

## ***Effective Leadership Skills as a Panacea for Holding Successful Administrative Positions in Tertiary Institutions***

**Olayinka Aina Falodun, Ph.D**

*Department of Adult Education*

*University of Lagos, Akoka*

*[falodun8@gmail.com](mailto:falodun8@gmail.com)*

**Victor Akinsanya Idowu**

*Department of Adult and Non – Formal Education*

*Federal College of Education, Abeokuta*

*[idowuvictor1234@gmail.com](mailto:idowuvictor1234@gmail.com)*

---

### **Abstract**

*Administrative positions in tertiary institutions are key areas which administrators must handle with care and utmost seriousness, if the objectives of the organization must be achieved. These positions bring together both the superior and the subordinates; hence, administrators must develop key leadership skills to promote free flow of interaction required for achieving success. To this end, the paper examines how administrative positions can be held successfully by members of staff in tertiary institutions through effective leadership skill. The discourse begins with conceptual clarifications of leadership skills and administration. Relevant leadership skills required by administrators in tertiary institutions are highlighted and discussed while key administrative positions in tertiary institutions along with their job description are also discussed. Finally, the paper outlined various administrative positions in line with the appropriate leadership skills required for successful execution of administrative tasks. Based on the conclusion of the paper, it was recommended, among others, that administrators in tertiary institutions should attend and participate in workshops, conferences and seminars which place premium on issues relating to administration and leadership skill development, as this will help them achieve greater success in their administrative task delivery.*

**Keywords:** administrative positions, leadership skills, tertiary institutions, service delivery, job description

### **Introduction**

All organizations including tertiary institutions are governed by people in positions of leadership, and the achievement of such organizations' objectives is often premised on the

efficiency rate of these leaders. Leadership in this regard refers to the ability of an individual to successfully guide and monitor a group of people to facilitate the achievement of objectives outlined by the organization. According to Ekpiken and Ifere (2015), leadership is the act of challenging people to transform a vision to reality.

Administrative positions in tertiary institutions are sometimes held by members of staff who demonstrate gross incompetence which can be detrimental to the growth of the organization. On many occasions, such leaders demonstrate their incompetence through mismanagement of human and non-human resources, adoption of autocratic and laissez-faire leadership approaches and exhibition of different forms of corrupt practices which can possibly retard the pace of development in an organization. Besides, the ever-dynamic nature of work in tertiary institution demands steady upgrade by the personnel in the positions of leadership. To this end, the call for acquisition of leadership skills among members of staff in the nation's tertiary institutions is not negotiable, since many personnel are holding vital administrative positions which demand demonstration of considerable level of leadership skills. Sotoyinbo et al. (2022) noted that leadership skills are skills employed by leaders when organizing and utilizing both human and non-human resources of an organization to arrive at an expected result.

When holding administrative positions in tertiary institutions, the personnel involved, whether teaching or non-teaching staff, must not only learn appropriate skills, but must apply them correctly by being a justifiable example to other personnel (Magda, 2003 cited in Pricellas et al., 2016). Occupants of administrative positions like the Registrar, Deans of Schools and Faculties, Heads of Departments, Directors, Coordinators of units like teaching practice, among others, must demonstrate exemplary skills in managing people. Leaders in these sensitive positions must connect with their subordinates by understanding their subordinates' job specification and schedules, by having in-depth knowledge of the skills required to perform the task and by providing a good working environment to help the employees perform their tasks diligently.

Such leaders must also direct their leadership skills towards addressing issues relating to non-human resources. Non-human resources like capital, facilities, including teaching materials, stationery among others, must be assembled and managed in such a way that organization's objectives are realized without any traces of wastage. In addition to this, such leaders must guide, mentor, monitor and motivate their subordinates to effectively use the available resources to produce graduates of desirable qualities.

### **Concept of leadership skills**

Leadership skills simply refer to those set of skills exhibited by leaders to influence a group of individuals in achieving organization's goals. In addition to technical leadership ability which basically deals with the ways and manner employees are managed, leaders must also demonstrate skills in areas like communication, motivation, decision-making, problem solving, delegation of duties and ability to listen to feedback. In order to effectively demonstrate these skills, leaders must be determined, focused, courageous, collaborative, passionate, confident, innovative, wise, considerate and demonstrating good knowledge of ethical behaviour and showing empathy when the need arises. Nakpodia (2014) corroborated this by stating that leadership skills could be described as traits which include competency, proficiency, and great deal of communication which require a certain mindset to lead by example, communicate positively and take ownership and responsibility over others.

Leadership skills afford leaders in administrative positions the opportunity to effectively coordinate the activities of their subordinates so as to keep abreast of the fast-changing world of work. In addition to this, administrators who possess relevant leadership skills often provide formal leadership and exhibit behaviour which determine the extent to which their subordinates see the work place as a desirable one. Besides, such leaders can possibly influence their subordinates' level of commitment to work and mentor them in such a way that they will not only partake in the institution's administration but render selfless services to move the institution to the next level. Sotoyinbo et al. (2022) argued that effective mentoring helps to build the confidence in workers and this will also help them discharge their duties diligently.

### **Concept of administration**

The word "administration" cannot be divorced from leadership since personnel who occupy the leadership position must perform some sensitive administrative tasks to keep the organization moving. Administration refers to the process of getting things done. It is a process of working with people to achieve pre-determined objectives. Omemu (2015) posited that whenever people are organized to attain certain goals, the elements of administration must come to play. The functions of administrators are broadly categorized into general and specific functions. The general functions are applicable to all organizations while the specific functions are determined by the goals and objectives of the organizations. Like every other organization, tertiary institutions are characterized by some common administrative features. Okoroma (2009) cited in Omemu (2015) highlighted and discussed the common administrative features as follows:

(i) Component of an organization: It is impossible for an administration to exist on its own; rather, it must rely on the existence of an organization. In a nutshell, administrative tasks are carried out in tertiary institutions of learning, and other organizations like banks, hospitals, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, pre and post primary schools, among others.

(ii) People oriented: Administrative tasks are performed by people in a way to meet human needs. In tertiary institutions, administrative tasks like allocation of courses, transfer of workers, students' admission, registration, students' clearance, signing of course forms and many other tasks are assigned to members of staff (teaching and non-teaching) of different cadres.

(iii) Geared towards achieving specific goals: It is ideal for every administrator to set goals and work towards achieving the goals.

(iv) Administration is continuous: The continuous nature of administration makes its termination impossible at any point in time. Even the death or resignation of an administrator is not an issue. Although policies may change over time but administration remains except where the organization folds up.

### **Leadership skills required by administrators in tertiary institutions of learning**

Administrators in tertiary institutions of learning need some leadership skills to function effectively in the delivery of their administrative tasks. These leadership skills are highlighted and discussed as follows:

(i) Relationship building: It is not possible for any administrator to work in isolation. In view of this, administrators must try their best to build good relationship with their subordinates if they must succeed in delivering their administrative tasks. They must bring their subordinates close to themselves as this will help them to know their strength and weaknesses. Besides, building harmonious relationship with one's subordinates will also help one to understand their plight, conditions and the type of tasks to be assigned to them. Adeniyi (2021) argued that a good leader must be able to build relationship with his subordinates; by way of interacting, motivating and inspiring collective struggle.

(ii) Problem-solving: No functional organization can be free from problems. By implication, administrators must be equipped with problem-solving skills to wade off any problem which may arise due to human interaction and work-related issues. In order to effectively demonstrate problem solving skill, administrators must have also acquired analytical skill, critical thinking skill and decision-making skill.

(iii) Decisiveness: Administrators who are well equipped with decision-making skills are worthwhile assets to their organizations. These administrators often make use of their

wealth of experience to take decisions that will positively affect the organization. Adeniyi (2021) submitted that a leader plays the role of a watchman; hence, he must be able to draw the line between doing what is right and what will affect the organization negatively.

(iv) Integrity: Integrity is a leadership skill that speaks volume about the personality of a leader. An administrator who demonstrates great deal of integrity must also exhibit some other core values like truthfulness, fairness, honesty, trustworthiness, showing love and understanding where and when necessary, firmness and ability to dish out positive and negative reinforcements where and when the need arises. Without mincing words, such administrators are always free from various types of corruption and corrupt tendencies common among leaders in tertiary institutions of learning. According to Adegbite and Abimiku (2021), no meaningful development can take place in organizations where leaders are corrupt, selfish, deceitful, biased and bossy. In addition to this, such administrators will serve as good role models to their subordinates while setting the pace for easy achievement of organizational goals.

(v) Mentorship: Mentorship simply refers to a situation where leaders are equipped with the skills to guide their subordinates by offering pieces of advice aimed at directing their paths towards achieving success in their various units. When leaders employ mentorship as a technique to relate with their subordinates, such subordinates may be motivated to work diligently; thereby helping the organization to realize its objectives within the stipulated period of time. Besides, mentorship gives room to feedbacks which will be evaluated to ascertain whether instruction dished out to the subordinates are well understood.

(vi) Confidentiality and diplomacy: Leaders must be able to demonstrate great deal of confidentiality and diplomacy among their subordinates, for peace to reign in their organizations. It is ideal for leaders to know one or two things about their subordinates; yet such issues must not be divulged to other employees for sanity to reign. Likewise, leaders must be diplomatic in their approaches; especially where it concerns their official duties. Exhibition of these skills goes a long way to help leaders build and restore confidence in their subordinates.

### **Key administrative positions in tertiary institutions and their job description**

Both teaching and non-teaching members of staff in tertiary institutions of learning are holding administrative positions with varying job descriptions. Such positions and the duties assigned to them are highlighted and discussed as follows:

(i) Vice Chancellor/Rector/Provost: The Vice chancellor, Rector and Provost are the chief executive officers of a University, Polytechnic and College of Education respectively. Their major duties include academic and administrative leadership, policy development,

ensuring academic standards, resource management, staff management, maintaining law, order and discipline, advancing the administration's reputation and playing advisory roles.

(ii) Deputy Vice Chancellor/Deputy Rector/Deputy Provost (Academics): The deputy vice chancellor, deputy rector and deputy provost (academics) of tertiary institution is accountable to their boss on all academic matters like academic administration, curriculum development, examinations, admissions, academic staff development, student support, research innovation, supervision and evaluation, training and retraining and chairing of committees.

(iii) Deputy Vice Chancellor/Deputy Rector/Deputy Provost (Administration): This category of leaders is also accountable to their boss in areas like human resources management, supervising and directing staff, planning and development, infrastructural development, asset management, students' affairs, support service, protocol and public relation, library service, SERVICOM and staff productivity, admission committee, bursary and audit.

(iv) Registrar: The registrar's position is another key administrative position in tertiary institutions. He partakes in recruitment exercise, oversees registration and enrolment process, manages students' records, ensures compliance with academic policies, manages documents and ensures communication and support for members of staff and students.

(v) Bursar: Bursars of tertiary institutions are key members of the management team. A bursar oversees students' accounts, budget management, cash management, account receivable and payable, tuition fee management, disbursement of financial aids and keeps all financial reports and records.

(vi) Librarian: A librarian is another key executive officer whose job description include selecting, acquiring and organizing library materials, ensuring collections are relevant and up to date, ensuring the use of standardized cataloguing and meta-data formats, lending and borrowing of library materials, managing library budgets and maintaining library collections and facilities.

(vii) Deans: Deans are the heads of faculties and schools. Their major duties include academic leadership and planning, faculty and school management, overseeing students' affairs, budget management, resource and facilities management.

(viii) Directors: Directors are heads of units in tertiary institutions. Their major responsibilities include governance and compliance, offering advice on financial matters, supervision of academic and physical development and offering support to members of staff and students.

(ix) Heads of Departments: Heads of Departments (HODs) are academic and administrative leaders in their various departments. Specifically, they oversee curriculum

development, teaching and learning, budget management, staff performance, ensure smooth communication and collaboration, advocate for department's needs and students' support, maintain discipline, engage in strategic planning and they also encourage members of staff in their departments to carry out research.

(x) Deputy registrar: Personnel in this cadre assist the registrar in coordinating and supervising members of staff, preparing correspondences, preparing appointment letters, maintaining records, students' admission and enrolment, keeping academic records, regulatory compliance, staff recruitment, staff promotion, discipline and welfare, preparing documents and engaging in strategic initiatives.

### **Managing administrative positions in tertiary institutions through effective leadership skills**

The management of administrative positions in tertiary institution requires effective leadership skill since administration has to do with organization and coordination of workers to achieve optimum productivity. There are numerous tasks to be carried out by administrators in their various units. Such tasks may require some doses of skills before they could be perfectly executed. According to Gregory (2015), administrators have to match the demands of a particular task to the appropriate skills necessary for the achievement of the task. A couple of administrative tasks are examined in line with the appropriate leadership skills required to execute such task perfectly. These administrative tasks and the appropriate leadership skills required in executing them are highlighted and discussed as follows:

(i) Offering supports to members of staff and students/communication skills: Administrators who wish to succeed in carrying out this task must exhibit good communication skills to actually understand the plight of staff and students and areas where they need support. Such administrator must be able to demonstrate a great deal of skill in active listening, clear and concise communication, receiving feedback and conflict resolution, as the case may be. Application of these skills will go a long way to help the administrator pay close attention to their subordinates, understand their plight and concerns; clearly convey instruction to ensure uniformity; receive feedback to ascertain the subordinates' level of compliance and address conflicts where the need arises, thereby finding solutions that suit everyone. Galle et al. (2023) posited that administrators and their employees are involved in the administrative process and as such, administrators must demonstrate good communication skills which will help to keep their relationship in an atmosphere of friendliness and mutual concern. Agumuo (2011) affirmed that communication skills are required by work organizations since they help to enhance steady

and improved productivity. This type of relationship will promote culture of peace in tertiary institutions while students will continue to learn under conducive learning climate.

(ii) Budget management/integrity: Administrators who perform the duty of budget management need to demonstrate high degree of integrity. Integrity is an element associated with core values like honesty, selflessness, truthfulness, reliability, among others. Therefore, administrators in tertiary institutions need high degree of integrity to wade off corrupt tendencies linked to allocation of capital resources to various faculties, department and units. In concise words, such administrators should be free from all kinds of corruption; and a gesture like this is a welcome development in tertiary institutions, since it promotes accountability and transparency needed for massive development. Aquino (2007) argued that an administrator who demonstrates high degree of integrity often command trust and respect from his subordinates while also setting the pace for successful execution of duties assigned to him.

(iii) Recruitment of members of staff, promotion, welfare and punishment/decisiveness: This leadership skill affords administrators the opportunity to take right decision at the right time. Taking decisions on who to recruit into the organization, who to promote after a specific period of time, effective welfare package to boost employees' morale and the right type of punishment to be dished out to erring employees is sensitive and germane to the growth of an organization. In a situation where an administrator fails to take decisive action on such sensitive issues, the organization involved may start experiencing constant drop in the quality of products it turns out, and this can in turn spell doom for such organizations. Ocho (1997), cited in Omemu (2015), noted that a good administrator should be able to take decisive decisions on vital issues meant for lifting the organization to greater heights.

(iv) Supervising and directing members of staff/relationship building: Supervision and giving directives to members of staff demand good relationship between the administrator and his employees. In order to effectively supervise and direct, administrators must bring their employees closely to themselves, show immeasurable love, show empathy, give constructive criticism, give words of encouragement, show respect when it matters and motivate their employees when necessary. However, such administrators must also be principled and firm in order to check the excesses of some employees.

(v) Registration and enrolment process/mentorship: Registration and enrolment process involves tedious procedures which call for high degree of commitment, patience, perseverance and understanding. Due to the fact that large number of students do turn up for admission and registration exercise, members of staff who attend to them often get exhausted and worn out. This condition sometimes triggers their anger in such a way that they will start treating the students with little or no respect. In contrast to this, a well

mentored registry employee will see the whole exercise as a call to duty and a sacrifice to humanity; instead of bullying the students, such employee will rather prefer to calm the situation down by demonstrating high degree of understanding, patience and perseverance. Mentorship, as a technique employed by superior officers to transfer knowledge and skills to subordinates, helps to build the confidence of the subordinates, raise their commitment level to meet deadlines and prepare the employees towards taking up more difficult tasks. Shah et al. (2016) noted that mentoring assists to develop healthier behaviour among workers and helps to improve social relationship and behavioural outcomes within the organization.

### **Conclusion**

Administrative positions are so sensitive to the extent that they must align with leadership skills in order to be held and managed successfully. Leadership skills like integrity, problem solving, relationship building, decisiveness, mentorship among others can be integrated into administration to promote free flow of interaction between the administrator and his employees. Besides, if such skills are carefully employed by administrators when carrying out their administrative tasks, employees' level of commitment will be raised while productivity will also experience massive transformation.

### **Recommendations**

(i) Administrators in tertiary institutions are enjoined to attend and participate in workshops, conferences and seminars which place premium on issues relating to administrative and leadership skill development as this will undoubtedly help them achieve greater success in their administrative task delivery.

(ii) Administrators must be conscious of their temperament; especially when delivering their administrative tasks. It is worthy of note that the more intense their temperament, the more their subordinates tend to drift away from them. Besides, good control of administrator's temperament will go a long way to reduce the lapses which may be observed in their administrative task delivery.

(iii) As a unique way of bringing both experienced and less experienced employees together, mentorship which is an important leadership skill should be extensively incorporated into administration to expose good number of mentees to the best organizational performances meant to take the organizations to greater heights.

(iv) The heads of tertiary institutions should strive to organize staff forum, at least three to four times in a year, where discourse on the significance of leadership skills like relationship building, integrity, mentorship, problem-solving and a host of others would be tabled and analyzed for everyone's consumption and possible improvement.

(v) The head of tertiary institutions should periodically invite seasoned administrators with proven competence to their schools to give lecture on issues relating to leadership and administration. Periodic staging of such lecture will always help to re-echo the significance of imbibing leadership skill to the hearing of the employees.

## References

- Adegbite, A. & Abimiku, S. I. (2021). Effective leadership as a panacea for development in Nigeria tertiary institutions. The case of Dr. A. A. Ajayi's tenure as Provost, F.C.E. Abeokuta. In R. A. Soyele & J. B. Filani (Eds.), *Trends and issues on global challenges. The scholarly reflections and dynamics of a visionary leader* (Pp 1 – 5). Federal College of Education, Abeokuta.
- Adeniyi, A. O. (2021). Trends in leadership challenges: Reflection on Ola Rotimi's hope of the living dead as a recipe in Nigeria. In R. A. Soyele & J. B. Filani (Eds.), *Trends and issues on global challenges. The scholarly reflections and dynamics of a visionary leader* (Pp 42 – 47). Federal College of Education, Abeokuta.
- Agumuo, E. E. (2011). Administrative office management. In B. O. Nwozu (Ed.), *Management: An Introductory Survey*. Owerri: CIDA Organization.
- Aquino, J. (2007). The top ten (10) signs of leadership. *Philippine Panorama*, 36(43), 18-19.
- Ekpiken, W. E & Ifere, F. O. (2015). Politics of leadership and implementation of educational policies and programmes of tertiary institutions in Cross Rivers State, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(35), 1-10.
- Galle, S. A., Abdullahi, B. S., Saidu, Y. & Mainoma, S. M. (2023). Assessment of principals' administrative leadership skills influence on teachers' job effectiveness in senior secondary schools in North central Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Anthropology*, 2(6), 131-140.
- Gregory, R. L. (2015). *The Oxford companion to the mind*. Oxford: Oxford University press.
- Magda, K. (2003). Cost-of-living adjustment and business cycles: Disaggregated evidence. *Macro-economic Dynamics*, 7(4), 537-566.
- Nakpodia, E. D. (2014). Leadership development skills: A Nigeria educational institution review. *Global Business and Economic Research Journal*, 1(2), 93 – 110.
- Okoroma, N. S. (2009). The paradigm for effective school supervision in secondary schools in Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Research and Administration*, 6(3), 15-31.

- Omemu, F. (2015). Leadership and administrative skills for optimal Universal Basic Education delivery in Nigeria. *International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 9(3), 50 – 61.
- Pricellas, V. S., Niez, R. A., Nierra, R. N. & Tubis, A. P. U. (2016). Effectiveness of school administrators' leadership skills and behaviours and their school performance in Area III Leyte Division, Philipines. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 18(8), 106-126.
- Shah, H. M., Othman, B. R. A. & Mansor, B. N. M. (2016). Mentoring and organizational performance: A review of effects of mentoring on small and medium enterprises. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economics*, 2(2), 143-148.
- Sotoyinbo, A. O., Idowu, V. A. & Sodipe – Lawal, F. O. (2022). Developing leadership skills in organizations through effective formal and non-formal education. *Journal of Interdisciplinary and Innovative Research in General Studies in Education*, 1(1), 51 – 57.