

## ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE AND PRINCIPLES IN NIGERIA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

### **Introduction:**

This paper highlights the background and importance of administration with specific focus on university administration and the role of administrative officers as the engine room of university administration. Administration is structured, hierarchical and coordinated to ensure that all activities and actions taken in the course of duty are unified and directed to achieve onerous and objective goals. The profession is therefore constituted as a clique, a crop of selected and professional officers to portray professionalism, unity of command, proper conduct and due diligence. It has a unique and complex structure headed by appropriate and designated officers in the ranks just as you will find in the military institutions where generals, brigadiers, majors, captains and lieutenants exist above non-commissioned officers and files.

An administrative staff is therefore regulated through delegated authority and derives their powers to act, operate and function from the leadership and goals of the organization. In the university system, careerists and professionals in administrative tasks promote the academic institution as a citadel of learning and Centre of excellence as a formal organization. Hence, they cannot work in isolation because whenever two or more people require the presence of a leader who should be responsible for the overall or partly held action of others.

University administration strongly depends on partnership, seniority, mutual respect and shared comradeship, orderliness, limitation of powers and procedural rules. Hence, this paper concludes that the failure of any administrator to adhere strictly to rules governing the roles, duties, responsibilities and functions of his/her office would be prejudicial to the person and catastrophic to the profession, career and institution.

### **Background of administration and bureaucratic culture in the university system:**

*Administration 'exist in any form of organization because human beings are brought together to make use of tools, equipment and resources for the attainment of set objectives'.*  
Administration therefore remains a process and machinery *'concerned with planning, coordination, supervision and control of institutions or organizations...the process through which*

*social stability is guaranteed. It is an instrument of continuity no matter whether there is a change of government or leadership. It is the stabilizer of the society and the guardian of tradition.*

*There must be an established 'relation between legally instituted authorities and their subordinate officials which is characterized by deprived rights and duties, prescribed in written regulations, authority relations between positions, which are ordered systematically, appointment and promotion based on contractual agreements and regulated accordingly, technical training and experience as a formal condition of employment, fixed monetary salaries, a strict observance of office by incumbent in the sense that the official does not own the means of administration and cannot appropriate the position...involves obeying rules. A good bureaucrat needs to be trained to accept rules and get on with the job'.*

*In the civil service, administrative behavior was developed in such a manner that makes it 'a body or organ which enjoys continuity of existence. Its members ...are not limited to a short term of office at the end of which they may not be returned to office. Elected members come and go (i.e. vice-chancellors, deans, directors and heads of departments), but civil servants (university administrative officers) remain in office. When a civil servant relinquishes his office for whatever reason, his place is taken by another person who similarly enjoys security of employment. Collectively, civil servants command a pool of management of the day... a civil servant is required to assist in formulating and implementing the policies approved... whatever his personal or private opinions or attitudes may be. This does not mean a civil servant should undertake illegal action. If so directed, he should invite attention immediately to the legal position or requirement and advise on the proper action to take. He has the duty also to advise on the implications of a policy or action.*

The ethics of the civil service mainly focuses on the value-facts summarized as : Discipline, hard work and transparent integrity; obedience of lawful orders and constituted authority; loyalty, honesty and courage; good moral standing for service reputation and community respect; effective leadership, exemplary character and enhancement of personal image in the public; cooperation, tact and industry; proper engagement and knowledge of work; issuance of schedule of duties, work sequence and timeline; avoidance of delay, dedication to duty, punctuality and regularity at work; Good writing skills, efficiency through speedy action and dispatch of official records; Delegation of urgent/routine matters to subordinates in

absence, running orderly office and proper file and equipment storage and organization; Proper dressing, courtesy, helpfulness and kindness to others; Conversant with financial rules and commitment to cost cut in spending public; National consciousness and respect for the secularity and diversity of the work; Self-efficiency at work through self-development and continuous training; Respect for the Constitution and laws of the land and conscious use of authority derived from the law, rules and regulations and other legal sources and traditions with a caveat that authority is itself defined and it has a duration.

Within the formal organization here bureaucracy exists, four main groups are identifiable namely: Administrative Classes, Executive Classes Professional/Technical classes And Clerical Class. In Nigerian Administrative, five main groups have emerged over time through reforms namely: Administrative, Professional and Technical Officers Class; Executive Class; Secretarial Class; Clerical/Junior Technical and Sub-technical Classes and Un-established grades.

The principles of centralization and decentralization of authority and devolution of power assumes that it is the duty and responsibility of the administrative corps to report to and take directives from the Head of Administration or the Chief Administrative Officer in the Organization, who is vested with powers and authority relating to the functions of Administrative Staff. In effect, all powers wield and duties performed by them legally and morally derive and rest on their source of powers.

Administrative Staff must realize that the process of articulating, implementing, aiding, supporting or accomplishing their functions of offices or providing leadership in duty post remains the function of the Chief Administrator who either devolved or empower them to act as his representatives but mindful of their limitations, responsibilities and the attendant implications.

Institutional leadership itself is a condition of qualification and background, training and exposure, administrative efforts and effectiveness, best practices and good management characterized by personal ability to see an organization as a whole, make decisions, delegate authority and command loyalty.

Administrative leadership is committed to improve organization effectiveness by being externally familiar with the public and their environment by displaying qualities such as: Foresight and clarity of vision; Decisiveness and correct judgement; Progressive attitude as a source of inspiration; Ability of a good organizer and public relation person.

**The Registrar and Registry within the scope of University Administration:**

Management theories often anticipate that ***'nothing can stand on nothing'***. Hence, administrative staff cannot stand alone without connecting to a source of authority and legitimacy from where they derive their powers, rights and privileges as experts and co-workers in the field of administration. Administrative Officers as a very important group in the University system is directly linked to the Chief Executive or Vice Chancellor and the Management (Principal Officers) and remainder of the administrative structure. The Chief Executive also requires the support of leadership in administration to perform his functions and carry out organizational goals.

**In the University system, the Administrative Staff forms the Civil Service.** It is the duty of the Administrative Officers under the leadership of the Chief Administrative Officer *'to assist in the formation (formulation) of policy, the coordination and improvement of (organization's) machinery and the general administration and control of departments (within the Organization)'*. The administrative officers rank from bottom to top are namely; Administrative Assistant, Administrative Officer II, Administrative Officer I, Assistant Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Director and Registrar (*a principal officer and chief administrative officer*). Members of the cadre possess good bachelor honors' degree with professional qualifications and leadership skills.

The Executive Class is the next rank in the bureaucratic organization and consists of: Assistant Executive Officer, Executive Officer, Higher Executive Officer, Senior Executive Officer, Principal Executive Officer, Assistant Chief Executive Officer and Chief Executive Officer Grade. Members of the cadre may possess lower degrees and diplomas upgraded through ranks in view of their additional qualifications and experience on job. They perform duties of general nature such as routine, professional and supervisory work in subordination to and under the control of Administrative Officers and *'carry out policy and handle individual cases where judgement, initiative and resource are needed. In practice, this puts the executive class in charge of the operational work. In some departments...administrative officer (deals with regulations and policy matters) and an executive officer (supervises) the operation ... (with the administrative officer being) the highest (ranking officer).'*

The essence of providing the extensive detail above is to give insight to the job weight and tradition surrounding administrative practices. Just as the Head of Service overseas and lead administration in the civil service, the Registrar as the

‘Chief Administrative Officer’ (head of Administration) in the Nigerian University system, except on matters relating to finance where the Bursar hold sway, is set to take charge, even though the role of Registrar in Nigerian University system has changed within a phase of time and is still changing. The statute which requires Registrar to function as the Chief Administrative Officer of the University and be responsible to the Vice Chancellor for the day-to-day administrative work also extend to his virtue of his office as the Secretary to the Governing Council, the Senate, Congregation and Convocation.

A typical Registrar’s Department is divided into the following Divisions headed by other senior administrative officers such as:

a. Academic Division – handles students' admission, examination, academic records, certificates and transcripts and prizes. Here in the Niger Delta University is the Exams of Records office and the Senate office.

b. Establishment (Personnel) Division – handles all staff matters such as recruitment, welfare, training and development and staff retirement benefits, including pensions office.

c. Council Affairs and General Administrative Division – provides support for Registrar and handles matters not directly under any section (special duties inclusive).

d. Student Affairs Division – Overseas freshman orientation, student accommodation, catering services, organization of sports, student union activities, non-academic records, guidance and counselling, scholarship, bursaries and other awards.

e. College/Faculty/Administration – represents Registrar in various academic program: The faculty officers.

Extensions of the Registrar’s Department outside the central Administration are the professionals working in Divisions like; works services/ physical planning, Information and Public Affairs Division and Legal Division usually domiciled in Vice-Chancellor's Office.

Having said that, let me at this junction discuss the powers of the faculty officers in the area of staff discipline as contained in the Guidelines and Conditions of Service and the Law.

Generally, it is the duty of every Head of Department/ Supervisor to cause a disciplinary process. The faculty officer being the representative of the Registrar in the faculties is the rightful person to do so where a staff is found wanting, the faculty officer can issue a warning or query at that level and conclude it where the reply/response to the query is seen to be satisfactory. Meaning faculty officer as the supervisor should ensure that it is not every matter that arises in his or her office that reach the Registrar or Vice Chancellor that will cultivate

into disciplinary action. They are encouraged to have a good working relationship with his/her subordinates.

### **Conclusion**

The Registrar as the Chief Administrative Officer of the University is the head of the Administrative *'management team which provides services to enable the University to perform its duties of teaching, learning, research and public service. With his team of administrative staff, the Registrar ensures correct and proper implementation of policy decisions...ensuring that everything is in place as existing rules and regulations allow...for the coordination of all activities.'*

Every Administrator must therefore take cognizance of these facts in taking any action or participating in any official activity of the University. The challenges, prospects and limits of the Registrar's powers would continue to determine the nature and scope of Registry work and the capacity of Registry staff to act and translate the work into an effective and efficient role in pursuing the objects of the University and managing its community. Therefore, as administrators work within the powers of the Registrar and as delegated.

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