
BUREAUCRACY AND CORPORATE PRACTICE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT: *Granting his maiden interview as Registrar in a first generation federal university in Nigeria, an astute Administrator, who had suddenly come into awareness of the importance of his position and the urgency of reconstruction and rehabilitation, promised to restore 'faith in the system'. One might wish to ask; what does it take to restore faith in the system? A SYSTEM is a form of mechanism based on the principles of complementarity and symbiosis. The interplay of these two principles energizes the system and makes it function maximally to achieve set goals. Where these structuring principles are lacking, the system would not be able to achieve and attain the heights necessary for its overwhelming success and for achieving the desired organizational goals. More importantly, the 'workers' of the system would feel less devoted and less bound to the system such that it would affect the overall productivity of service and consequently, dampen institutional spirit. This study focuses on the importance of building, maintaining and sustaining the consciousness of 'faith' in the university bureaucracy. It shall attempt to present in a nutshell the ideas behind bureaucracy, and the intent behind 'street-level bureaucracy' as it affects corporate practice in Nigerian universities. It shall further proceed to enumerate merits and demerits of bureaucracy and its overall impact of university administration in Nigeria.*

KEY WORDS: bureaucracy, corporate practice, Nigeria, universities

INTRODUCTION

It was the American Abraham Lincoln who once said:

“Do not think about what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country.”

Ordinarily, the statement may be thought to be emphasizing country *vis-à-vis* the task or the responsibility of the individual to their country. But a deeper analysis takes the statement away from the liminal to the emotive level. Before an individual can achieve this 'noble' emotional status, they have to be deeply attached to their nation-state to disregard considering its negative aspects, turn askance and maintain a positive posture towards the state despite everything.

The university is composed of three key players; the teacher, the student, and the administrators, whose job is to facilitate good practice and a good working environment. The Administrators are the linchpins of campus operations as they occupy a delicate and definitive space from where they try to entrench synergy and stability through effective management practice. Thus, the word *'faith'* requires greater observance from the Administrator than from any other echelon of the workforce in the university system because by nature of their schedules, the Administrators are the ones that carry the bulk of the weight of the system on their backs. In other words, the 'support' being

provided by the administrative class is such that aid the primary assignment of teaching, research and community service, and generally, knowledge production. While the student is the primary client and the recipient of the action of knowledge proselytization, the teacher is the vessel, and the Administrator provides enabling environment for these two actors to operate. Hence, each one of them is important and indispensable for the production and dispensation of knowledge to the needy community. However, the Administrator who is often referred to as a ‘*support staff*’ because he provides the support services is key and most important as his primary function is to maintain balance and synergy and give definition to the system. He is like the legs of the chair- if removed, it no longer qualifies to be called a chair. He is therefore as important, equal and a partner in the university enterprise. The onerous tasks of the university system get more convoluted by the day with the evolution of additional functions and identification of new challenges as determined by the contemporary needs:

“The complexities of educational systems and their institutions, particularly in Nigeria and other developing countries, tend to be characterized by such phenomena as; student population explosion, diversities in the dimensions of programmes and procedures, inadequacy of funds and other material resources even in the face of inflation, conflicting models and policies adopted for implementation.”¹

Against this backdrop, it is important to note whether bureaucracy has served the university system in good stead, the pros and cons of bureaucracy as they affect the university enterprise in Nigeria.

JUSTIFICATION

The objective of the paper is to research the geometrics of service-delivery in public bureaucracy in Nigeria, in the context of the Neo-Weberian construct with particular reference to Nigerian universities. It is the consensus that the Nigerian public service, and by extension, the university space, had witnessed deficits such that effective and efficient service-delivery had eluded.

The Neo-Weberian model which encourages organization of large number of people working together administratively to achieve set goals remain by far the only known means of achieving the mandate of qualitative service-delivery despite the fact that presently, it has been argued in some quarters that it has only succeeded in breeding ‘*Throttlebottoms*’, noticeable in the depressing state of public utilities, as well as in educational, health and general municipal system failures. The poor performance of public bureaucracy in Nigerian universities was traced to a number of factors ranging from the inherent principle of impersonality and excessive red- tapes which normally creates a gap between the bureaucrats and the citizens, to lack of skills, lack of motivation, lopsided recruitment, defective working condition, work ethics, political interference, and corruption among others.²

University Administrators as service-providers are portrayed as facilitators of public interest in the area of education, which lately, has evolved a keen competition in an ever-expanding market. The question of whether the rivalry is healthy between public and private universities in Nigeria under the supervisory roles of government is another area worthy of study. However, in this paper, we

have attempted to probe the Neo-Weberian bureaucracy *vis-à-vis* service-delivery in Nigerian universities, and how effective or otherwise it is, with emphasis on the professional administrative class. We have also dedicated a substantial part of the paper to the effect of the colonial legacy foisted on the public service in Nigeria, and how this has become effete, irrelevant and ineffective to a large extent in interpreting modern realities in the public service space. The content and structure of '*General Order*' has over the years ensured that the Nigeria's public service remains rooted to a shaky foundation as provided by the '*law and order*' colonial bureaucracy.³

On the issue of university autonomy in Nigeria. Though, somewhere along the line, it was argued that the university should not be treated as part of public service owing to the much touted autonomy, what we have presently cannot be termed autonomy. As long as our universities are still being majorly funded by government, and the Pro-Chancellors and other Principal Officers are still subject to acceptance by government, it will be a parody to insist that our universities are autonomous. University autonomy in this context, therefore, remains sheer exhibitionism. It is a desired future state.

In the final analysis, we have endeavored to capture in the paper other ancillary issues that are peculiar and general in nature, like graduate unemployment, university ranking, mentoring, vision/mission and basic leadership variables that would ensure the reclaiming of qualities and qualitative practice in the public service and in Nigerian universities in particular.

Bureaucracy

The term '*bureaucracy*' cannot be separated from leadership as it is invariably linked with it and a host of other indispensable ideas that form the nexus of management principles. For decades, leadership theories have been a source of intense studies right from Thomas Carlyle's 19th century's '*Great Man's theory*' which tends to emphasize that great leaders are born with innate greatness, to Herbert Spencer's deconstruction of the idea of natural ability, and his affirmation that greatness in leaders should rather be ascribed to social conditions. From '*Trait theory*' through '*Transformational theory*', '*Transactional theory*,' '*Contingency theory*' to '*Behavioral theory*', the flow had been the conduct of leaders in their interactions and switch between **tasks** and **people**. In other words, what determines the success and the effectiveness of the management system is how effectively relationships are handled in accordance with management principles and practice. Thus, leadership, bureaucracy, corporate practice, are all inherently linked and inseparable as the one leads to the other to fashion an effective and efficient operational system.⁴

The term '*Bureaucracy*' has been variously defined as a personnel system where a class of people is entrusted with maintaining '*coordinative activities*' in a system. It is used synonymously with '*Civil Service*, '*Public Service*', '*Administration*,' '*Management*' etc. It is usually defined through its features which include:

- (i) Permanent Appointment: A Bureaucrat is appointed on a permanent basis mostly after a probationary period which is renewable pending the permanent appointment;

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- (ii) Hierarchy: There is a rigid form of hierarchical order whereby a superior-inferior, master-lieutenants chains are set at several levels. The principle of office rule is therefore based on that of higher-level officials superintending the lower level officials in a job environment where every official is responsible to every other official;
- (iii) A Bureaucrat is duty-bound to remain apolitical. He is to show allegiance to the government/management of the day as he typifies permanent continuity, as a tenured officer. Administration will come and go. Government will come and go. But a Bureaucrat, as a tenured officer, remains and will work with various, at times, opposing orders. They are therefore, not granted the luxury of aligning with any party or individual. By training, they are not allowed to be partisan;
- (iv) A Bureaucrat is expectedly, a professional, someone with honed administrative skills, whose duty is to manage an organization in accordance with management principles and practice. Their services are enrolled after a keen contest through examination, and they are trained and re-trained on the job in order to get the best out of them;
- (v) A Bureaucrat is a salaried staff. They are placed on payrolls and draw their salaries as payment for services rendered;
- (vi) A Bureaucrat operates under rules and regulations written down for the day-to-day running of the organization;
- (vii) They operate under what is called '*Code of Conduct*' which regulate their attitudes, the *do's* and *don'ts* of the organization;
- (viii) Class consciousness is a feature in bureaucracy, whereby, the Bureaucrat is conscious of belonging to a distinct class and always endeavour to conform to its ethics and practices;
- (ix) Bureaucracy boasts of distinctive division of labour and operators specialize in areas of jobs in order to make for effective, fast and efficient management practice.⁵ It therefore describes activities in large-scale formal organizations like the Civil Service, the Police, academic institutions, and a host of other large organizations. Its activities are regulated by

*"...rules, procedures, impersonal relations, elaborate and fairly rigid hierarchy of authority, responsibilities and relationships."*⁶

Bureaucrats are therefore, policy formulators, policy implementers and most importantly, front-desk officers for their various organizations as they represent the image, tendencies and sentiments of such organizations. This is what makes their job very important as every Administrator thus becomes a miniscule Public Relations Officer for their organizations. This is in addition to their advisory and record-keeping roles.

Max Weber identified three types of power in an organization *viz*:

- Traditional Power;
- Charismatic Power;
- Bureaucratic Power; which at times, he referred to as Legal Power. ⁷
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He endorsed bureaucracy as the most efficient and the only system that is capable of withstanding the pressures of a large organization. However, by and by, the practice has exhibited a number of frailties from overbearing emphasis on rules and regulations, wastages of time, papers and efforts

i.e. as evident in Committee system; unnecessary delay in decision-making which is not suitable for business ventures, impersonal relationship with the workforce, and a host of others,⁸ what Max Weber called '*bureau pathology*'.⁹ He equally warned of an acute state of officials and impersonality, when allegiance and conformity with rules and regulations will make for the zombification of the workforce and make efficient and effective management practice impossible to achieve, what he called '*Iron cage*'.¹⁰ Hence, no matter how one may want to look at it, interpersonal interaction is highly important in any bureaucratic organization.

And this brings us to the issue of street-level bureaucracy.

Street-Level Bureaucracy

Street-level bureaucracy has come to emphasize the relationships *cum* delivery aspects of public service. It is a study of the impact of the public service bureaucracies on the public. By stressing the Bureaucrat/clients' interaction and the benefits derivable therefrom, street-level bureaucrats are regarded as veritable vehicles to convey the policies of the government to the people. They include policemen, teachers, lower court judges,¹¹ civil servants, public servants, university administrators, secretaries and social workers. Basically, they are called upon by duty, to interact with citizens, and they have extensive impact on the lives of their clients. Conditions such as unavailability of resources with which to perform and deliver maximally, ambiguous and unattainable goals, limited control over the attitudinal configurations and performances of their clients constitute the prevailing job conditions of street-level bureaucracy. For example, while policemen are charged with controlling and curtailing deviant behaviours which emanated from deep social roots, teachers are entrusted with the job of influencing aspects of children's upbringing which they know little about. Thus, street-level bureaucrats are those people who through daily interactions, represent government to the people.¹²

In managing the university estate, the university administrators in their day-to-day performance represent government's policy-thrust on education to the people. They present the face of administration and are also the image-maker of their institutions. This is why it is important for them to be comported and be above-board in the performance of their functions so as not to earn their universities a bad image. Negative tendencies from these operators could quickly and easily send the wrong signals to the people they are meant to serve, which could ultimately boomerang on the universities. For instance, a student-client who was treated rashly by administrators in his Department may likely not give back to the Department when occasion demands that he should do so after graduation. Also, visitors to the university live with the impression they got from the people they met in the offices, in the course of making enquiries. And the impression may stick in their minds for eternity, and determine their future interactions with the institution.

In street-level bureaucracy, relationship is key. The bureaucrats occupy the bottom rung of the policy hierarchy, and represent the direct lines to the people. In our institutions, like in every other large organization in Nigeria, efficiency and effectiveness have been elusive. Basic principles of organizations are not kept. Management principles are sacrificed at the altars of ill-motivation, corruption, bad practices, comatose work ethics, etc. Excuses are proffered for inefficient workers by the bosses who should ensure compliance to ethics. Workers believe more in getting along with

their bosses to get promoted rather than relying on hard work and productivity. Hence, 'eye service' or 'bootlicking' as known in local parlance becomes the order of the day. Appointments are done through patronage rather than on merit. Filial affiliations, church affiliations and all forms of connexions serve as credentials for employment into the service, and people are employed without inkling knowledge of organizational behavior. No formal training of interns is done before or even after employment. There are 1001 excuses for employees to be absent at work in the name of performing civic responsibilities and other personal interests. It is either that they go picking children in school, go to hospitals and health centres, or just disintegrate.¹³ In the middle of the drama, the 'extra-cool' people reign supreme. They are a large set of workers who have less years to retire. These people behave like feudal lords, disregarding all known ethics with impunity. If a supervisor dares as to remind them of probity, punctuality and good conduct, they quickly repudiate the advances by reminding him that they have paid their dues over the years and that they should be served, not serve.

The statement 'Oga-is-not-on-seat' (literally translated as 'the boss is unavailable') syndrome has become a popular refrain in our institutions. Writing in **The Guardian Newspaper** of Sunday, April 6, 1986, Bola Adepoju observed as follows:

"There are eight working hours daily in 40—hour working week. But it would be interesting to conduct a survey to determine how many hours, in actual terms, the civil servant puts into an average working day...If...the Nigerian public servant could put in an average of two hours daily consistently (instead of the normal eight hours) throughout the years, the productivity of the public service would be increased many fold."¹⁴

A bureaucrat resumes late at his desk and takes about one hour to pray and evangelize with fellow 'churchians' especially at the beginning of a new month. He soon leaves for 'morning break' when he goes out or locks himself up in the office to have breakfast. He goes to bank, to PHCN, hospital, supermarket, and then goes home. The needless trips translate to loss of man hours daily and deter him from performing his normal activities. Most importantly, it projects a bad image of the organization as a slugabed and a behemoth. The culture of best practice has been thrown over the fence.

In our universities, the problem assumes a different dimension. Professor Nimi D. Briggs identified in his book, *Thoughts on University Education in Nigeria* the ills of examination malpractices, Strike actions and lock outs, cult activities and poor work ethics. The malaises most common and prevalent among the workforce of the institutions are those of union actions/lock outs and deplorable work ethics. According to him, though fundamentally, the use of collective bargaining for staff welfare is a noble enterprise making up the foundation of unions, the abuse of the 'instrument of strike action' incessantly is to say the least, objectionable:

"...dialogue is abandoned in preference to strike actions especially when the issue has to do with the payment of allowances at individual universities... (even when) the unions themselves are aware that money had not been made available for the payment of the allowances for which they are embarking on strike actions"¹⁵ (p.195)

Coupled with the incessant strike actions by unions to press home welfare demands is the fact that staff take time off to attend union meetings which are usually and at times, deliberately held during working hours. The uppity complex of the management class has not done much to help matters in the various organizations as a line is drawn between them and the unions as soon as they assume management positions. It is the belief that management staff should not see eye to eye with unions as they have diametrically-opposed goals. This should not be the situation as both classes are stakeholders in the system and as such, should always consider the preference and superiority of jaw-jaw over war-war.

Decision-Making Process in the University

The pedestrian definition of Administration is the act of '*getting things done*'.¹⁶ Hence, this act is a process that involves the keeping to a set of methods and procedures for effective decision-making. Decision-making is an administrative function that takes into account records and information retrieval as its pathway to making proper and apt decisions. However, in our universities, a large class of Academic Administrators collaborate with Professional Administrators in making and formulating all necessary decisions and policies. In some instances, some universities have allowed politics and gamesmanship to determine the personalities involved in decision-making. For the academic staff, there is no gainsaying the fact that the frequency of involvement at decision-taking meetings might impact negatively on their primary assignment of teaching, research and community service. The Professional Administrators in turn feeling ripped-off, might abdicate their responsibilities having been under-utilized, and get involved in paltry matters.

In our universities, the committee system is majorly adopted as the vehicle for decision-making. Each university maintains a large number of committees through which it formulates its decisions and policies. The committees which may be statutory, sub or ad-hoc are tagged with distinctive membership, terms of reference and tenure, but their sheer overwhelming numbers ensure that in some instances, their terms of reference overlap. There has been much criticism against the effectiveness of the committee system in an organization. Teasdale (1961)¹⁷ maintains that apart from the fact that it is time-wasting, the results of committees are usually not commensurate with the efforts put in terms of time and money. These criticisms are not alien when viewed in the general context of the weaknesses of excessive bureaucracy which in itself is complex and convoluted, what some scholars described as '*red-tapes*' or '*office tyranny*'. However, by far, the committee system remains the only viable vessel and, by and large, the only effective method for decision-making in our universities. Effective records management in our universities ensures that antecedents are considered in making new decisions and formulating new policies. However, it has been observed that retrieval of relevant decisions have constituted a problem basically because of inadequate computer knowledge of the operators, mismanagement of records or outright lack of interest in locating relevant decisions made in the past. The result is duplication of decisions or even, inadvertent reversal. Information therefore remains a key element in maintaining sanity and ensuring continuity in all the decisions taken either in the immediate or in the foreseeable future.

Coupled with this is the importance of manpower to manage the university estate. The university estate is unique in nature because of its objectives of knowledge transference through research and community service. It is a complex organization that requires adroitness to manage. This brings to question the tradition of having an academic scholar as College President or Vice-Chancellor as the case may be. According to Algo D. Henderson, this practice is relatively new as in the past, religious leaders were saddled with such responsibilities:

*“The value of having educational leaders with intellectual interests and academic orientation is evident. Because of the nature of the institution, **the administration must be run by men who understand fully the task of converting tangible resources into intangible results. (Emphasis mine).** The scholar who understands intellectual inquiry and appreciates achievement will be concerned both with the discovery of knowledge and with its dissemination. He will also defend academic freedom .A man trained in the arts or sciences will probably have these values but he may not have developed the skills necessary to administer an institution or assume the role as an educational leader. **The question is, then, how to preserve these values and simultaneously train a person for administrative responsibilities. (Emphasis mine)**” p.125¹⁸*

The occupants of the hierarchy must be a good scholar and a good manager of men. It is not enough for them to exhibit high erudition but they should also exhibit immense administrative skills and emotional intelligence. The combinations of these make for progressive governance of the estate.

GENERAL ORDERS: THE COLONIAL ALBATROSS

One of the problems of bureaucracy and corporate practice in the Public Service and by extension, in the administrative practice in Nigerian universities is the fact that procedures are still tied to the apron strings of the **General Orders**. These **Orders**

“...are intended to be read in conjunction with Colonial Regulations...”¹⁹

“ The Chief Secretary, the Principal Auditor and the Auditor, the Commissioner of Police and the Gazetted Police Officers, officers serving in the offices of the Governor and the Chief Secretary and the clerical staff...are subject to the General Orders of the Colony...”²⁰

To start with, the word **Orders** give the impression of a body of fiat, decree or unmitigated command from a superior to an inferior. The environment at that time was indicative of a master-servant, boss-intern relationships which was prevalent under colonialism.

General Orders is a colonial compilation of rules and regulations which dated back to the colonial era. Fact is, most of the set down rules and regulations have become averse to contemporary realities in the present-day job environment. Though the copious document covered many grounds ranging from issues of appointments, promotions, retirement, pension, conduct and discipline which stand relevant till date, it has not been reformative and eclectic in its approach, being a document that addressed the colonial situation and colonial exigencies. It remains the only instrument regulating the practices and activities of public officers till date. As it is, the document is palsied and inadequate for the contemporary job environment, though it remains a strong launching-pad for all-embracing regulations.

Let us proceed to look at some sections of the document which one may consider inadequate for the modern-day public service:

**(a) General Order 18-22:
Appointments and Promotions Procedure:**

“When a post on the authorized establishment becomes vacant, it may be filled by the appointments of a candidate with the requisite qualifications and experience selected from within or outside the Service, but the claims of meritorious Officers with adequate qualifications already in the Service of the Colony and then of those in the Service of any other Colony will normally take precedence over those of persons not in the Service.”²¹

This Order serves as the focal point upon which all other Orders on appointment revolve. As it is, this Order made the matter of appointment inclusive like a personal affair of a few member of the ‘*politburo*’. Appointments are not made on the basis of merit ascertained *via* qualifying examinations, but rather the possession of qualifications and experience was stressed here and in other ancillary Orders, over the test of abilities. Situating this in the colonial context where paper qualifications and certificates are valued and could be defended by the possessors, and where only a sizable numbers of qualified job-seekers hankered for job, one would find this emphasis viable. In the present dispensation, weeding tests are introduced in written and oral forms to prune down the large numbers of applicants to a reasonable size. The tests also serve as credible benchmarks to discover good and seasoned manpower who would contribute to the development of the Public Service rather than just adding up to the staff list. In the present circumstance, ‘*claims of meritorious officers*’ would not amount to much as the workplace is always struggling with the overwhelming crowd of applicants seeking for meal tickets.

Also in Order 22 Class B (ii) and Class C (ii), emphasis is not placed on advertisement of vacancies:

*“If in the opinion of the Commission there is no government officer in the Colony who is suitably qualified to the post, **the Commission may then consider government officers outside the Colony, or candidates selected as a result of examinations, or may advertise the post (emphasis mine).**”²²*

In essence, advertising the post and examinations become options only after all efforts of poaching for qualified job seekers have failed. In the present age, it is mandatory to advertise all vacancies to conform to due process. Not doing that is a punitive crime and an aberration of procedures.

There is still a significant synergy between the present practice and the stipulated Orders regarding appointments and promotions. However, Orders like the following Order (i.e. Order 32) are no longer extant:

“Officers under the age of twenty years are not eligible for confirmation to the pensionable establishment.”²³

Also, feminists and gender *aficionados* would hastily shout down the following Orders (i.e. Orders 39-40) which puts to doubt the employability of married women by creating an uneven playing field between them and their male counterparts:

“Married women (emphasis mine) will not be selected for appointment to posts on pensionable establishment, but may be engaged for service on a temporary basis. For the purpose of this General Order, divorcees and widows will be regarded as women.”²⁴

By this statement, only divorcees and widows were given the opportunity of serving in the Public Service to a pensionable state. In the Colony, for a woman to get a job, she would have to divorce or outlive her husband. For women in the service who were married prior to the promulgation of the General Orders, they probably might be relieved of their jobs once it is ascertained that their domestic responsibilities infringed on their official responsibilities. In the present age, these Orders are not practicable. As a result of the “*law and order*” based, colony-centered regulations which formed the foundation of the present-day civil/public service governing instruments, bureaucracy in Nigeria today is viewed as a system that is

“...too bureaucratic, too conservative and there are conduct derived from colonial based civil service which are designated just to make law and order. Further to this, inadequate coordination, communication gap, over-centralization of decision-making, (and) non-application of reforms reports have marred the efficiency and effectiveness ...”²⁵

It should be noted however, that a sizeable number of these Orders remain relevant and are still used in the service as they are products of comprehensive and painstaking enterprise, hence, they remain fundamental substructures that have the capabilities of withstanding the test of time.

Other Challenges:

(a) Graduate Unemployment

It is a known fact in African history that Africans remain one of the most vibrant and enterprising people who are not totally bereft of ideas in matters of administration of resources. Evidence abounds in the rich antecedents of festering trade in gold, silver, copper, ivory in Mali, Songhai, Ghana and in a host of other ancient empires. In these empires, one found traces of good and effective handling of resources. Translating these successes to management of our systems in modern-day bureaucracy and in our ivory towers appeared herculean mainly because of our low technological advancement and the consequent low labour productivity. Human resource is not a problem in Africa, but effective management of resources and manpower. Contrasting the present state of anomie in graduate unemployment with what used to obtain in the early stage of Nigeria’s independence, N. Amankulor observed that:

“Today, with rapid increase in the number of universities and other institutions of higher learning in the country, there appears to be an explosion of graduate

production...and a slump in the graduate labour market to the extent that technically, graduates are being sold two for one kobo.²⁶”

Note that Amankulor wrote his article in 1986. The dire downturn gives room for predatory ethics where in order to make ends meet, graduates, who used to be automatic members of the elitist bureaucracy now tout their services cheaply, in order to keep a ‘respectable’ job. Thus, most graduate employed in today’s corporate space got the job not as a matter of interest but to secure a meal ticket. They are therefore less concerned with ethics of the job or organizational behaviours.

(b) Ranking of Universities

In recent times, a number of organizations and corporate bodies have sprung up to initiate elaborate systems and criteria for ranking of world universities. This is a noble idea as it keeps universities on their toes and keeps them abreast of movements and developments in other institutions of the world. In addition, the global-village concept is further enhanced and concretized as each university is geared up to the universal concept of quality assurance and quality control. However, putting age-long universities on the same pedestal with new and inexperienced universities could only be counter-productive. The concepts, outlooks and aspirations of universities in the developing world are quite different from those of the developed world. The challenges also differ and need specific indigenous solutions. Attentions of these developing universities are therefore turned away from the community-based challenges to the universal requirements as they further lose their relevance in their immediate communities.²⁷ Ordinarily, the developmental challenges which should take precedence over the universal requirements are made to suffer and they further sink into irrelevance when their impacts are not felt in their immediate communities. They focus more on competing with Harvard, Cambridge and other old and established universities, jettisoning their primary concern of impacting on their immediate communities, and using this as a springboard to other achievements *pro bono publico*.

(c) Capacity Training

Human resource has been described as ‘*the life blood*’ of any organization. The success or otherwise of an organization depends solely on how efficient and effective this resource is managed in the formation and formulation of corporate strategy. Hence, managing human resource effectively depend upon how an organization is able to

“...plan, acquire, develop, maintain, dispose of and replace human resources as required by the activities to be performed to accomplish organizational goals and objectives”²⁸

Apart from the fact of their discretionary powers, everyone in an organization is important and required in a team to achieve the goals and objectives of an organization; thus, their knowledge, skills and attitude determine the success of the organization as exhibited by the attainment of its goals and objectives on a continuous basis. But our focus is not on the importance of human resource which is incontrovertible even in the face of digital culture and technological advancement. Our focus is on training and re-training of employees as a way of enhancing performance and rewarding performance. Updating the knowledge of employees in an

organization serves to enrich their skills and enhance their performance towards achieving corporate strategic plans. They tend to approach challenges with confidence and maturity, see threats as opportunities, and deliver on set goals with precision. Capacity building therefore, serves as the substructure for the achievement of the superstructure, ensures the enhancement of corporate goals, and gives the organization the image of stability as it delivers quality services on a continuous basis. Our experience in corporate circles and in our universities has shown that human capacity building has not been given its rightful attention as a corporate strategy. Training and re-training on the job has become herculean for a number of universities in Nigeria due to paucity of funds. This position caused by heavy reliance of universities on government funding, is inexcusable in the present age, as other universities in developed world and in other parts of Africa have divested themselves of the idea of leaning heavily on government to survive, as this is fraught with a lot of dangers and uncertainties. A university that is worth its mettle should be seen as being able to take the contemporary challenges head-on, and this include the fiscal challenge. Financial autonomy is a key element for effective management of the 21st century universities. Also, training and re-training of the workforce is an investment in human resource management that should not be compromised, as the entire future of the organization rests on it. Since most of the expertise of bureaucrats and administrators are learnt on the job, it is important to bring them up to speed with new developments to further the goals, vision and mission of the universities.

Employees must also cultivate the habit of self-sponsorship to training, workshops, conferences and seminars, and see this as personal investments. The knowledge gained through such trainings becomes their personal property and may be put to use to further the cause of the individual or that of any organization. In all, adequate training from time to time is essential for the continuous development and for effective management of the human resources in the university estate.

(d) Vision, Mission and Strategic Planning

In another paper captioned '*Vision, Mission and the 21st Century Nigerian Universities*' we attempted to define the concepts and their usage in Nigeria. We observed that the concepts of vision and mission have been much misunderstood and have suffered misinterpretations and misrepresentations in our various universities, most of who are guilty of muddling-up and switching meanings without a definite comprehension of the issues and targets they set out to address. ²⁹ It is sad to note that our Ivory Towers parade nondescript statements on the Internet as their visions and missions, and have allowed these to stay on for so long without constant review. A few of the universities do not even have a verifiable website, not to talk of exhibiting their visions and missions for the coming years. This is a problem that should be tackled with all deserved seriousness as it is the crutch that bears the weight and the philosophies of every university.

Strategic Planning is a compilation of the vision and the mission of a University. It is a refrain on the set goals and targets of the estate for a period of usually four years; a roster for a number of targets that a University has set-out to achieve within a reasonable timeline, and the ways to achieve them. It is observed that over the years, we cannot unreservedly declare that infrastructural and municipal facilities which form the basis of structural development are adequately provided in our institutions. There are inadequate hostels to house a teeming number of admitted students,

while facilities are also grossly inadequate to cater for their basic needs. The ratio of admitted students far outnumbers the ratio of available facilities. Teacher-students ratio is also lopsided, hence, standard is compromised. Universities in Nigeria reek under the weight of lack of funds, inaptitude, mismanagement of policies and undue intervention by government of the day. Hence, any strategic plan has the onerous task of meandering the contours and this has often proved difficult. New Vice-Chancellors were sworn-in as they revealed beautiful future plans for their universities, but soon found out that instituting and achieving them were as difficult as pushing a camel through the needle's eye. Strategic plans therefore become flaccid, ineffective, unachievable, and a catalogue of pipedreams to say the least.

(e) Mentoring

Mentoring is the perpetuation or dissemination of knowledge from an experienced, and more often than not, an older person, to an inexperienced person, willing to broaden his/her horizon; a transfer of knowledge sown in perpetuity. Knowledge is an essential element in maintaining and sustaining good practices in perpetuity. It is when knowledge or the 'know-how' of a job is passed down from superiors to interns that an organization can claim to have a standard or modules of operation which passes as a tradition. In our universities in Nigeria, mentoring has not been given the deserved attention. A good and efficient boss does not deem it fit to pass on the knowledge to his lieutenants. The institutions do not consider it necessary to initiate a mentoring system whereby the culture of good practice is perpetuated. The result is that our perfections and perfectionists are not replicated, and as they naturally go out of the system due to retirement, their expertise goes along with them. Our heroes are not replicated in the system, and the lacuna widens by the day:

“The university system is a vibrant and complex system. It is a society that requires all hands to be on deck to make it possible for it to actualize its mandate of teaching, research and community service. In this wise, the values, vision and mission of the university which is in perpetuity should be jealously tendered and administered through mentoring, rather than be allowed to capitulate on the account of lack of leadership successive plan.³⁰”

In order to bridge the gap, there is need for the universities to introduce mentoring sessions whereby knowledge will be exchanged and not allowed to extinguish with the passing out of the bearer. In a situation where this is not done, standard will be compromised and the gap of inaptitude and lassitude will take over the system. Someone once said that *“The death of an African is like a library set ablaze.”* It is always wise to preserve knowledge and pass them down through a vibrant mentoring system.

(f) Iron-Cage Bureaucracy

Red-tapism, or what Max Weber termed iron-cage bureaucracy is a troubling trend in government-owned Nigerian universities that is killing corporate strategies and giving the estate a bad image. Complex and unnecessary procedures are enshrined in our institutions and these cause delays in processing matters through the system. This officialdom leaves efforts and clients frustrated and disappointed such that the excesses scare them away and make them look for shortcuts. Office tyranny or excessive bureaucracy leaves no room for discretion but enjoins puritan observances of rules and regulations. Interpretations are therefore myopic and unpliant. Because of the prevailing

conditions surrounding this malaise, it takes only a few number of conscientized workers to run an office, while the larger part of the office workers remain laggards and unproductive. These are the set of people that cultivate the cultures of gossips, idleness and conspiracy. The 'about-to-retire' people, also known as 'extra-cool' constituted a class of people who believe that they have paid their dues by serving in the universities for many years and that now that they will soon retire from the service they should be served and not serve. It is a known fact that the universities, especially government-owned ones harbor a huge numbers of such people and the systems are run always by a few dedicated ones. The fall-out of this lopsidedness is the over-burdening of the few efficient workers, and to make the matters worse, nothing is put in place to reward hard work, and to announce the benefits of hard work. The resultant effect is that it has become impossible to match huge number of the workforce with productivity, and both the efficient and inefficient ones get regularly elevated through batch promotions with no defining lines in-between them. In private universities however, the reverse is the case as elevations and remunerations are performance-based.

CONCLUSION

Leadership is a practice that comes with responsibilities. A good leader is like a round peg in a round hole that makes everything falls in place. With him/her at the helm of affairs, corporate strategies, vision and mission are achieved with ease, as s/he will be able to generate or encourage feasible and positive ideas to confront challenges. In our universities, leaders are appointed, selected or seemingly elected through a process that sublimate political leanings and influence in government. Hence, excellence is sacrificed at the altar of politics, and a crooked foundation is laid.

Peter Drucker once defined **efficiency** as doing the job right, and **effectiveness** as doing the right job:

"Your boss will tell you how to do the job right, but you have to work out for yourself what the right job is; what it needs, and how its needs are changing, and what the organization must do to survive and prosper."³¹

What eludes the greater number of the workforce is discretionary foresight. Most rely on faulty tradition to carry out their daily assignments. The statement, 'That is how we met it' has become a *cliché* and a signpost excuse for official inadequacies. The annoying thing is their unwillingness to change the order. Some of them engage in gossips and chatter because they have mindless jobs to do- jobs that can be considered as routinized paediatrics. For the others who are disillusioned because the system is not rewarding drudgery and because of some uncanny policies of the hierarchy that directly affect their financial concerns, they go to work each day to pass time and 'fill in the garbage' to arrive at the magic time-the closing time. As soon as the clock ticks for closing, they carry their bags and go only to come back the next day to mark time. Deplorable work attitudes in most organizations are direct results of lack of trust and suspicion towards the leadership, and the effect of patronage appointments-employing people through the backdoor; not on merit but on affiliations. The danger of not being productive, creative and proactive is fossilization. When you become unduly preoccupied with the internal system and lose touch with

development in the outside world, you become a hingeless behemoth who proclaims the vastness of his/her father's farm without having ventured outside the farm to look at other fathers' farms. It is all about speed. We live in a period of rapid change and rapid development. Peter Drucker captured it vividly when he averred that the beginning and the end of crisis in an organization is when it allows the speed of change outside it to overwhelm the speed of change inside the organization. That is when it becomes irrelevant and antiquated.

In all, the quality of leadership provided by the hierarchy is germane and determines the quality of service that will percolate from up to down the ladder.

According to Richard Templar:

"You can't be a successful Chief Executive if you are surrounded by embittered, resentful and demoralized colleagues."³²

On this note, our leaders and followers in our universities need to internalize and adjust as appropriate in order not to further compromise the integrity of our universities. Universities are bastions of democratic norms and democratic ideals; fountains of tradition and novelty, citadels where 'authority of ideas' are emphasized, rather than the 'idea of authority'.³³ Our universities are committed to excellence, but are yet to evolve the culture of maintaining excellence over a long period of time. Making excellence a brand that will survive the experience of time is important for universities to remain relevant to the yearnings of their immediate communities and the globe. Lastly, it has become increasingly necessary to consider University Administration in Practice (UAP) as an important area of interest where practical experience of university professional administrators is prioritized over outlandish public administration theories. It has been verified severally that theories do not necessarily translate to practical experiences and that at most times the narrative of the book changes when confronted with barefaced facts on the field. It is important to note that corporate practice in a Neo-Weberian bureaucracy could best be experienced by practitioners who relate more with on-the-field happenings to resolve, re-shape and re-define challenges presented by the itinerary of an ideology in constant evolution.

Thank you for having me.

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