



MANAGEMENT IMPERATIVES OF HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH ETHICAL AND VALUES EDUCATION RE-ENGINEERING FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



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Abstract

This research paper explores the necessity of re-engineering higher education system focusing on the ethics and values for sustainable national development. It clearly identifies the concerns in education system with particular reference to Nigeria higher education narrowing it down to University Education. Such serious concerns in education system like quality teaching, management leadership behaviours, teachers' roles or what teachers should be able to do in attending different learning needs of students as well as how to promote a climate of mutual respect in a multi-cultural environment calls for review. It emphasizes the evaluation of University ethical and value issues programmes in the management of University education in Nigeria that can provide basis for reform; like providing concrete, realistic and challenging goals, policy initiatives/reform with regards to professional development in Nigeria. Addressing management imperatives of professional development programmes and training for constructivist pedagogy, improving teachers' performance, developing quality knowledge, skills and values among them so as to sustain an effective teaching/learning environment and attaining education goals. Hence, maintaining and impacting reasonable ethical and value standards among others to students clearly brings teachers to the centre stage of the discourse for sustainable national development.

Key words: Ethics, Higher education, Management, Teachers, Values.

Introduction

Education is a basic necessity in any society and it serves as a source of development and transformation for societal existence. Indeed, education is indispensable in the life of individuals and nations; and teachers are at the centre stage for effective and efficient teaching-learning process. Hence, teachers cause desirable and anticipated revolution in the society, though silently. It is often said that, the status of the teachers reflect the socio-cultural ethos of a society; and no nation can rise above the level of its teachers. The role of teacher is multifaceted - character builder, guide, leader, counselor, etc. Therefore, good teachers are essential for the effective functioning of education systems, so as to improve the quality of learning processes. However, teachers perform under the directives of the management. It is therefore, the school managers who through their leadership behaviours influence the teachers to perform either positively or negatively depending on the managerial effectiveness and impact. Essentially, the role of both the school manager and the teacher involves the character building of the taught, apart from designing and implementation of the curriculum, which no doubt reflects the ethical and values education for sustainable national development.

Managers of education system, especially higher education plays significant role in nation's reform; such is the situation this paper is addressing regarding ethical and values education re-engineering for sustainable national development. Indeed, most reforms are initiated through education. As stated in the national policy on education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004), the success of any system of education is hinged on proper planning, efficient administration and adequate financing. Administration is a function of organization and structure, proprietorship and control,



inspection and supervision. By and large, for effective and efficient administration of higher education that could engender reforms for sustainable national development, the managers should consistently upgrade the system by implementing strategic education plans and making adjustments where necessary. Obviously, the management imperatives of higher education in this 21st century are not far-fetched. The world is dynamic and technology-driven. Hence, university managers should not act in isolation rather engage in learning and re-learning to build the needed skills to navigate the system effectively. Capacity training for managers and staff are necessary in various areas of not only digital technology, but moral training through effective communication and exemplary leadership.

Okeke (1986) opined that those who are to inspire others to develop willingness to attack national problems through University education must themselves be effective and efficient. Therefore, the higher education system in Nigeria needs a review ranging from organizational structure, goals, implementation strategies, communication and evaluation; reflecting workers motivation in terms of professional training and incentive scheme. However, there is breakdown in ethics and values in Nigeria education system. The level of moral decadence witnessed in universities at present is alarming. Students indulge in examination malpractice, disrespecting and insulting staff, bullying, cultism, and other manipulative tendencies. Changing needs of the society requires corresponding changes in pedagogical methods of teaching and innovation. Skills acquisition and technological innovations are essential needs of the Nigerian society, especially at this point in time when knowledge-economy is information technology-driven. Yet moral education is equally important.

John and Okonkwo (2025) emphasized that integrating 21st century skills of critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy in education of the youth will enhance productivity. It is therefore, imperative that managers of higher education be equipped with sufficient skills to impact the subordinates, engendering ethical and values education for sustainable national development. In essence, a high level manpower production at University level requires such a balanced training that encourages learning soft skills and as well incorporates ethical and value education with the 21st century skills for sustainable national development.

Meanwhile, ethical and value education refers to a deliberate process of teaching individuals, often in a school setting, to understand and internalize important moral practices and values like honesty, integrity, responsibility, fairness, and compassion, aiming to develop their character and guide their behaviour towards ethical decisions. Essentially, the question is how does the management of Nigeria universities tackle the concerns of ethical and values education to drive the nation to an expected end? However, the discourse considers the structure of higher education in Nigeria, the management bodies/functions, etc.; and how university education challenges of ethical and values issues can be tackled.

Conceptual Framework

Higher Education in Nigeria

The conceptual framework of the Nigeria higher education is presented below, illustrating the structure, goals, implementation strategy, evaluation and the required outcome.

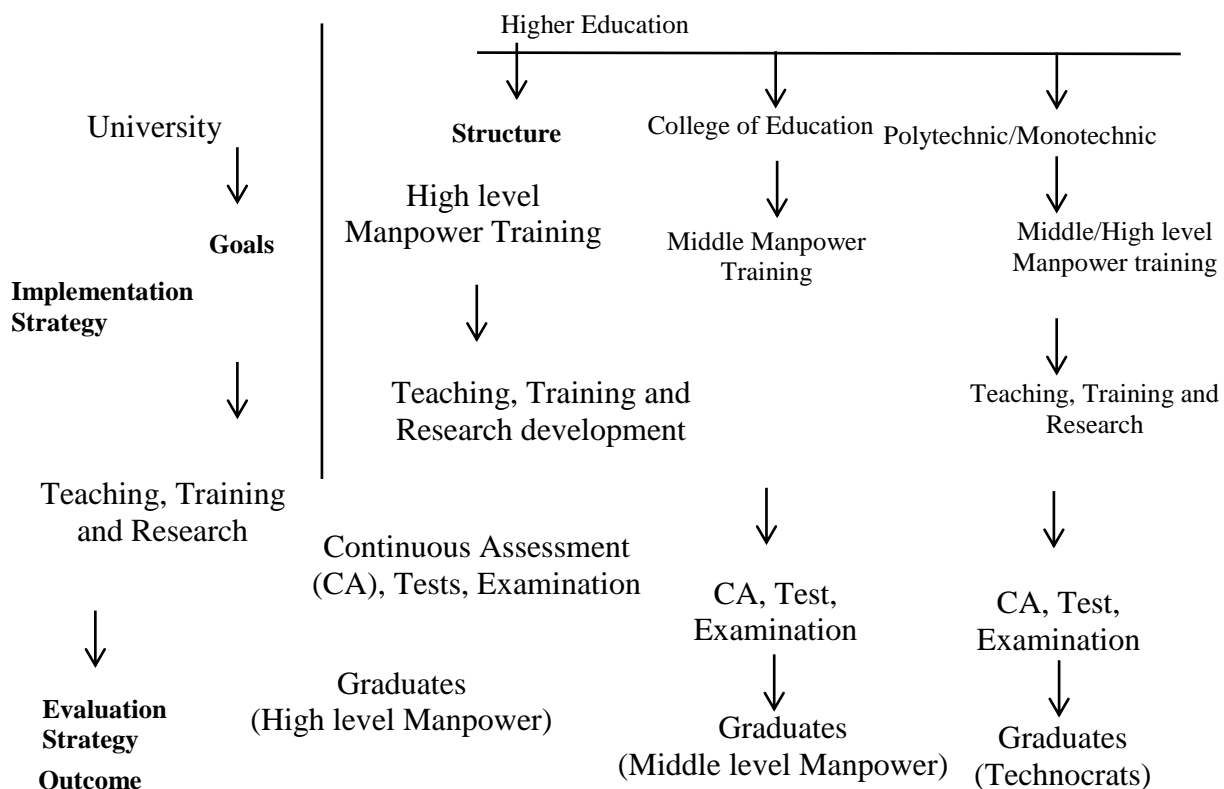


Figure 1: The Framework of Categories of Higher Education in Nigeria.
Source: Developed by the Author, Okonkwo, C. O. (2025).

In the context of this review, the focus is on University Education in Nigeria which is at the apex of higher education system in Nigeria. The aim of University education according to the National Policy on education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) advocates that University education shall make optimum contribution to national development by:

Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation;

Making professional course contents reflect our national requirements.

Making all students part of a general programme of all-round improvement in University education, to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge, nationalism and information technology (IT); and

Making entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement for all Nigerian Universities.

In view of the enunciated objectives of University education in Nigeria, the question is: To what extent, has the University education system in Nigeria been able to achieve their objectives; what challenges were encountered in the process, and possibly how could these challenges be handled? What are the identifiable gap(s) in their goals that require possible reform initiatives reflecting the topic of this study/review? To answer these questions, the line of the discussion will address the leadership/management of University education, achievements made so far, challenges/problems encountered in relation to ethical and value standard, and reform initiatives to ameliorate the challenges.

Management of University Education in Nigeria

The management and administration of University education is a herculean task; let alone in a developing nation like Nigeria. Currently, the administration of University education in Nigeria begins with the Federal Ministry of Education, followed by the National Universities Commission (NUC). The NUC is the educational agency with the mandate to ensure access, quality and relevance in the



university education. It is the body that initiates policies and programmes, and plays crucial role in the development, administration and regulation of University education in Nigeria. However, the bulk of the management practices to achieve the goals of University education lies in the hands of the implementers of the policies and programmes within the University community. Therefore, the concern here is to identify the purpose for organizing and administering University education in Nigeria; to raise the question as to whether the organizational and administrative processes adopted are serving to achieve the purpose for University education in Nigeria; to identify current practices as a basis for judging whether or not they are necessary to the achievement of the purpose, pinpoint major achievements so far, and to point out any problems/challenges, and proffer way forward for University education in Nigeria; More importantly, to factor in the aims of ethical and value education while reviewing the practices. Such ethical value aims are set to: stimulate reflection, shape personality, create awareness in terms of knowing what is right or wrong, and cultivate core values like honesty, respect, integrity, responsibility, etc. Hence, the agencies responsible for the management of University education in Nigeria include:

Federal Ministry of Education (FME):- the apex body responsible for coordinating policies and programmes in Nigeria's education sector.

National Universities Commission (NUC):- the agency that regulates, supervises and accredits Universities in Nigeria.

Federal Ministry of Education

The role of the Federal Ministry of Education is very important in coordinating policies and programmes in the education sector. The main objective is to use education as a tool for fostering the development of the citizens to their full potentials; and promoting a democratic, egalitarian, prosperous, indivisible entity as a sovereign nation. Thus, the FME oversees various aspects of education which includes:

Bilateral Education Agreement (BEA): This includes partnerships with other countries to promote educational exchange and cooperation.

Scholarship Programmes: Nigerian students are offered scholarships abroad; such as the Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowship Plan (CSFP).

Education Policy Development: FME develops and implements policies to improve education, although, mainly through other educational agencies down the hierarchy. Also there is National Policy on Safety, Security, and Violence-Free Schools.

Quality Assurance: this role is carried out through the help/efforts of other education agencies to ensure quality education through accreditation and monitoring.

International Cooperation: Collaborates with international organizations like the UNESCO for promoting education as well as cultural exchange.

The National Universities Commission (NUC)

The National Universities Commission (NUC) plays a vital role in regulating, supervising, and accrediting Universities in Nigeria. It has undergone significant transformation since inception in the 1962 to become a statutory body in 1974. The primary objective is to ensure quality and relevance of the University education in Nigeria. The role it is still playing till date despite numerous changes in the system and scheme of things in Nigeria and world at large.

The functions of NUC include:

Accreditation and quality assurance

Policy formulation

Funding and resource allocation

Curriculum development

Objectives of the NUC

To ensure that Nigerian Universities maintain high standards of education, producing graduates that can contribute to national and global development.

To regulate the establishment and operation of Universities, preventing the proliferation of substandard institutions.

To promote research and innovation, and knowledge creation.

The Vice Chancellor

The 3rd in the categories of management of Universities in Nigeria after the FME and NUC is the leader within the University Community – the Vice Chancellor (VC). In fact, the actual implementation of policies and programmes initiated at higher echelon of the University administration is put in practice at this level – University premises. The Vice Chancellor being the leader in the university is saddled with enormous responsibilities of bringing to fruition the objectives of University education taking cognizance of the objectives of FME and NUC so as to achieve national educational goals. Nonetheless, the major task at University Management level is to ensure that staff and students carry out their functions effectively and efficiently. The VC engages in short and long term planning, as well as in day-to-day planning and decision making. He/she ensures teaching and learning conform to the ethics of the profession so as to achieve desired goals and objectives of education. He/she delegates power and authority to the University Senate and Management team. Among the management team are the Deans and Heads of departments who in collaboration with lecturers communicate face-to-face with students in shaping their behaviours. The success or failure of university education especially with regards to ethics and values standard is mainly at this level. The framework in the management of University education in Nigeria can be summarized as below:

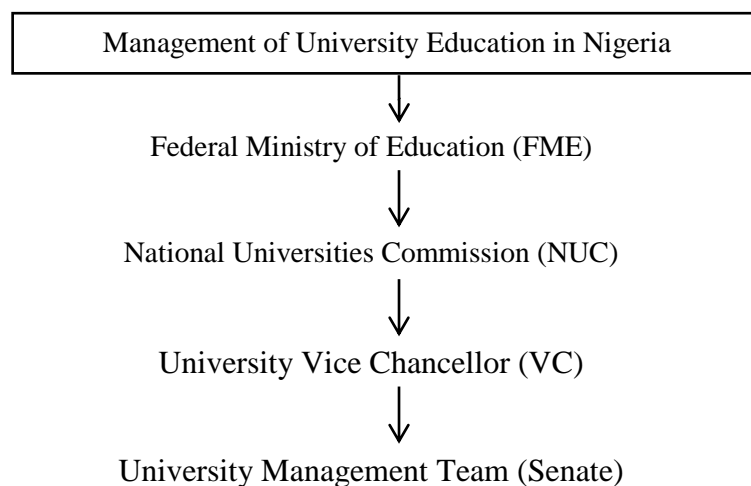


Figure 2: The Administrative Framework in the management of University Education in Nigeria. Source: Developed by the author, Okonkwo C.O. (2025)

Consequently, at the implementation level of management of higher education, particularly University education, a lot of functions are carried out. In the process of performing numerous administrative functions such as obtaining/generating education resources, the allocation and use of the resources, as well as accountability reflecting professionalism, no doubt, ethical and value issues are encountered. However, education like any other sector or organizations experience challenges, but achievements abound. Thus, the major achievements recorded in the management of University education in Nigeria considering the goals of education as enshrined in the National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) can be briefly summarized before engaging the ethical challenges.

Achievements Recorded in the Management of University Education in Nigeria

Several achievements have been recorded in the management of university education in Nigeria. In the recent past, some of the major achievements are briefly stated thus:



Policy development and implementation: The apex bodies in the management of education monitor the trends of development and societal changes and needs, and design policies to suit the needs and address the challenges facing education sector. Typical example is the periodic review and improvement of the crucial document, National Policy on Education in Nigeria – 2004, 2007, 2013 editions and counting. Each publication with innovation to suit the the nation’s current needs.

Quality assurance: The FME and NUC ensure that University education meet minimum standards in providing quality education. They design and regulate university curriculum.

Teacher Training and development: Training is being provided to lecturers and administrators too. For example, Information Technology seminars, workshops, and conferences are organized and sponsored by government and various professional educational associations.

Adults and inclusive education, Entrepreneurship education: These are relatively new courses to meet up with the changing needs of the society.

Challenges/Ethical and Value issues in the management of University Education in Nigeria

Ethical and values issues in the management of University education in Nigeria is multifaceted. The goal of Nigeria education as a force to produce balanced citizens (academic and character) is the driving force for this paper to address such serious concerns in education system as follows:

Admission into Universities and choice of course: This is a background factor that contributes the major ethical and value issues in the education system. The admission process is biased and sometimes truncated by some of the stakeholders of education - parents, teachers and even administrators. The admitted students may grossly found wanting in ethical and values behaviours if their choices are mostly influenced by their parents or guardians, and the admission influenced may have neglected merit. Due to frustration and confusion on the part of student reading the course they were influenced to study without interest, results in all kinds of negative behaviours. These affect administrative and learning plans due to initial negligence of admitting the right candidate for the right choice of course and some of them not based on merit too.

Examination malpractice: A lot of examination malpractice is witnessed in Universities nowadays. It ranges from cheating, impersonation, and result falsification which undermine the integrity of the educational system. Probably due to over dependency on paper qualification in the labour market students engage in all these evil ways to make good grades even when they can hardly defend it during interview.

Dilemmas in Educational Administration: University’s administrators are faced with challenges of navigating complex moral and ethical decisions, balancing individual interests with institutional responsibilities. Much of the demanding factors are ethical leadership behaviours on motivating staff to perform to optimum capacity while maintaining positive human relations and cooperation. Communication gap also strain the desired behaviour of both teachers and students – pitfall in ethics and values

Corruption and Nepotism: This is a persistent challenge in Nigerian Universities because “God fatherism” and extended family system is rooted in the culture. This implies that your relative who is in authority is expected to help you get what you want within his jurisdiction of office. This causes violation of rule of law, as is with the case of admission vices. According to Okonkwo and Chinelo (2024), “due to corruption in the system, bias and fairness in the management of institutions of learning is challenging, especially in such critical areas like admissions and grading”.

Professional ethics: plays a vital role in University education. Educators sometimes fail to adhere to codes of conduct that promote honesty, fairness, and respect for students, colleagues, and the institution as a whole. Every profession has code of conduct or rules and regulations that guide their actions and behaviour.

Research ethics: This reflect the issues like plagiarism, data falsification, and informed consent regarding unacceptable practices in conducting research. Educators that indulge in these unethical behaviours not only make leadership difficult but hinder progress of the system.



Inadequate funding: Insufficient funding affects the quality of education, infrastructure, and resources, ultimately impacting the students learning experience. Okonkwo and Chinelo (2024) pointed out that inadequate financial support to education system makes it difficult to employ new technologies fully in

The management of academic institutions, especially at higher education level.

Brain drain: The mass exodus or emigration of skilled and educated young Nigerians due to unfavourable working conditions, poor remuneration and lack of opportunities affects the University system. It has become a common view that Nigeria is currently faced with brain drain due to high level of emigration; considering the use of slogans “I’m checking out” or “Japa Syndrome” by the youths. The reason is not far-fetched. Poor job opportunities is pushing them out to search for greener pastures abroad; thereby losing the best brains needed to manage the nation’s various sectors of economy, and not only education system.

Cultural and Religious diversity: Pose challenges to University management, especially where there is poor governance structure. As a result of technology advancement and globalization, there is expansion in the demand for University education. This apparently has made the world a global village and has drawn students from far and wide, of diverse cultural and religious background. The leader (university management team) as well as lecturers therefore is faced with challenges of cultural and religious diversity regarding how to balance or align his leadership styles (behaviours) to such diversity; promoting inclusivity and yet respect cultural and religious differences.

Poor Training: Neglect of religious and moral training at all levels of education in Nigeria is negatively impacting the society. Both administrators and lecturers are inadequately informed in terms of new technologies and trends in modern teaching. This is the woes of third world countries regarding constructivist pedagogy. More so, training of the masses to create awareness for any introduced programme is yet to be optimal. For instance, legislation and community participation and support require a powerful public relations programme to be mounted up, so that the feed-back from the public may enable the plan to be improved (Adesina, 1981). By so doing, support of the public is achieved; then decrees and laws are no longer imposed instruments but expression of the public will.

Recommendations

In view of this review paper, the following measures can be adopted to ameliorate the identified ethical and value issues in the management of higher education in Nigeria.

Admission into University and choice of course: Education stakeholders – parents, teachers, guardians and administrators should allow due process of admission, and children to make their choices based on interest. In fact, admission requires new approaches and dynamic creativity. The administrative practices should constantly adhere to changes in the old order; follow due process and quantitative assessment planning before admission. This will help to reduce the overarching mismatch in resource availability and allocation problems. Honest and devoted formula for the admission, allocation and use of resources and benefits thereof is crucial.

Examination malpractice: School administrators should implement the law guiding any offence in school without bias, to serve as a detriment to others (staff and students). In addition, paper qualifications (certificates) should be accompanied with identifiable skills through interview before job offer so as to re-focus the youths on integrating skills with academic qualifications to reduce examination malpractice bearing in mind that practical skills matter.

Dilemmas in Educational Administration: Leadership by example, and transformational leadership style is required to navigate the complex moral and ethical decisions. This is to balance individual interests with institutional responsibilities. Use of motivational strategies to spur staff to optimum performance is crucial; firm and consistent in dealing with ethical and values behavioural deviations by staff and students. Two-way communication strategy instead of top to bottom is essential.

Corruption and Nepotism: The management at all times should prioritize rule of law to deal with issues so as to avoid corruption. Ensuring that admission, hiring, resource allocation and so on are based on merit rather than personal connections or financial gains or political affiliations.



Professional ethics: Every profession has at least identifiable code of conduct that promotes honesty, fairness and respect for others; for example, in school conduct regarding students, colleagues and the institution as a whole should be made available to them. What teachers should know and be able to do are increasingly shaped by world trends. Universal enrolment with diverse background calls for model of higher - order thinking processes, ability to work as team, leadership and communication skills needed in a complex world flooded with information.

Research Ethics: Academics should be aware of the ethics of conducting research. Hence, should avoid issues like plagiarism, data falsification, and a host of other ill behaviours that hinder the progress of education system. Research is meant to identify problems and explore new areas to proffer solution which abhors falsification, plagiarism, etc. Offences should be matched with appropriate punishment and effective implementation strategy.

Funding: Enough funds should be allocated to education. It is capital intensive and other sectors of economy depend on education sector for manpower supply. Staff should be properly remunerated to curtail unnecessary extortion from students being coerced into buying lecture notes. The 26% fund allocation to education sector as recommended by UNESCO to Nigeria is yet to be met.

Brain Drain: The rate of emigration of Nigerian educated youths nowadays is alarming. The outcry regarding poor job opportunities and unfavourable working conditions should be faced with urgent need for reversal. Nigeria government should engage in a serious stakeholders meeting to arrest this ugly situation of excessive emigration; creating jobs and initiating favourable working conditions.

Cultural and Religious diversity: Progress towards universal enrollment has brought into the classroom a much more diverse student population, with different backgrounds and aspirations. Hence teachers must have a stronger mastery of the disciplines they teach; and be able to model the higher-order thinking processes. Teachers should improve themselves through training; they are now expected to know how to attend to the different learning needs of students, to promote a climate of mutual respect in a multicultural environment and to create for their students exciting, age and context relevant learning experiences.

Training: A review of curriculum on religious studies is imminent considering the level of moral decadence in our society. Training for constructivist pedagogy is necessary; and continuous professional development by the administrators and lecturers to stay updated on best practices for inclusive teaching. More so, training students to acquire soft skills is necessary so as to augment the paper Certificate acquired, and to be relevant in the labour market.

Apart from the foregoing recommendations, what teachers should do in attending to different learning needs that would motivate and impact students behaviour positively are:

Identify learning gaps and fill it by providing support where necessary.

Differentiate instruction by tailoring teaching methods to meet diverse learning styles, abilities, and needs of the students. Therefore, adjust instruction to meet individual needs.

Confidence boost: teachers should provide scaffolding to students which give them temporary support and helps to build confidence.

Use of diverse teaching strategies: the pedagogical method should be attractive and compelling to make learning interesting.

Monitor progress: students' performance needs regular monitoring and supervision to avoid deviation both in academics and ethical behaviour.

Conclusion

The administrators of academic institutions particularly University education should always consider their roles as changing agents of the society. The purpose of University education is to train high-level manpower needs through strategic planning and implementation of the National Policy on Education. Therefore, University education in Nigeria like elsewhere is need-oriented; problem-solving service organization that trains and coordinate the activities of experts towards desired development. By understanding the special role of managing University education being a problem-solving social



organization that any challenging issues like the ethical and values education can be re-engineered for sustainable national development. The need to make changes in the policy and actualization of such policy lies in the effective administration and authentic research of academicians for a functional education to meet the current needs of the society for sustainable national development.

Consequently, a deliberate attempt to make religious and moral education training very necessary as general studies at all levels of education system in Nigeria will go a long way in reducing the level of infringement on various ethical matters. Then, the enforcement of policy guidelines and punishing offenders as prescribed by law as checks and balances is important. More so, being in a fast changing society, both administrators and lecturers should follow the world trends in updating their skills towards higher-order thinking processes, ability to work as a team, leadership and communication skills useful in this complex world flooded with information. Thus, training and re-training provides mature experiences and needed skills to pilot the affairs of University system towards sustainable national development.

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