



EMERGING TRENDS IN PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract:

Educational planning and administration trends in higher institutions across the world continue to evolve due to the new discoveries, research outcomes, funding, technological and industrial advancement of the institutions. Administrators of higher education programmes in Nigeria are saddled with the task of developing appropriate administrative policies whose implementation must be in line with the sustainable development of the 21st century academia. This paper discussed the extent to which institutions of higher learning in a developing nation like Nigeria should plan and administer higher education programmes, as well as operate to achieve academic excellence, high standard, international ranking and effective administration. The authors equally provided suggestions for improvement to stakeholders that may require such transformation.

Keywords: higher education, planning, administration, learning students

Introduction

The essence of education and higher education studies to the development of young people in a country like Nigeria cannot be overemphasized in this 21st century.

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According to Okebukola (2008), higher education provides high level human resources for driving the economy and ensuring rapid societal transformation. That is, the greater the opportunity given to the citizenry for higher education, the more expansive the horizon for rapid social and economic development. Obiozor & Nwosu (2016) stressed that in the field of higher education, knowledge and skill acquisition must play vital roles to the functional lives of the learners; thus, academic excellence in any higher education programme requires a student's good standing in his or her study which has long been the basis on which students of all levels could overcome their challenges to become graduates, educated professionals and responsible citizens. Negroponte as cited in Obiozor & Nwosu (2016) stressed that solving human problems would require educational efforts no matter what global problem you are dreading, whether it's the elimination of poverty, whether it's the creation of peace, whether it's solving environmental energy problems, the solution- whatever it is- multiple solutions, the solutions always include EDUCATION; never is it without an EDUCATION component and sometimes cannot be done without EDUCATION.

The Nigerian society relies on the tertiary institutions across the country for the education, training and imparting of skills to her young population engaged in various fields of study. The kind of higher education programme provided in these institutions of learning must adhere to the global trends entrenched directly or indirectly in planning and administration of higher education programmes. Such administrative roles are conducted in order for such institution to compete favourably with others in the teaching-learning process in this 21st century.

Thus, educational planning and administration trends in higher institutions across the world continue to evolve due to the new discoveries, research challenges and outcomes, funding, technological and industrial advancement of the institutions. Moreover, administrators of higher education programmes are saddled with the task of developing appropriate administrative policies whose implementation must be in line with the smooth running of the institutions and for sustainable development of the 21st century academia. The authors of this study believe strongly that the goal of higher education hinges on the development and enhancement of quality education, acquisition of appropriate knowledge skills by the learners and employment opportunities for the graduates. In this regards, through consolidated and coordinated efforts of the stakeholders, the higher education administrators contribute to the resolution of many of the problems that influence teaching and learning or adversely affect the educational status of the population. Therefore, the provision of appropriate planning with strong academic and administrative policies could lead to the success of higher education programmes in any given institution. The central focus of this paper is

to assess the trends in planning and administration of higher education programmes for successful training and empowerment of Nigerian youths in the 21st century.

The Concept of Administration

University [administration](#) and [management](#) flourishes through the officers' adherence to its guiding principles of [educational philosophy](#), as they serve the higher education community. According to Webster's New World College Dictionary (2010), *administration* means the following:

1. The act or process of administering, especially the management of a government or large institution.
2. The activity of a government or state in the exercise of its powers and duties.
3. often *Administration*
 - a. The executive branch of a government.
 - b. The group of people who manage or direct an institution, especially a school or college.
4. The term of office of an executive officer or body.

Instam (2014) refers to *administration* as the management of an office, business, organisation or institution. It involves the efficient organisation of people, information, and other resources to achieve organisational objectives. Information is the key to institutional business operations, and people are the resources who make use of information to add value to an organisation. This means that institutions like universities will struggle without some type of [administrative management](#).

In a university system, there are distinct administrative authorities who facilitate the higher education programme process – viz; the academic and non-academic authorities. The academic authorities/academic staff comprising of the teaching professionals – graduate assistants, lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors, and professors; while non-academic staff comprise of the administrative machinery - junior and senior personnel of the university (for instance) who oversee the day-to-day administrative unit activities of the institution. Wikipedia (2016) added that every university equally have those referred to as being in the *academic administration* cadre - a branch of [university](#) or [college](#) employees responsible for the maintenance and supervision of the institution and separate from the [faculty](#) or [academics](#), although some personnel may have joint responsibilities. Some type of separate administrative structure exists at almost all [academic](#) institutions, as fewer and fewer institutions are governed by employees who are also involved in academic or scholarly work. Many

senior administrators are academics who have advanced degrees, teach a little or/ and no longer teach or conduct research actively.

University Education in Nigeria

In line with the provisions of National Policy on Education(Revised Ed. 2004), Tertiary Education is the Education given after second day education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics courses institutions offering correspondence courses.

The goals of tertiary education include to:

- a) Contribute to national development through high level relevant man power training;
- b) Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- c) Develop the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments.
- d) Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society; promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- e) Forge and cement national unity; and
- f) Promote National and international understanding and interaction.

Tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria are expected to pursue the above 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 the Industrial Training Fund (ITF);
- g) Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES);
- h) Maintenance of minimum education standards through appropriate agencies;
- i) Inter-institutional co-operation;
- j) Dedicated services to the community through extra-mural and extension services.

Types of University Programmes

University programmes conducted in various fields of study fall under the following:

- Certificate programmes;
- Diploma programmes;
- Undergraduate programmes (bachelor's degree);
- Postgraduate programmes – masters and doctoral degrees;
- Postdoctoral programmes;
- Research fellowships.

Administrative Titles in Higher Education Settings

Depending on the country, higher education programmes in different institutions have management executives with unique titles that depict their positions/roles/office portfolios. Conway (2000) for instance, explained that the Chief executive, the administrative and educational head of a university, depending on tradition and location, may be termed the [University president](#), the [provost](#), the [chancellor](#) (as it is in the United States of America), the [vice-chancellor](#) (as it is in the United Kingdom and many [Commonwealth](#) countries), [principal](#) (Scotland and Canada), or [rector](#) (Europe, Russia, Asia and the Middle East). In Nigeria, top university management executives include the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor (chief executive officer of the university); while in Colleges of Education and Polytechnics have Provosts and Rectors as their chief executive officers. These institutional leaders are answerable to the Governing Councils appointed by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

An administrative executive in charge of a university department or of some schools may be termed a [dean](#) or some variation, such as dean emeritus or even provost (as the case may be). The chief executive of academic establishments other than universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics, may be termed principal, headmaster or [head teacher](#) (secondary/high/primary schools), director (used to reflect various positions ranging from the head of an institution to the head of a programme). Academic administrations are structured in various ways at different institutions and in different countries saddled with different responsibilities as discussed by Wikipedia (2016).

Key responsibilities

Key administrative responsibilities (i.e. administrative units) in academic institutions include:

- Admissions
- Supervision of academic affairs such as hiring, promotion, [tenure](#), and evaluation (with faculty input where appropriate);
- Maintenance of official records (typically supervised by a [Registrar](#) in the United States - In the United Kingdom not all institutions have a Registrar, who would have varying responsibilities for non-academic matters depending on the institution);
- Maintenance and audit of financial flows and records;
- Maintenance and construction of campus buildings (the *physical plant*);
- Maintenance of the campus grounds;
- Safety and security of people and property on the campus (often organized as an office of [public safety](#) or [campus security/police](#));
- Maintenance and construction;
- Supervision and support of campus [computers](#) and [network](#) ([information technology](#));
- Fundraising from private individuals and foundations ("development" or "advancement");
- Research administration (including grants and contract administration, and institutional compliance with federal and state regulations);
- Public affairs (including relations with the media, the community, and local, state, and federal governments);
- Student services such as disability services, career counselling and library staff.

Trends in planning and administrative policies

If you want to play a role in the smooth running of a university, college of education or polytechnic, then a career in higher education administration may be for you. According to AGCAS Editors (2016), education administrators organise and manage the administration, support systems and activities that keep an educational institution running smoothly. They're usually based in higher or further education (HE or FE), although such jobs are also available in schools and private colleges. The editors succinctly explained that planners and administrators of higher education programmes normally work in areas such as admissions, quality assurance, data management and examinations or in a specialist department such as finance, careers, marketing or human

resources. All of these can be either centrally based or within faculties, departments or other smaller units. Job titles and job descriptions vary widely, and not all will have 'education' or 'administrator' in the title.

As a 21st century education administrator, you'll need to:

- work on committees including academic boards, governing bodies and task groups;
 - assist with recruitment, public or alumni relations and marketing activities;
 - administer the 'student lifecycle' from registration or admission to graduation or leaving;
 - provide administrative support to an academic team of lecturers, tutors or teachers;
 - draft and interpret regulations and deal with queries and complaints procedures;
 - coordinate examination and assessment processes;
 - maintain high levels of quality assurance, including course evaluation and course approval procedures;
 - use information systems and prepare reports and statistics for internal and external use;
 - participate in the development of future information systems;
 - contribute to policy and planning;
 - manage budgets and ensure financial systems are followed;
 - purchase goods and equipment, and process invoices;
 - supervise other administrative staff;
 - liaise with other administrative staff, academic colleagues, teachers and students;
 - communicate with partner institutions, other institutions, external agencies, government departments and prospective students;
 - organise and facilitate a variety of educational or social activities
- AGCAS Editors (2016).

Challenges faced by Administrators of Higher Education

[Top issues facing higher education according to the Forbes eBook On Paying For College \(2014\)](#); cost continues to top the list of concerns for the administrators of higher education across the world, including Nigeria and other African nations.

- *Cost* continues to top the list of concerns for the universities, government and, most importantly, the public. Much of the cost increase over the past five years can be attributed to reduced federal/state support for public institutions which has forced an offset through increases in tuition and fees. The highest increases

have been at state-owned polytechnics and universities where 75% of students are enrolled. Government is expected to be drawing further attention to this issue with appropriate approaches to reducing the burden of the administrators in higher education.

- *Renewal of the Higher Education Act* by Congress got started last year in 2013 America. However, the in-depth work of shaping and testing new policies and regulations picked up steam in 2014. At this point, accreditation reform appears to be one of the few issues parties agree is needed although consensus on its purpose is lacking. Same situation needs to be reviewed in Nigerian universities and other tertiary institutions via the National Universities Commission Act, etc.
- *Workforce development* is taking on greater importance as [employers are once again hiring but they are still having difficulty finding applicants with needed skills](#). This is creating dialogue around the nation's "skills gap" and the need for higher education to do a better job of preparing future workers. Meanwhile, business and industry remain largely on the side-lines in terms of efforts to increase employee degree completion. This calls for promotion of vocational training and entrepreneurship education programmes in higher education settings.
- *Competency-based education (CBE)* [is receiving attention from the media as more schools dip a toe into these new waters](#). There is much to be done here. Few understand exactly what is meant by "competency", know how to measure it, or comprehend what can actually be done with a degree attained through such a process (employers may like it, but what about grad schools). Even the appropriateness of the term "competency-based education" is questioned by some as such programs are focused on the [assessment of one's ability to apply learning already](#) acquired rather than the attainment of new learning. Should this be "competency-based credentialing" (CBC)?
- *Accreditation* has become the "piñata" of both the political and policy communities. Few of those who are critical of it understand the present system, a big part of the problem. However, before any meaningful reform can be undertaken, there needs to be agreement as to whether the present system is "too difficult" or "too lax" and whether the desired end state is a regulatory enforcement body or one of quality assurance.
- *Assessment* has become a major concern for higher education. Increasingly, regulators and accreditors are moving away from input models and instead are asking, "What is the country receiving in return for the billions being spent on higher education and how do we know if it is effective?" Learning outcome-

assessment has become the basis for determining institutional effectiveness. However, the availability of valid, widely accepted tools and methods needed to determine learning and skill acquisition are proving hard to come by.

- *Quality assurance in non-institutional learning* is one of several awkward terms attached to granting equivalency to similar learning within an academic institution. There is growing consensus that a need exists for standards and greater transparency in the process for determining the credit worthiness of learning achieved outside the academy. This is an aspect of higher education long dominated by the [American Council on Education](#). As more institutions are starting to make such determinations independent of one another, the [Council for Higher Education Accreditation \(CHEA\)](#) has created a commission to consider what is needed. All want some assurance of quality but no two assessors are using the same yardstick. In Nigeria, the National Universities Commission (NUC) and other related bodies handle such issues and needs to be reinvigorated.
- *There is a need to recognize the (not-all-that-) new majority in student bodies.* While higher education has seen a dramatic shift in student demographics, neither the media nor the policy community appear to fully recognize that today's typical student is no longer an 18 to 24 year old studying full-time on a campus. In fact, there is data which shows that fewer than 20% of the roughly 20 million now enrolled fit this traditional description. The rest are "post-traditional" students who are older, working part-time, and often commuting, either by car or, increasingly, the Internet. Yet, policies and programs still make assumptions based on the needs of a shrinking minority.
- *A leadership crisis is looming.* It is debatable whether the need to prepare new leaders in higher education is coming or has already arrived. Demographic data show an increasingly "seasoned" group at the top of our colleges and universities. According to an American Council on Education report (The American College President, as cited in Forbes, 2014), "Two decades ago the average age of college and university presidents was 52. Today, it is 61." Only the community college sector seems to recognize this as a problem and it is taking action. Community college leadership programmes are springing up in schools of education across the country. And while some may question whether these are the right places to be training future leaders in areas such as the use of technology, innovation, advocacy and entrepreneurial thinking, there is little else filling the void.

- *The economy* in Nigeria is struggling to gain strength and unemployment is still rising. [Cost-value comparisons](#) that question the investment in a degree at today's prices (always the "published" tuition for an elite private institution) are increasing in frequency. Student recruiting and enrolment/payment of tuition is likely to have serious challenges as a result of poor economic activity and because of the political situation in certain parts of the country.

Need for Strategic Planning of Higher Education

Planning of higher education structure and programmes is essential to the standard, stability and progress of the institution. [Sanaghan & Hinton](#) (2013) stressed that just about every higher education institution periodically engages in strategic planning. Some of this planning is part of the fabric and culture of a university, but many campuses engage in planning only when required by accrediting agencies or mandated by the federal or state-wide system offices, or after a crisis. Regardless of the motivating factor, [Sanaghan & Hinton](#) argued that challenges with the planning process result in too many campuses failing to achieve their original planning goals even when a great deal of time and effort are invested.

The following advice might provide some helpful information to administrators and faculty as they think about crafting their institution's strategic planning process and connecting it to the life of the campus:

1. *Visible and committed senior leadership is essential.* Administrators should ensure that the information needed to develop the university plan is readily available, all of the planning processes are transparent and that there is widespread engagement in the process. The Vice chancellor must be the leader of the planning process and use the designated "planner" as a key resource.
2. *Authentic faculty involvement and engagement will make or break a strategic planning process.* Without the meaningful engagement of faculty in the strategic planning process, the resulting plan will not get carried out. There must be a standing committee that is responsible for monitoring the implementation and assessment of the strategic plan.
3. *The University Governing Board needs to have a balanced role in the strategic planning process.* Accreditors discourage top-down planning and instead emphasize collaborative, participatory planning processes. The board is responsible for ensuring that an intelligent, disciplined and inclusive planning process takes place for their institution.
4. *It is important to avoid "listening to yourself too much.* Attention to the external environment is an on-going necessity and practice. Faculty and administrators need to

pay attention to what is going on regionally, nationally and internationally. They need to be well versed about programme enrolment trends, student demographics, parent expectations, broad financial trends and issues, employment demand, technological innovations and new teaching strategies. Just think about how much change we have experienced over the past five years. The next five years promise to be equally complex, fast-paced and challenging. Campus stakeholders throughout the campus, not just the senior level, need to understand the big picture and changing context of higher education on an on-going basis. This type of engagement can only happen if the Vice chancellor and senior leaders create opportunities for people to convene and discuss the events, trends and issues facing their institution. This is not a one-shot thing. There should be multiple opportunities throughout the year for these important and strategic discussions. These internal SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analyses are a vital component of the planning process and remain equally critical once the plan is implemented in order to ensure assessment of the plan is realistic and on-going.

5. *You need to make extraordinary efforts to communicate with stakeholders throughout the planning process.* While many campuses believe periodic e-mail updates about the plan are sufficient, it is important to use a variety of communication vehicles that include both high-touch (e.g., town hall meetings or "chews and chats" where stakeholders congregate over a breakfast or light lunch to discuss institutional issues and receive updates about the planning process) and high-tech (e.g., electronic newsletters and updates).

6. *Trust is the most important factor in a planning process.* Without a fair amount of institutional trust, every detail becomes a debate; conversations quickly become contentious and things move at a glacial pace. Without trust, a "perfect" plan will be sure to fail. Campus leaders need to know how to build and nurture institutional trust if they are going to carry out their strategic plan. They can build campus trust by creating an inclusive, transparent and participative planning process.

7. *Planning is not a linear process.* Great care should be taken to avoid the "plan to plan" syndrome where there is way too much research, planning, analysis and synthesis in an attempt to do planning perfectly. Apply campus-wide engagement, a shared vision, and on-going feedback about achieving goals is the priority. We need to build agility and resiliency into our strategic planning process given the changing and complex environment we live in. Recognizing this early on in the planning process will ensure work is done rather than merely thought about.

8. *Visionaries are a dime a dozen.* Senior leadership needs to be committed to paying attention to the process, rewarding and recognizing accomplishments, and resourcing

the strategic plan. Implementation is the hard part of strategic planning but essential to its success. If the campus culture lacks rigor and discipline, and is unwilling to hold stakeholders accountable for shared aspirations, implementation will falter.

9. *Campus stakeholders need a way to keep score.* At a minimum, senior leadership needs to commit to a series of yearly "report outs" to the campus community about progress toward institutional goals. This holds stakeholders accountable for implementation and communicates to everyone that the strategic plan is an institutional priority. It is essential that leadership reports shortcomings as well as successes, especially in dynamic times. It helps build transparency, credibility and faith in the planning process, especially in low-trust environments. If a campus has been less than successful in accomplishing their stated goals, senior leadership can communicate why certain things did not occur and share what they will do moving forward. These report outs also further the premise that the campus "owns" the strategic plan, not the president, a planner, or a committee.

10. *The danger of doing too much.* When it comes to carrying out the strategic plan there is often an attempt to do way too much in the first year. People want to see progress toward the plan goals and often try and move on all fronts. On-going communication about achieving goals, no matter how small, is the key to keeping the momentum of the plan alive.

Taken together, the above ten points suggest that the most important elements of planning are around connectedness: connecting colleagues across the campus in the development of a shared vision and shared plan. Connecting in multiple modes – face-to-face and electronically – to gather robust feedback and support. Connecting our individual institutions to the broader higher education landscape. Connecting the planning process and the subsequent plan to the daily operations of the institution. Connecting realistic goals with shared aspirations. And, finally, connecting what we do with what is measured and valued on our campus. These connections are led and facilitated by the vice chancellor and extend up to Council members and down to faculty, staff and students. The plan becomes a reflection of the valuable – and valued – connections ([Sanaghan & Hinton](#), 2013).

Suggestions for Improvement

Success in higher education in Nigeria must involve strategic planning and organizational finesse of the stakeholders whose effective and efficient initiatives must be borne out of stated university policies, standard, vision and mission. Writing on the book, *organization and administration in higher education*, [Schloss](#) & [Cragg](#) (2012)

explained that efficiency, focus, and accountability have become the defining standards for contemporary higher educational leaders. The authors stressed further that situating strategic planning and budgeting within the organization and administration of higher education institutions; contemporary universities require effective and proven strategies for today's change-oriented leaders. There is need to bring together distinguished administrators from two-year, four-year, public, and private polytechnics and universities, to undergo periodic practical orientation and effective guidance on the intricacies of the institutional structure, its functional activities, and contingency planning.

Training coverage according to [Schloss](#) & [Cragg](#) (2012) must also include the following:

- Key leadership positions and expectations
- Faculty and student governance
- Accreditation and assessment
- Budget processes
- Curriculum alignment
- Philanthropic efforts
- Human resource development
- Legal considerations
- Strategic planning
- Crisis management

It is pertinent to note that effective planning and administration can elevate an institution in critical ways, by enhancing recruitment and retention, strengthening student life, increasing outside support and private giving (fundraising), and advancing a reputation for excellence. These practical areas of higher education when followed by higher education planners and administrators would go a long way in solving the academic and management crisis that occurs some times in different universities across the country. The application of practical and authoritative guide orients future and current administrators to the major areas of an academic institution and will assist higher education administrators in leading their institutions to excellence. This process of entrenching productivity, equity, academic excellence, gender parity, justice and fair play in the affairs of the universities should be encouraged to become regular lifestyle of institutions.

Furthermore, university administrators and other employees must pay attention and refer to the University policies at all times in their daily activities. University policies apply to the operations and activities of the University regardless of location. *A University policy is defined as any policy that meets all of the following criteria:*

- has broad application or impact throughout the University across colleges, schools, institutes and/or operating units, including policies whose subject matter or budgetary impact requires review and approval by a member of the Senior Team;
- seeks to ensure compliance with applicable laws, ethical norms, accepted best practices, promotion of operational efficiencies, enhancement of the University's mission, and/or reduction of institutional risks; and
- mandates or constrains actions.

In conclusion, every university is expected to have an intimate campus environment, experienced administrators, and well-structured programme at all fields of study and an incredibly strong faculty and set of students; as a result they will be able to produce a lot of really important research and also have vibrant and exciting classroom experiences (Peabody, 2016). The programme in higher education administration is designed for students who wish to enter administrative roles in polytechnics, colleges of education and universities, state education agencies, and postsecondary-related non-profits.

The National Universities Commission (NUC) coordinates the setting of Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) for the programmes in all Nigerian universities, and prospective students should visit often university websites to find out about admission and academic opportunities as provided by administrative staff for experiential learning in their choice field.

Finally, if strategic planning in higher education is designed carefully, it creates a space for collaborative implementation and becomes the glue that holds the internationalisation process of higher education together (Hunter, 2013). In other words, Hunter concluded that it can act to strengthen the culture and enable the university to become the institution it wants to be (thus, achieving its vision and mission). The authors urge university administrators to ensure that programme curriculum/content/instruction prepare and train students for skill acquisition, employability and self-actualisation in the society.

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