personnel functions are performed by school administrators with a view to achieving the goals and objectives of the school. The objectives of school personnel management are: to plan and direct activities necessary to select and assign

the best qualified individual staff and students; to provide opportunities for the growth in service for these individuals; and to maintain good interpersonal relationships (Orubuloye 2006).

The primary objective of the school system, according to Nwagwu (2008), is to ensure effective teaching – learning process. For this objective to materialize, the school head (The Head Teacher) must be able to plan, organize, direct, coordinate and control the activities of the staff and students in an atmosphere devoid of persistent and unresolved conflicts. To this end, there is need for clear-cut policy concerning staff relations, duties and functions and most importantly, motivation in terms of remuneration and other staff welfare oriented policies.

In Nigeria educational institutions, teachers are very vital if the objectives and aims of education as stated in National Policy on Education are to be achieved. Mahar (2004) emphasized the importance of teachers' job performance when she observed that school teachers are the principal instruments in awakening the child to cultural value, in preparing the child for his or her later professional training and in helping him/her adjust normally to his environment. Ololube (2006), posited that teachers are the most important group of professionals for our nation's future. In any

educational institution, it is the work of the teachers that determines the degree of success or failure in the institution's effort to achieve its goal of integrating morality and learning. The teacher is the vehicle through which the subject matter is presented to the students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Systems Perspective

The systems perspective defines a system as a set of interrelated and interdependent parts arranged in a manner that produces a unified whole. Using a systems perspective, we envision an organization as being made up of interdependent factors, including individuals, groups, attitudes, motives, formal structure, interactions, goals, status and authority (DeGreene 1973).

The system approach believes that system is made up of parts which are differentiated in some ways but are connected to make up the whole through the interaction between its component parts and with the external environment. The school as an open system cannot exist in isolation. It must exchange energy and information with its environments. Every system is 'loosely connected' with many other sub-system or sub-units. For instance, the educational system is loosely coupled by the following elements: teacher-materials, school boards, administration-classrooms, process-outcome, teacher-teacher, parent-teacher and teacher-student.

The school is a community within the larger community. It is important for the school to expand its functions in order to bring it into closer relations with the surrounding community. It is also necessary for the school to be in close relationship with its community because of the support which the school gets from the community in terms of input resources. For instance, teachers are recruited from outside of the school system, students (as inputs) also come from outside (community) of the school while funds for providing the necessary instructional materials/equipment and infrastructures that will assist the school in performing its functions also come from outside of the school system.

An organized enterprise does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, it is dependent on its external environment. It is part of larger systems, such as the industry to which it belongs, the economic system, and society. Thus, the enterprise receives

inputs, transforms them, and exports the outputs to the environment. The school is expected to meet the needs and expectations of the society by assisting the children (students) within the community to develop sense of commitment and become acquainted with their civic and social responsibilities to the community. The school also raises the level of economic activities of the community, which in turn raises the standard of living of the members of the community. The relationship between the school and the community is indeed a symbiotic one, since the function of one complements the other. The job of a school head, principal, Provost, Rector or Vice Chancellor is to ensure that all parts of the institution are coordinated internally so that the institution's goals can be achieved. The open systems approach recognizes that institutions are not self-contained. They rely on their environment for life-sustaining inputs and as outlets to absorb their outputs.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Primary School

Primary education is the first stage of compulsory education. It is preceded by pre-school or nursery education and is followed by secondary education. It is the type of education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 years. Since the rest of the education system is built upon it, the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. The duration shall be six years (National Policy on Education 2004). The major goals of primary education are achieving basic literacy and numeracy amongst all pupils.

Typically, primary education is provided in schools where the child will stay in steadily advancing classes until they complete it and move on to high school/secondary school. Children are usually placed in classes with one teacher who will be primarily responsible for their education and welfare for that year. This teacher may be assisted to varying degrees by specialist teachers in certain subject areas. The continuity with a single teacher and the opportunity to build up a close relationship with the class is a notable feature of the primary education system.

The New National Policy on Education (2004) stated that government shall provide basic infrastructure and training for the realization of the

goals in the primary school. By implication, primary schools will be staffed. Activities of these staff must be coordinated and according to Afe (2002), this is where personnel management comes in. The competence of the staff personnel is a pre-requisite to the effectiveness of the school in achieving its objectives. Much of head teacher's impact upon the operation of the school is achieved through his work with the staff. If quality school programmes are to be developed and maintained careful attention must be given to staff administration. Farrant (1982) opined that there should be proper coordination of staff through regular meetings, routine notices, motivation and encouraging friendship among staff. The head teacher is the chief management officer in the school system. He oversees, coordinates and supervises the activities of other staff (teaching and non teaching in the primary school). He is assisted by the Assistant Head Teacher (see Fig.1).

Usually, the administration of the primary school allows the operation of committee system (delegation) as a way of facilitating the work of the school head towards improved efficiency. Such committee may include welfare committee, disciplinary committee and hostel committee (for boarding schools). The kind of reception a new teacher receives from the head teacher influences to a considerable degree his future attitude to the head teacher and, the school (Gerald 1995). To enhance punctuality, the head teacher maintains

the teacher's attendance register and staff movement book, which indicates staff entry and exit time. More so, the head teacher motivates the staff to work through the provision of incentives such as materials to work with – chalk, textbooks and teaching aids (charts and drawings) to facilitate teaching and learning activities. The head teacher is responsible for the settlement of dispute (conflict resolution function) among members of staff. More so, he recommends staff for promotion as at when due. This is necessary so as to make them dedicated. If a staff feels that the management is indifferent to this aspiration, he will be less dedicated to achieving the goals of the school. The heads of the various departments and units also oversee the affairs of staff under their jurisdiction and makes reports to the head teacher, who in turn takes necessary actions as appropriate.

The following are the pre-requisites to effective personnel management in the primary school:

- Proper and adequate staff orientation/ induction.
- Proper and adequate professional training school heads in personnel management.
- Competence on the part of the head teacher to handle personnel matters.
- Availability of relevant materials to facilitate the work of teachers and other staff.

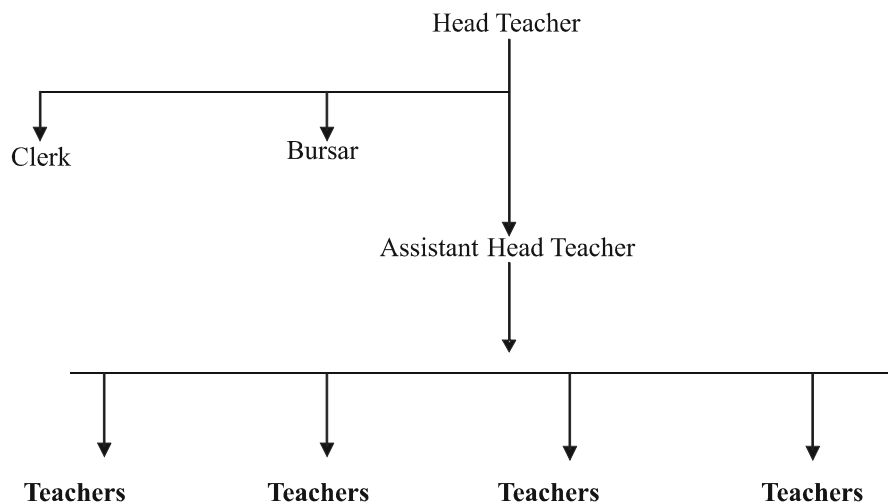


Fig.1. Organisational structure of primary school

- A conducive atmosphere or working environment for staff.
- Adequate and timely remuneration of staff so as to enhance productivity and willing/timely compliance to directives (Oluwatusin 2006).

Secondary School

Secondary school otherwise known as Higher of education is that sector of the education pyramid that usually comes immediately after primary education. It also comes before tertiary education. It is at this stage of education that students are prepared for the Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Universities. Within the framework of the New National Policy on Education (2004), secondary education shall last for six years, broken into two distinct parts that are perfectly correlated with the ground works of the first three years – Junior Secondary School (J.S.S.) – dovetailing into the next three years of Senior Secondary School (S.S.S.).

According to the New National Policy on Education the broad aims of secondary education in Nigeria are:

- (i) Preparation of students for useful living within the society, and
- (ii) Preparation of students for higher education.

In specific terms, the secondary school system is geared towards realizing the following objectives:

- (a) Provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background .
- (b) Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, Opportunities and future roles;
- (c) Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- (d) Develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage.
- (e) Inspire students with a desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence;
- (f) foster National unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity;
- (g) raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens;

- (h) Provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic developments.

The aims and objectives of secondary education make it clear that the future of any nation depends quite considerably on the quality of education it provides for its citizens.

The principals are faced with several challenges some of which are:

- § Over-population and congested classrooms.
- § Lack of adequate infrastructure such as building, furniture, toilet facilities
- § Transportation problems making students to come late to school,
- § Truancy – students roaming about the streets during school hours and students skipping lessons.
- § Broken homes that lead to lack of parental care.
- § Lack of textbooks and other instructional materials.

The principal in the Nigerian secondary school occupies a unique position. He is regarded as an educational leader, the school disciplinarian, the organizer of the schedule, the supervisor of the instructional programme, the director and evaluator of teaching efforts, the manager of school facilities and generally a professional leader (Knezevich 1969) (see Fig. 2).

Staffers in secondary school are made up of many professional, para-professional and non-

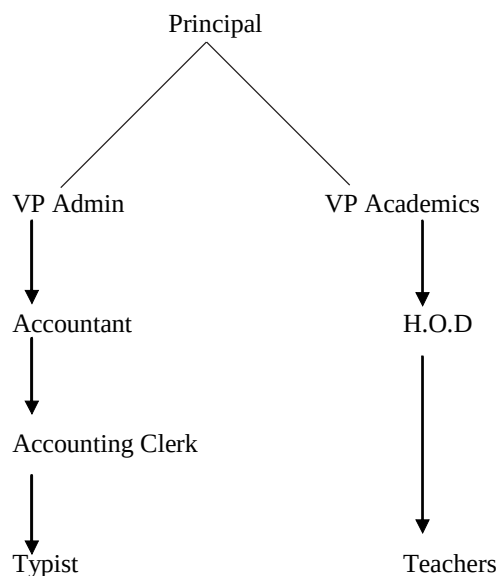


Fig. 2. Organisational structure of secondary school

professional adults who work in the school. This includes the Principal, Vice-Principal and the Teachers. In addition, schools require the service and skills of variety of non-professional persons: Gardener, Night watchmen, Bursar, Cooks, Clerical officers and Laboratory attendants. It is the task of the principal to guide the efforts of these people so that their individual and collective behaviour will contribute significantly to the fulfillment of the school's objectives.

The principal is both the administrative head and academic head of the school. To this end, he performs both professional and administrative duties. To ascertain the smooth running of the school, he performs the recruitment function through the ministry of education by forwarding his request on the number and type of staff needed in his school.

Also, it is the function of the school head to induct new staff and assign duties to them. However, it should be stressed that this function can be delegated to the Heads of Department, to whom the new staff is directly accountable. For effective management of the school, the committee system is very important. Examples include disciplinary committee, staff welfare committee, and hostel committee (for boarding schools).

Personnel management rests largely on assigning of duties to members of staff. Decentralization of authority is much prevalent in the management of the secondary schools. Instances abound where teachers are assigned to deal with late coming offences; maintain a clean compound by using students to pick refuse; take charge of morning devotion; draw time-table for the school; arrange venue for meetings; and pass information across to staff.

Problem of Personnel Management in Secondary School

The management of personnel in the secondary school is associated with many problems:

Inadequate Financial Allocation: The financial allocation (imprest) to primary schools is far below the needs of the school. Consequent upon this, the provision of consumables such as chalk, broom, cutlasses etc. are greatly hampered. Minor repair works also suffer consequent upon this inadequacy.

Conflict among Teachers: Conflict is inevitable in every social organization. Although,

measures can be preventing its occurrence, it hampers management when it occurs inevitably.

Lack or Inadequacy of Facilities/Materials has the potential to hamper effective personnel management in the school. When facilities are in bad condition or grossly inadequate, it reduces the effects or weight of instruction as little or nothing can be done when facilities / materials to work with are not available.

Poor Remuneration could be a source of management problems. Poor remuneration tends to reduce the effort or contribution or commitment of individual staff to the objectives of the school. This is in the line with Vroom's theory of motivation.

Lack of Relevant Training and Induction Courses in the area of personnel management makes the task more challenging for school principals.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Personnel management in the College of Education is as paramount as the success of the system. For this educational level to achieve success with respect to the objectives for which it was established, there is the need for professionalism in managing the human and material resources effectively. The College of Education being a large and complex organization is divided into departments and units to facilitate the management function of the school head-the Provost (see Fig. 3).

To a large extent, the pattern of staff relations determines the level of cooperation among the various staff which in turn determines the general atmosphere of the institution. To this end, there is the need for proper coordination of the activities of the various departments in the school.

Ajayi et al. (2001) highlighted the function of a personnel manager to include planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling. For any personnel policy to be effective, according to Amaefule (2008), Akintoye et al. (2008), it must meet a number of criteria such as:

- (i) It must be consistent with the goals of the organization;
- (ii) It must be fair, realistic and attainable;
- (iii) It must be seen to be necessary;
- (iv) It must be applicable;
- (v) It should be simple and unambiguous; and
- (vi) It should be distributed and communicated to staff in form of handbook.

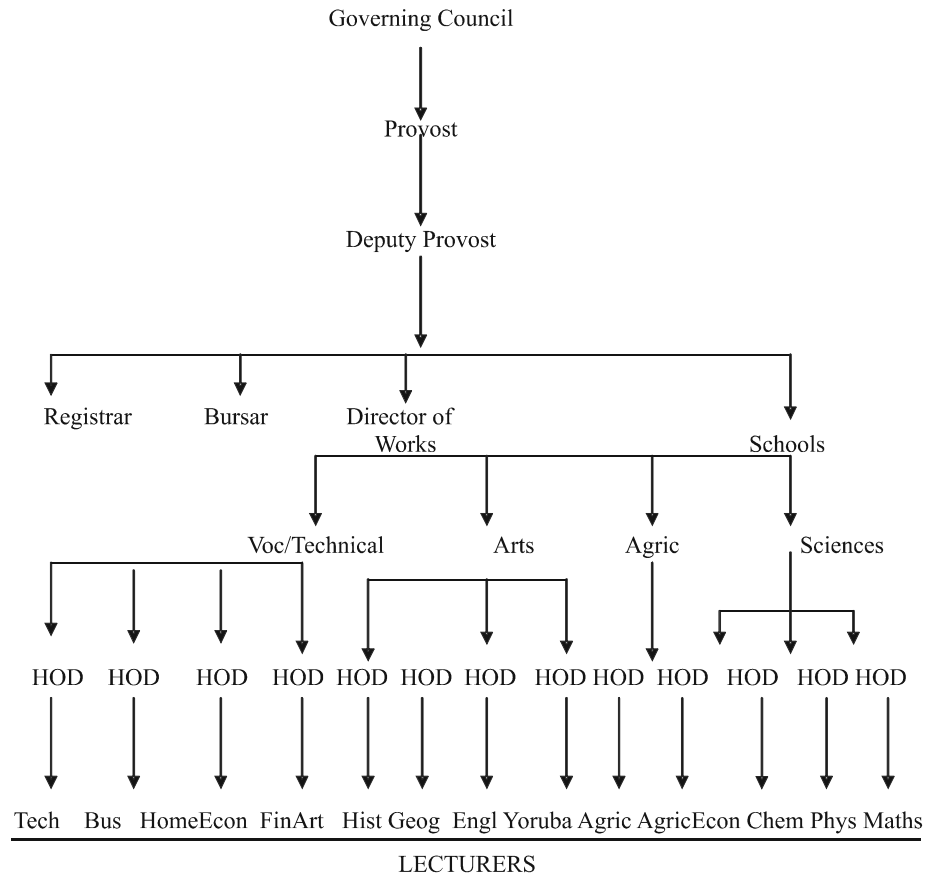


Fig. 3. Organizational structure of a college of education

Principal Officers of College of Education

The principal officers of a College of Education are as follow:

- (i) Provost
- (ii) Deputy Provost
- (iii) Registrar
- (iv) Bursar
- (v) College librarian

Academic Board

The Academic Board Members are as follow:

- (i) Principal Officer
- (ii) Deans of Schools
- (iii) Vice Deans of Schools
- (iv) Chief Lecturers
- (v) Principal Lecturers
- (vi) Representatives of the Congregation

(vii) Heads of Department

The College of Education is divided into schools and each school is headed by a Dean, the divisions are as follows:

- (i) School of Education
- (ii) School of Arts and Social Sciences
- (iii) School of Sciences
- (iv) School of Languages
- (v) School of Vocational and Technical Education; and
- (vi) Dean, Student Affairs.

The Deans of the various schools are assisted by the heads of department. They coordinate the affairs of the other staff members in the School. The Dean presides over Schools' board meetings. The Head of Department (H.O.D) assigns duties to other lecturers. These include course to be taught by each lecturer, computation of results, invigilation and supervision of examinations.

Ambrose (1986) stated that a typical college of education is organized under a system of unit heads viz. Administrative unit head and Academic unit head. The administration of the College of Education is to a large extent run on committee system for convenience. The committees in the college include:

- (i) Student Disciplinary Committee;
- (ii) Time-Table Committee;
- (iii) Sports Committee;
- (iv) Teaching Practices Committee;
- (v) Students' Welfare Board;
- (vi) Transport Committee; and
- (vii) Staff Welfare Committee.

For the purpose of effectiveness and sense of direction the committees are usually given terms of reference within which they carry out their duties.

The effectiveness of personnel management in the college of education is a function of the competence of heads of the various departments, sections, and units in terms of initiative towards prudent management of the available human and material resources. To this end, managers at the various levels should acquire relevant training in the field of personnel management through attending seminars, workshops and conferences towards enhancing their competence.

THE POLYTECHNIC

The polytechnic education is directed towards the technical needs of the country. In other words, it is meant to produce technical personnel in the various fields of engineering. Technical advancement is a pre-requisite to the economic advancement of any nation. To this end, there is the need to take engineering education very serious. This is not to say that there are no other courses apart from engineering courses in the polytechnic. According to the National Policy on Education (2004), Polytechnics shall:

- Provide full-time or part-time courses of instruction and training in engineering, other technologies, applied science, business and management, leading to the production of trained manpower.
- Provide the technical knowledge and skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial, and economic development of Nigeria;
- Give training and impart the necessary skills for the production of technicians, technologists and other skilled personnel who shall be enterprising and self-reliant;

- Train people who can apply scientific knowledge to solve environmental problems for the convenience of man; and give exposure on professional studies in the technology

Principal Officers in the Polytechnic

The principal officers in the polytechnic include;

- (i). Rector;
- (ii). Deputy Rector;
- (iii). Registrar;
- (iv). Bursar; and
- (v). Chief Librarian

The Academic Board comprises of the chief lecturers in the school. The school officers are also known as the registry staff or centrally deployed staff, who implement the day to day administrative policies of the school. Other departments in the polytechnic include:

Planning, Works, and Medical. They are headed by Directors. For convenience of administration and effectiveness of learning, there are faculties in the school, such as Faculty of Civil Engineering, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Metallurgical Engineering etc.

There are other non-engineering faculties such as: management. The faculties are run on committee bases such as Student Industrial Attachment Committee, Disciplinary Committee, Sport Committee, Examination Committee, Staff Welfare Committee etc. These committees usually operate based on specified terms of reference and they are accountable to the Deans and Heads of Department. Effective leadership entails the administrative ability to draw together those persons affected by a decision into the decision making council of the organization (Garald 1995) (see Fig. 4).

Problems of personnel management in the polytechnic include:

- (i) Inadequate financing; (ii) Violent trade unionism among staff; (iii) Disagreement of policy matters; (iv) Lack of Trust; and (v) Ambiguity in policy interpretations.

The following are possible suggestions for the amelioration of the problems of personnel management in the Polytechnic:

- (i) Improve funding
- (ii) Well spelt-out policies / clear policies
- (iii) Maintenance of good communication network
- (iv) Well Defined Roles
- (v) Well Defined Staff Relations
- (vi) Regular briefing of Staff on new development.

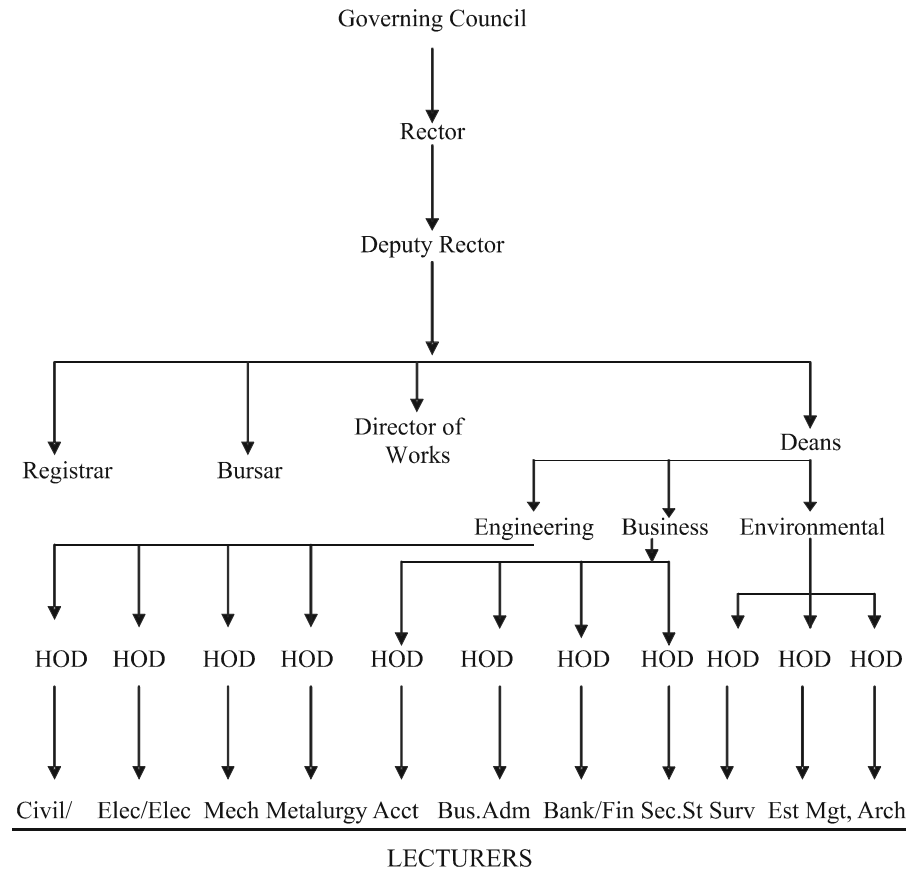


Fig. 4. Organisational structure of a polytechnic

THE UNIVERSITY

The university is a large organization of people (staff and students). It is established to contribute optimally to national development. This is done by intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the need for the nation.

To implement the various programmes of the university, staff (teaching and non-teaching) are needed from various disciplines and in most cases, in large number. Based on the largeness of the organization, the act of managing the system becomes relatively complex and demands high level of professional competence from the head of the university, The Vice Chancellor.

Administrative Set Up of the University

The Council: At the apex of the management structure within each university is the council. This body is headed by chairman of council (Pro-chancellor). Members of the council include the Vice Chancellor, members of public as constituted by the government, and representatives of the university senate. The Registrar is the secretary to council.

The council is charged mainly with the administrative functions in the area of goals setting, policy formulation, staff development, general discipline, budget approval and liaising with government.

The Senate: This is the main organ regulating the internal academic activities of each university.

It is headed by the Vice Chancellor. Other members include the Deans of Faculties, Heads of Academic Department, Professors and congregation representatives. The Registrar is the secretary of senate. The senate regulates the academic programmes of each university, in line with the general guideline provided by the NUC.

University Management: This is the headed by the Vice-Chancellor, other members include the University Chief Librarian, Bursar, Director of Health Services, Director of Works, Registrar and Deans of Faculties. They implement policies and administer personnel in their different areas of jurisdiction.

Administrative Sector: It is headed by the Vice – Chancellor. Other members include the Registrar, Deputy Registrars (students' affairs, academic affairs, establishment, and Post Graduate school). Others are Admission Officer, Faculty officers and other administrative officers. They operate based on their area of assignment.

Committee System: Universities are run to a large extent by the committee system. The committee are either responsible to Council alone or to both the Council and Senate. These committee work as standing bodies to effect approved policies and prepare grounds for new policies.

Committees in the University Include

- (i) Rect
- (i) Finance and general purpose committee;
- (ii) Development Committee;
- (iii) Appointment and Promotion Committee;
- (v) Admissions Committee;
- (vi) Academic Planning Committee;
- (vii) Research Grant Committee;
- (viii) Committee of Deans;
- (ix) Staff School Board of Governors;
- (x) Petty Contracts Committee;
- (xi) Library and Publication Committee;
- (xii) Student Welfare Board; and
- (xiii) Ceremony Committee.

Faculties

For the purpose of specialization, the university is divided into faculties; examples are Faculty of Education, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Management and Faculty of Science, Faculty of Engineering/Technology. Faculties are divided into departments. For example, in the faculty of engineering there are Department of Civil Engineering, Department of Mechanical Engineering,

Department of Electrical Engineering etc. A similar thing applies to other faculties.

Control of Faculties

A faculty is headed by a Dean. Departments are headed by Head of Department (HOD). The HOD assigns duties to members of staff e.g. teaching (course allocation). He presides over departmental meetings. He is the Chief examiner.

The Dean is both the academic and administrative head of the faculty. He runs the faculty through committee system. The committees in the Faculty include: Disciplinary committee, Welfare committee, Post Graduate committee, Academic Board and Teaching Practice committee.

The Dean presides over the Faculty Board meetings. The Board is very important in the faculty. The board deliberates on academic issues, examinations and results and staff welfare. It also deliberates on the areas of need of the faculty; financial, material, and academic (staff) (see Fig. 5).

Problems of Personnel Management in the University

Finance: Inadequate finance could be a big problem to effective personnel management. This is because lack of finance could be responsible for inadequate facilities such as offices, furniture and fittings, instructional materials, delay in salary, delay/non-payment of allowances etc. which could result in face-off taking a variety of dimensions such as confrontation, and strike. According to Taiwo (1995), budget proposal usually fall short of allocation and Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) is seen as complement, but in most cases, the proposal is modified.

Below is the budget proposal of the University of Ibadan for 1990/91.

Budget proposal	54,459,062
NUC Allocation	33,542,459
IGR	1,414,300
	34,956,059
Modified budget	41,024,247
Deficit	6,067,488

Source: Taiwo CO 1995. *The Administration of a Nigerian University*. Lagos.

Violent Trade Unionism among Staff: Leadership or membership of trade unions could be a source of hindrance to personnel management. Misinformation, misinterpretation or lack of good

communication network could cause trade unions to be aggressive and get out of hand.

Disagreement on Policy Matters: Policy matters could be a source of disagreement. Instances abound when discrepancy in salary/remuneration among staff of different unions (e.g. ASUU and NASU) have created problem for university management.

Lack of Trust: There is usually lack of trust in the management of the university by the staff. This could be field where there is communication gap, poor communication or ambiguity in communication content.

Dictation from the Political Class: The political class (such as the Visitor) could dictate policies to the disinterest of staff. This causes internal conflict in the university community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Under-funding and lack of funds is a general problem in virtually all educational institutions in Nigeria. The effective management of personnel in any of the tiers of the educational system in Nigeria can be attained through improved allocation of funds to schools for proper maintenance of equipment and facilities and, other expenditures of emergent need.

To enhance good rapport among members of staff, there is need on the part of the principal and heads of department to create room for regular interaction among members of staff. More so, staff meetings should be made participatory rather than a one-man job which is synonymous to briefing rather than a venue for deliberation.

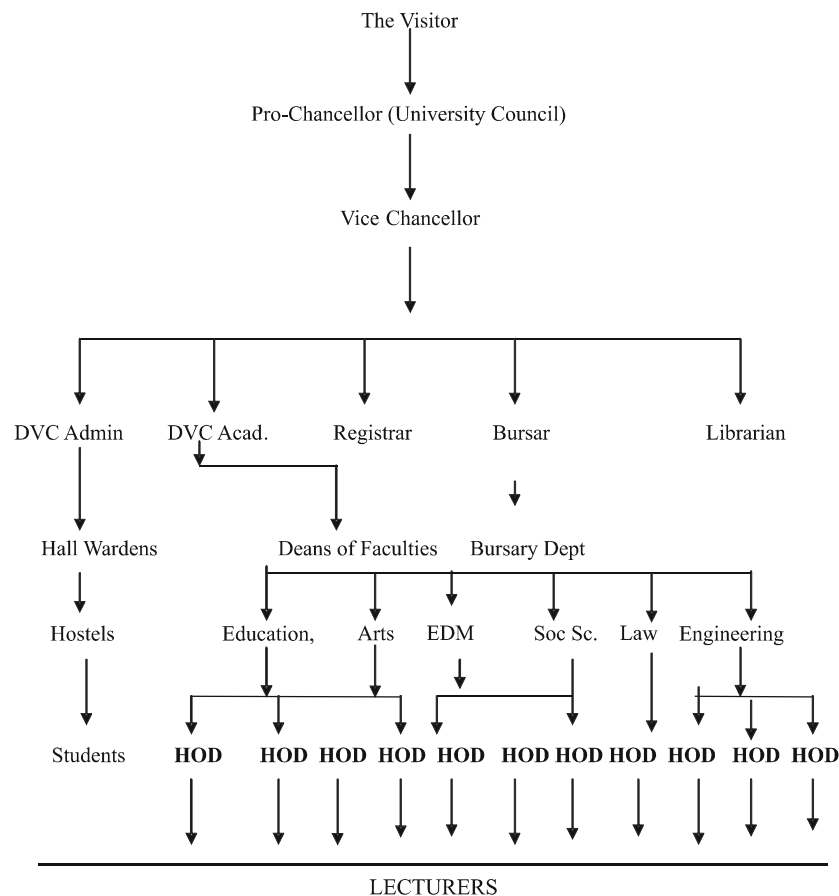


Fig. 5. Organizational structure of a university

The Government should endeavour to provide adequate and standard facilities in secondary schools. Where classroom, chalkboard, officer etc. are inadequate and in bad condition, staff in the school is less motivated to work willingly. It is paramount that the staff are well remunerated and in time. Since man's action is to a great extent influenced by economic consideration, this is equally in Maslow's theory of motivation. Regular training should be organized for school principals in the art of personnel management. This could take the form of seminar, workshop, lecture etc.

The university should be inward looking on ways of generating or improving on its internally generated revenue to compliment government effort. Most trade union face-off borders around finance, improvement of the financial base is therefore imperative at this junction. University autonomy on policy making matters should be encouraged and a consistent and effective communication network should equally be maintained. There is equally the need for good rapport and human relation between heads of the various departments, section and units and their staff. In addition, staff welfare should be given priority to enhance greater productivity and cooperation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the success of the administration of any of the tiers of the educational system in Nigeria cannot be solely determined by the quantity and quality of staff available but rather a combination of these and the effective utilization of the staff. For this to be achievable, there is need for the efficient allocation and motivation of the staff if the objectives of the schools (institutions) are to be achieved.

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