



THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC PLANNING AND CONTROL UNIT IN UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

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What is a University?

University as a concept is derived from the latin *Universitas magistrorum et scholarium* which is interpreted as —Community of teachers and scholars. These centers of learning had existed in Africa and Asia. What we have today as university is rooted in the European medieval University in Italy. Universities evolved from Christian cathedral schools during the High Middle Ages for the clergy.

In Nigeria as in other countries it is the apex tertiary education and research institution with the mandate to award academic degrees in accredited academic disciplines at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels rightly exercising University education

This is formal type of Education or learning unique and complex that is usually provided in universities after secondary or other tertiary education. This includes distance correspondence learning provided by the Open University.

The Federal Government of Nigeria places heavy premium on university education for the actualization of its desired development *ceteris paribus*.

Article 59 and 60 of the National Policy on Education FRN (2004) spelt out the mandates of universities through effectively planned actualization strategies.

The Goals of University Education

A University is a centre for *excellence, ivory tower and a storehouse knowledge and research*. These features are catholic across time and space. According to article 59 in FRN(2004) the following are the goals of tertiary particularly university education:

- a. Contribute to national development through high level relevant training;
- b. Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual
- c. Develop the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment;
- d. Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- e. Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- f. Forge and cement national unity; and
- g. Promote national and international understanding and interaction
- h. By the time universities achieve these goals they would no doubt contributed significantly to development and even its sustainability

Delivery Of University Education

The delivery of university education in Nigeria cannot be divorced from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at alleviating extreme poverty to enhance social welfare of majority of world population.



The Obasanjo administration (1999-2007) derived its National Economic and Empowerment Strategy (NEEDS) from the Millennium Development Goals MDGs and was aimed at massively improving the quality of life of Nigerians to allow Nigeria to feed herself, provide first class medical health care and strengthen other institutions within our growth parameters. This was designed to primarily attack poverty, a social problem that seemed to be worsening among both rural and urban poor and other vulnerable groups. The delivery of NEEDS with respect to poverty reduction programmes has not been able to impact the people because of the issues of administrative red-tapism, lack of political will and corruption. (Nwadiani 2018)

Delivery of the Goals of University Education

Universities in Nigeria shall as be noted in article 60 of the National Policy on Education pursue their education goals through:

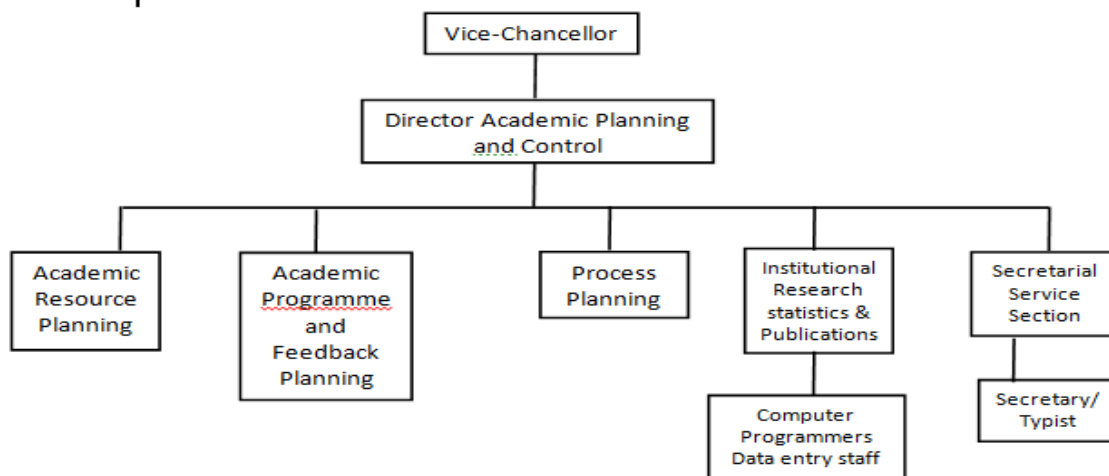
- a. Teaching
- b. Research and development
- c. Virile staff development programmes;
- d. Generation and dissemination of knowledge;
- e. A variety of modes of programmes including full-time; part-time, block release, day-release, sandwich etc.
- f. Access to training funds such as those provided by Industrial Training fund (ITF) and Tertiary Education Training Fund (TETFUND)
- g. Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES)
- h. Maintenance of minimum education

- i. standards through appropriate agencies
- i. Inter-institutional Co-operation;
- j. Dedicated services to the community through extra-mural and extension services.

The Academic Planning and Control Unit was established in Nigeria Universities in the early 1980s in response to the need to co-ordinate and streamline the academic policies and activities arising from the sudden and sometimes uncoordinated growth and development, proliferation of programmes and or units in the Nigerian Universities System

- There also arose the need to address the problem of data collection and management to guide the orderly academic development of each university.
- This orderly development by and large involves universities' compliance with NUC's Minimum Academic Standards and norms and each University senate's stipulated academic requirements. (Ali Okafor, 1998.)
- With the establishment of the office of Academic Planning and Control in various Universities charged with the performance of certain clearly defined duties, it became possible for a uniform academic direction and purpose to be put in place and serve as a beacon for academic development in the various Universities.
- The organogram of a typical office of Academic planning and control in a Nigerian university is shown below:

Figure 1: Organogram of a typical office of Academic Planning and Control



Source: Ali Anthony in Nwafor (1998)

The university is derived from a Latin expression **Universitas Magisterium et Scholarium** meaning —society of teachers and learners .Nwediani (2018). This society of teachers and learners forms the academic environment which requires continuous survival and maintenance of its landscape in order to achieve organizational effectiveness. There is, therefore, the need for Academic Planning and Control Unit to determine various courses of actions to be undertaken in the university as a knowledge society to achieve its predetermined goals most optimally in terms of resource use.

❖ Job Specification of Directorate of Academic Planning

- For the office of the Academic Planning Control of the University to diligently perform its duties as enshrined in the law, it requires a vice-chancellor must understand the operations of the office and the willingness to be guided by the parameters of the National Universities Commission (NUC) as the coordinating agency of government that oversees universities education in Nigeria.
- The Academic Planning and Control Unit is an integral part of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor. The Director of this unit is directly responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the day-to-day administration of the unit.
- The unit serves as a quality control unit of the university, guiding each unit on operating the academic brief of the university.
- It is the duty of the Director of Academic Planning and Control to seek, whenever necessary, clarifications from NUC, on academic matters at the implementation level and feed such clarifications to the Vice-Chancellor and to appropriate sections of the university that seek such clarifications, in the first place.
- To be able to perform this duty, the Director must himself, be familiar with and keep abreast of these academic policy matters as well as ensure that the end-users are familiar with and comply with them.
- These duties demand that he plays an advisory role to the appropriate bodies whenever required such as during meetings of Senate, Academic Planning Committee, University Administration Management, University Board of Research and so on.
- Also, he has to coordinate/liase with these bodies and communicate, as may be needed, any new information on academic policy matters and experiences gained from implementing them to NUC, Senate, University Administration and so on.
- The Director must study and analyze how the University and the units within it are complying with NUC's parameters for funds



allocation/performing on relevant items of the university performance audit including accreditation.

- Based on such studies/analyses, the University and units within, as the case may be, can then be advised on the needed line of action to remedy any problems or potential problems. Banjo and Ali (1998).
- One of the most important duties of the Director of Academic Planning and Control Unit is that of obtaining up-to-date, relevant and accurate data for processing and or for generating on the University matters. Such data include staff and student records, financial records, research, output etc.
- Administratively, it is the duty of the Director to ensure that various universities should be actively involved in the Management Information System of the University.
- Owing to the fact that, the Director of Academic Planning and Control Unit works very closely with all segments of the Vice-Chancellor's office as well as other principal offices, he needs to cultivate and nurture a good working and personal relationship with these offices as well as others.
- The Director can be assigned, for instance, committee duties in the Vice-Chancellor's office and other related offices. Some of such duties are Chairmanship of the Accreditation Committee of Senate, Chairmanship of the Vice-Chancellor's Office Appraisals Committee, Membership of Special University Academic/Technical Projects, or the Secretaryship of the Senate Subcommittee on Staff Establishment. These duties are necessary experiences that would better equip him to relate well with the Registrar, Bursar, Librarian, Personnel Director, and so on.
- These functions of the Director of Academic Planning may seem to be a mirage where the Vice Chancellor is negligent in providing the enabling climate for these acolytes to function.

Academic Resource Planning Section

- Collection, analysis and interpretation of data from relevant university bodies
- Provision of data-based information on various aspects of university operations for use by the university as it deems fit. Some of those aspects include information on university academic/material resources, university facilities, etc.
- Period up-dating and analysis of data from relevant university bodies for the internal evaluation of the performance status of the university on all the NUC approved funding parameters and other guidelines.
- Annual up-dating, projection, analysis and interpretation of data for the planning and preparation of the university budget and the subsequent resource allocation within the ambit of the approved budget. The Bursar is responsible for financial planning and implementation of the financial matters of the university. He works closely with the Director in the production and presentation of the university budget.
- University function assigned to Academic Planning and which has to do with careful collection, analysis and interpretation of data for purposes of meeting certain criteria etc, or for providing other university bodies (MIS, Etc) information they need.

Academic Programme and Feedback Mechanism Planning

- Collecting relevant data on changing trends on university activities-enrolments, staff training and turnover, etc, and passing such data on for institution-based research findings should be ploughed back to university activities for improvement purposes.
- Ensuring that the University complies with and maintains standard, through passing necessary information to departments and the university at large on NUC's minimum academic standards.
- Storage and retrieval of relevant institutional data for approved



researchers, especially on academic staff workload, areas of specialization, university's research output, public service performance output, using feed back data for generating information that can be used for evaluating the internal operations of the university against approved criteria.

- Participating in university curricula revision and or review activities as well as ensuring that the university complies with procedures and guidelines on the establishment of new programmes. Helping the university in producing and or revising long-term, medium-term and short-term academic briefs and or plans and modelling of such plans against reality and university goals.

❖ **Process Planning**

- Using collected data for making projections and advising the University on areas on dire concern and alert.
- Assisting the NUC and the university in identifying new guidelines and criteria, modifying existing ones etc. for annual resource allocation, and as the Vice-Chancellor may direct.
- Assisting NUC in the development of fresh Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS) for some disciplines like Marine Science.

❖ **Research, Statistics and Publications**

Mindful of the relevance of the output of academic researches, the Director of Academic Planning identified educational research statistics of publications as a panacea to solving problems that puzzle mankind. This became a reality through the following means:

- Collection and storage of publications of statistical nature from other universities.
- Upgrading of the Unical Printing Press to Unical Publishing Company.
- Documenting and storing information on the academic programmes of the university.
- Preparation of research materials/papers on the basis of data supplied to it from the feedback planning section.

- Analysis and interpretation of university annual and trend statistics.
- Publication of university records, statistics, research reports as may be directed/approved by the Vice-Chancellor.
- The Vice-Chancellor understood very clearly that: a very important responsibility of the Director is that of ensuring a peaceful, smooth and harmonious administration that would place the unit in a position to perform its functions creditably.
- The Vice Chancellor, also in a bid not to create gaps within his office, insisted that a new Director needs briefing by most senior staff and training while an incumbent may need periodic retraining to better equip them in the job they are expected to do.
- Some areas of training of the Director of Academic Planning and Control on assumption office, and those to do the training are indicated below.
- This leadership approach is indeed leadership succession which encompasses:
 - Introduction of office management techniques, preparation of hand-over notes, etc. by university
 - Introduction to Higher Education Management – by the National Universities Commission (NUC).
 - Introduction to applied statistics – data sourcing, data verification techniques, data processing, interpretation, storage and retrieval – by Management Information System Unit of National Universities Commission.
 - Estimating preparation and presentation techniques by the NUC
 - Training on techniques, mission, mode of operation and functions of the NUC
 - The University and its constituent units including the Registry, Project implementation Unit (PIU), Linkages, etc. by the NUC and Universities.
 - The Director has the additional responsibility of keeping himself abreast of developments in the area of academic planning.
 - Keeping abreast in the professional activities of academic planning



involves attending conferences/workshops within the area and active membership in the Committee of Directors of Academic Planning of Nigerian Universities (CODAPNU) and so on.

- Awareness among lecturers of the requirements of Minimum Academic Standards (MAS).
- High level of compliance of the university with enrolment norms, annual growth rates, etc.
- A high quality of support services and inputs during accreditation visits.
- A high level of awareness on funding parameters which affect universities, work load, science - arts ratio, staff-student ratio, pyramidal structure of academic staff etc.
- an efficient and effective use of Management Information System (MIS) harmony in the Academic Planning Office.
- high level of productivity, accurate data base for processing, storage and retrieval.
- awareness among departments on the demands of accreditation
- opportunities for training and retraining of self and his staff.
- high level of familiarity with information technology.
- opportunities for committee work and consultations with others during work.
- efficiency and effectiveness in resource management of office imprest and allocation to his office. These functions were made possible owing to the visionary leadership of the Vice-Chancellor.

Challenges

- Political Interference on tenureship of the directorate
- Funding issues
- Difficulty in upsetting genuine claims incurred by the directorate
- Lobbying/undue pressure for staff development
- Infractions on staff development programmes
- Lack of training relevance in the directorate
- Short notices for the directorate to comply.

Solutions

- Politics for Political Interference should be geared towards development of the directorate and university
- Improve funding through encouragement of staff to pursue collaborative innovative researches, to attract grants.
- Management of Universities must upset genuine claims incurred by the directorate
- Academic staff should be giving periodic orientation that would reduce lobbying/undue pressure for staff development programmes.
- Universities must encourage the use of training relevance in the directorate and the university at large.
- NUC should improve on it notices for the directorate to comply

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