

Original Research Article

Factors Hindering Professionalism in Administrative Roles in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi

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Abstract: The declining role of professionalism in university administration is due to the rise of managerialism and excessive administrative burdens. This shift forces administrative staff into rigid, procedural routines rather than strategic service, compounded by a lack of dedicated career development and inadequate professional training. This paper investigated the factors hindering professionalism in administrative roles in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was adopted, and data were obtained through a closed-ended questionnaire, while secondary data sources were harnessed to complement the questionnaire. The Taro Yamane (1967) formula was adopted to determine a sample size of 400 respondents among the non-teaching and academic staff in administrative capacities at the university. The study utilised the Transactional Leadership Theory by MacGregor (1978) as its theoretical framework of analysis. The study revealed that chronic underfunding of the university is a major challenge undermining effective professional practices, institutional effectiveness and quality academic, consultancy, and community development efforts of the university. The research also indicates that a lack of funds to provide adequately for the entire university resulted in unequal distribution of financial, human and material resources, which have affected the management of the university in several ways, such as poor and untimely completion of tasks, slow academic progress, inadequacy in maintenance of infrastructure within the campus, poor security network, among many other administrative duties in the university. The study reports that the university's administrative structure does not allow for swift decision-making, making it difficult to carry out effective administrative processes. The paper recommends, among other things, that the institution should establish a Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Unit with clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for both teaching and non-teaching staff, while institutionalising periodic audits and maintenance schedules to support transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency. The Management of Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, should implement

mandatory professional development and ethics training programmes for all staff to reinforce institutional values, ensure compliance with procedures, and build a strong culture of professionalism in the university.

Keywords: University, Professionalism, Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu, University, Makurdi

Introduction

Globally, the role of professionalism in the effective management of society and organisations cannot be overemphasised. Managing universities needs much more professionalism nowadays than in some decades ago. Universities are being granted more autonomy, and their behaviour is expected to become more customer-oriented, more cost-aware and more sensitive towards the needs of society. (Pausits-Pellert, 2009:39). The administration and management of these universities have also become increasingly complex: the institutions have so far become larger and more multifaceted, the tasks have multiplied (modern 'multiversities') and therefore the need to provide skilled management and administration has increased (Kerr, 2001, cited in: Pausits-Pellert:40). More management tasks have to be fulfilled at the institutional level than before. Professional and effective management is becoming an important prerequisite for enabling higher education institutions to deliver on their mandate of providing knowledge through research and solving numerous societal problems.

In almost all universities in Africa, management of these universities has been confronted with numerous problems which have, in one way or another, affected the effective administrative management of these universities, thereby resulting in reduced quality in teaching and learning. Among the problems confronting educational institutions on the continent of Africa, professionalism and inefficient management have become chief and recurring problems. The above problems affect educational management and administration and, in turn, the teaching effectiveness and academic performance of students. This situation has become even more worrisome due to the current global financial crisis, which has impacted economies worldwide, especially in Africa. The system has not only witnessed decayed infrastructures, poor funding, poor quality products, low morale of teachers, inadequate research and development, but also a lack of government willingness to provide solutions for solving these problems.

In Nigeria, two major aspects of professional practice in higher education administration are professional autonomy and the regulation of professional standards. Historically, university administrators and academics enjoyed self-regulation in their professional duties (Beck & Young, 2005), emphasising service and trust in their roles (Milliken, 2004). However, as administrative demands increase, knowledge institutions like the Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi must now balance autonomy with accountability to improve organisational efficiency. Effective administrative management involves decision-making, resource allocation, and personnel coordination, all of which are critical to maintaining a conducive learning environment and fostering academic excellence

(Adegoroye, 2005). The professionalism of administrative staff in the university setting directly influences the institution's ability to adapt to change, implement policies efficiently, and meet stakeholder expectations.

Several reform initiatives, including the Dotun Phillips Study Group (1985), the Presidential Task Force on Civil Service Reforms (1985), and the Allison Ayida Committee (1994), have sought to address issues of performance, professionalism, and remuneration in public administration. However, these reforms have not effectively resolved the constant challenges of incompetence, lack of accountability, and inefficiency in administrative management. Universities are increasingly being granted autonomy, calling for efficient management practices that prioritise service delivery, cost-effectiveness, and societal-related needs (Utile, 2021; Keczer, 2015). As tertiary institutions grow in size and complexity, skilled administrative management becomes essential to ensuring smooth service delivery and institutional success. Professionalism in management enables universities to function as independent entities rather than being overly dependent on federal or state government control (Keczer, 2015).

In Nigerian universities, professionalism in administration is crucial for combating inefficiency, minimising political influence, and improving service delivery. The administrative structure at Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, plays a fundamental role in ensuring the institution fulfils its educational objectives, including the provision of higher education, research promotion, community service, and the production of skilled graduates. Over the years, the university has faced various issues and possibilities which have shaped its administrative framework. As part of its commitment to academic excellence, enhancing professionalism in administrative management is vital to ensuring institutional efficiency, stakeholder trust, and sustainable development.

Benue State University (now Rev. Fr Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi) is faced with numerous litigations and court cases. Many of these litigations and court cases are traced to administrative lapses characterised by unprofessional conduct among staff. It is in light of the foregoing that this study was carried out to investigate the factors hindering professionalism in administrative roles at Rev. Fr Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. In today's world, higher education institutions require greater administrative professionalism than in previous decades. This study, therefore, assessed the factors hindering professionalism in administrative roles at the Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, to enhance organisational effectiveness and academic success.

Conceptual Review

Professionalism

A plethora of literature exists on the meaning and nature of professionalism. However, professionalism in itself suffers from definitional problems, and this is due to a lack of general agreement on the definition of a profession (Burke, 1988). However, Lester (2017) defines a profession 'as a reasonably well-defined occupation that meets a defensible set of criteria for being a profession, whether those are derived from a social

construct, trait or sociological perspective. Such identifiable criteria include: education founded on broad learning and culture, practical training and building expertise through experience, rational solution to problems and formal control of entry routes (Lester, 2017). The South African Social Science Professions cited in De Vries and Steyn (2011) also state that a profession must practice unique skills and knowledge for the benefit of individuals and society, and that there must be professional autonomy and a code of ethics. Such elements therefore characterise a profession as occupation, education and training, code of behaviour and service to the public.

Professionalism, therefore, derives from the notion of a 'profession' and represents the standard of practice. Rainey (1991), in his context, views a profession as involving the application of a skill based on theoretical knowledge; intensive training at recognised educational institutions; organisation into a professional association; existence of a code of conduct enforced by a statutory body and commitment to one's work as a calling. From the foregoing, we can deduce an important component of a profession as the existence of intellectual capacity, which, in the context, enables the proper identification and definition of professional goals.

On similar ground, Benoit (1998) writes that if professionalism refers to ongoing search for excellence in performance and quality of work in all its dimensions, respect for the client, a love for the product, a concern for detail, a taste for beauty, moral concerns, mutual assistance, updating of knowledge and skills, attention to tools, and especially the full development of the human being, then professional behavior is proposed for the African civil servants (Nigeria inclusive). Professionalism in the context of public administration/public sector performance is viewed in terms of the overall principles and values that guide public service delivery, such as loyalty, diligence, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, impartiality, commitment, etc., and these are acquired through formal processes of education and training.

Hilferty (2018) posits that professionalism is a process rather than a product. Becoming truly professional is a lifelong challenge, which comprises the way administrators think about their profession, and how they behave and implement their knowledge and skills related to their profession. Several studies have indicated that improving professionalism encourages administrative staff to set higher standards in teaching and learning, thereby improving performance in the quest for professionalisation. In addition, when staff put numerous efforts into improving their work quality, they need professional and efficient leaders to motivate them to maximise their time and achieve the institutional goals.

According to Sachs (2016), professional administrators are responsible for delivering quality results in high-performance levels of student learning. The use of modern, research-based instructional methodologies, creative techniques and strategies for creating activities for all types of learners, and fostering professional relationships with colleagues, all serve as additional examples of administrative professionalism.

According to Mulwa et al. (2024), professionalism is demonstrated by tutors' extensive knowledge of multidisciplinary, integrative modes and techniques of teaching; their in-depth understanding of subject areas, learning objectives, instructional strategies, and content aligned with the current curriculum; and their ability to enhance academic outcomes.

Professionalism, in the opinion of Brass and Holloway (2021), refers to the traits that distinguish or identify a certain profession or a professional individual. The specific knowledge of professionals is well known. They exhibit a desire to learn more and have their abilities, and, where necessary, they possess the degrees and certifications that form the basis of this knowledge. According to indicators developed by Hargreaves (2021), professionalism is an aspect of individual behaviour that influences organisational efficiency (Prasetyo, 2022).

Daniel and Rose (1991) write that professionalism presumes specialised knowledge resulting from formal education and training. As an occupation, public administration possesses various features, including educational qualifications, exposure to training, work schedules, a code of ethics and conduct, the existence of professional bodies, recruitment and disciplinary procedures, and mission statements that guide behaviour in terms of set goals, among others. Given this, Gilman (2018) maintains that public administrators must believe that they are part of a profession with professional standards. The United Nations (2000) also states that public service professionalism embraces the notion that those who join the public service need to be inculcated with shared values and trained in basic skills to carry out official duties professionally.

Professionalism refers to the high standard of skills, abilities, competencies and expertise required or expected of all administrative and management staff such as the Principal Officers: like the Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, Provosts and their Deputies, the Registrars and their Deputies, the Librarians, the Bursars and the Chief Security Officers and the Deans, Directors, Coordinators, Heads of Department, Lecturers and all such employees in the ministries of education who are educational administration practitioners who can be distinguished from the educational administration theoreticians (Klein et al., 2018). It also refers to adequate application of professional ethics. It refers to the conduct, aims, or qualities that characterise educational administrators in their workplaces, administrative settings, or professions, including work ethic, school business ethics, orderly presentation, and responsibility in dealing with issues, conflicts, decisions, and obstacles in a respectful, non-invasive manner.

Professionalism as used here also refers to the sum of characteristics or features that are specific to the administration, profession and administrators, predictive of their job performance and effectiveness. It is therefore, in line with the foregoing, that Obasanjo (1999) anchors his view of ideal public administration in the country on professionalism with the following elements:

- i. A competent, professional, development-oriented, public-spirited and customer-friendly civil service capable of responding effectively and speedily to the needs of the society;
- ii. A civil service with the core values of political neutrality, impartiality, integrity, loyalty, transparency, professionalism and accountability.
- iii. A civil service that is guided by equity, where things are done the right way based on extant rules and regulations, but with room for discretion, which should be exercised in the public interest;
- iv. Creation of a suitable environment where civil servants are assured of protection and job security in the faithful discharge of their duties and responsibilities; and
- v. A competitively well-remunerated and innovative civil service.

Theoretical Framework

The Transactional Leadership Theory is adopted in this study as the theoretical framework of analysis. The Transactional Leadership Theory was propounded by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 in his book *Leadership*. However, the concept was further developed and popularised by Bernard M. Bass in the 1980s. Bernard Bass expanded on Burns' original ideas and is often credited with making significant contributions to the development and understanding of transactional leadership.

The Transactional Leadership Theory have relevance in investigating factors hindering Professionalism in administrative roles at Rev. Fr. Adasu Moses Orshio University, Makurdi, because it emphasises clear expectations, defined roles, and structured processes. In a university setting like Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, where administrative tasks are diverse and complex, a transactional approach could provide a structured framework for managing routine tasks and maintaining stability. Transactional leadership sets clear performance expectations and communicates specific standards for tasks. In the context of administrative management in a university, this will help in strategic planning, budgeting, defining roles, responsibilities, and performance criteria for administrative staff, contributing to a more effective and accountable workforce.

Transactional leaders use contingent rewards to motivate followers. In the university setting, administrators could use a rewards system to encourage and recognise professionalism among staff. This might include acknowledgements, promotions, or other incentives for exemplary performance. On the other hand, transactional leaders engage in management by exception, intervening when there are deviations from established standards. In the context of administrative roles in the university, this could involve correcting errors, addressing inefficiencies promptly, and ensuring that administrative processes align with institutional goals.

Transactional leadership is often considered effective in stable and predictable environments. In a university setting where certain administrative processes and functions might remain stable over time, a transactional approach could provide a consistent and reliable framework for day-to-day operations. Also, transactional leadership emphasises adherence to established procedures. In the administrative management of a university,

where policies and procedures are crucial for smooth functioning, a transactional approach may contribute to maintaining order and consistency.

It is important to note that Transactional Leadership Theory provides a structured and task-oriented approach; it is important to recognise that effective administrative management often requires a combination of leadership styles. A solely transactional approach may not fully assess the factors hindering professionalism in administrative roles. Combining transactional elements with transformational aspects that inspire and motivate employees could create a more holistic leadership approach tailored to the specific needs of Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design is adopted for this paper. This is because the study aimed at describing the opinion of staff (non-teaching and teaching staff in management positions) on the factors hindering professionalism in administrative roles in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi.

The staff of the university made up the population of the study. The University has a staff strength of one thousand, nine hundred and twenty-two (1,922) spread across twelve faculties, a college, directorates and units. Out of the total staff population of one thousand, nine hundred and twenty-two. Taro Yamane's statistical formula of 1967 was utilised to select a sample size of four hundred (400) respondents.

According to Yamane (1967), sample size can be determined using the following formula:

$N =$

Where:

N = Total Population,

n = Sample Size Sought,

e = expected error

1 = constant

$$n = \frac{1922}{1+1922(0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{1922}{5.805}$$

$$n = 331.093 \approx 331 \text{ (approximately)}$$

Therefore, the sample size for the study is 400.

The stratified technique was employed to disaggregate the university staff population into teaching and non-teaching staff. From the teaching staff category, sixty-nine (69) staff (those in administrative positions like Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Provost, Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments and Coordinators of various units who are teaching staff were selected based on their roles within the University. The stratified

technique was utilised in the study because of the large population size of the respondents, which may hinder the researcher from achieving their target within the stipulated time of the study. From the non-teaching staff category, 311 staff members were selected. The simple random sampling technique was used to ensure that every staff member in the population had an equal and likely chance of being selected in the sample.

The research made use of a questionnaire and Key Informant Interview (KII) as the main instruments for the collection of primary data. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagreed, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree was used. At the same time, secondary data were generated from published articles, books, theses, visitation panel reports and other online sources to augment information from the primary sources.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Socio-Demographic Analysis of Respondents

The data generated from the research indicates that, out of the total respondents from the sampled population, 268 were males, representing 70.1%, while 114 were females, representing 29.8%. While this analysis indicated an opinion that cuts across both the male and female sexes, it has been shown that the male respondents were the majority by a wide margin in the study area.

From the data generated, it can also be seen that 89 respondents (23.2%) were single, 278 (72.7%) were married, 4 (1.3%) were divorced, and 11 (2.8%) were widows/widowers. This analysis has shown that married people constituted the majority of the responding population.

Again, from the data generated, it has shown that, 205 of the respondents representing 53.7% were from the age bracket of 31-42 years, 107 of the respondents representing 28% were from 43-54 years, 55 of the respondents representing 14.4% are within the age bracket of 55 years and above while 15 respondents representing 3.9% were between the ages of 18-30 years. This analysis has indicated that the workforce in the university is ageing, as 42.4% and above of the total workforce is from 40 years of age and above, which shows that the university staff are responsible enough to give their input on the questionnaires administered to them.

In addition, from the demographic analysis, it can be deduced that 118 respondents have obtained postgraduate qualifications, 185 respondents obtained first degrees, 25 respondents got NCE/ND, 41 respondents got secondary school certificates, and 7 respondents got Primary education. In contrast, 6 respondents received other unspecified forms of education, representing 30.9%, 48.4%, 6.53%, 10.7%, 1.8%, and 1.6%, respectively. This analysis shows that the respondents are educated, as 30.8% obtained postgraduate qualifications while 48.4% obtained first degrees, which is a good indication of the level of education of the staff in the university.

Similarly, the demographic analysis inferred that 25 respondents from the university have served in the range of 1-10 years, 217 from the 11- 20 years range, 98 respondents from 21-30 years, and 42 respondents from 30 and above years, representing 6.5%, 56.8%,

25.7%, and 11.0% respectively. This analysis shows that those who serve for 11-30 years are the majority, and they constitute a larger portion of the staff strength, which is a good indication that they are professional and have gained experience to give vital information on the subject matter under investigation.

Lastly, the demographic analysis indicated that 228 respondents (59.7%) were senior teaching and non-teaching staff at the university. In comparison, 159 respondents representing 40.3% were junior teaching and non-teaching staff. The responses, therefore, imply that senior staff cadre respondents dominated the study, which is a good indication that the study's findings will be more valid due to their years of service to the university, which have accorded them such status.

Factors Hindering Professionalism in Administrative Roles in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi.

Chronic Underfunding Limits Operations of the University and Effective Administrative Roles in Particular

The result from the above reveals that 196 (51.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the university is underfunded, which limits its effective management, especially administrative procedures and processes; 119 (31.2%) of the respondents agreed; 5 (1.3%) were neutral; 52 (13.6%) disagreed, while 10 (2.6%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. The result shows a wide consensus view pointing to the chronic underfunding of the university as a major challenge undermining effective professional practices, institutional effectiveness and quality academic, consultancy, and community development efforts of the university.

Disparities in the allocation of resources in different faculties, departments, and units create inequality and hinder the smooth functioning of administrative roles in the university.

Analysis on the above showed that 179 (46.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the disparity in the allocation to the faculties, departments and units creates inequality in the university consequently hindering smooth functioning of administration in the university, 103 (26.9%) of the respondents agreed, 16 (4.2%) of the respondents were neutral, 63 (16.5%) disagreed and 21 (5.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. The result implies that the lack of funds to provide adequately for the entire university resulted in unequal distribution of financial, human and material resources, which have affected the management of the university in several ways, such as poor and untimely completion of tasks, slow academic progress, inadequacy in maintenance of infrastructure within the campus, poor security network, among many other administrative duties in the university.

Complex University procedures create delays and often lead to slow decision-making, policy implementation and academic activities, thus affecting administrative roles in the university.

The results from the above also reveals that 176 (46.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the university's complex/bureaucratic procedure often creates delay leading to

slow decision-making and policy implementation of the university's programmes thereby impeding effective management and administrative activities in the university 95 (24.9%) of the respondents agreed, 20 (5.2%) were neutral, 70 (18.3%) of the respondents disagreed and 21 (5.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. The result implies that the university's bureaucratic nature does not allow for swift decision-making, making it difficult for the administration to carry out its activities smoothly.

Interviews conducted with the Dean, Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, on the challenges hindering professionalism of administrative roles/staff in the university, he averred that:

First of all, underfunding, a lack of motivation in terms of staff emoluments, staff entitlements, and their rights to be respected and a lack of cohesion in the system. You know the direction that the principal wants the university to be run is not achieved because of most of these corrupt tendencies that are inherent in the system. So, for us to move forward, we have to be transparent, we have to be honest, we have to ensure that the circles are achieved, and the staff should be well motivated and also infrastructure, basic needs for comfort, like in the office, for staff to work effectively. Lack of working tools, and again, the students, on the other hand, have to be encouraged to discipline themselves and be well-behaved according to set goals of the university. (Dean Basic Medical Sciences, Male, 47years)

In the same manner, the Registrar has this to say:

These areas we are talking about are areas we will brush up on these specific areas that there are deficiencies so that by the time these staff have received training, it will help impact on the kind of work they do in their offices, so the hindrance of professionalism here is simply that (1) We don't have enough funds to train or offer the kind of training we want people to have. Then we have a shortage of human resources because we don't have the money; our budget is very limited. We haven't employed for some time now, especially in administrative areas. Concentration is more on academic areas, so we are hoping that with what is going on now, very soon we will be able to employ. Then we will fill these spaces, get enough resources for training, and place these people properly in the areas where they have these skills, so that we can improve professionalism on the job.

Collectively, this result implies that there are a pack of challenges ranging from a lack of finance, inadequate staff, outdated skills, and a lack of accountability, among others, which have, over time, hindered the effective and efficient administrative roles in the university.

The findings highlight professionalism as a key driver in ensuring an efficient work environment marked by strict adherence to organisational rules and operational standards. For Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, maintaining a culture of

professionalism among administrative and teaching staff will continue to improve operational processes and discipline, contributing to overall institutional effectiveness. The study's results affirm that professionalism is critical to efficient service delivery and effective communication. For Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, embedding professionalism in administrative practices can enhance trust between staff, management, students, and external partners, creating a collaborative and transparent institutional culture.

Findings of the study on some of the inhibiting factors of professionalism in administrative roles in the university revealed that issues such as underfunding, unequal resource allocation (material, human and financial resources) to departments, units, directorates and faculties, as well as complex university procedures which often slow decision-making and policy implementation, have hindered the effective and efficient operations of administrative roles in the university. The result corroborates the findings of Nwankwo et al. (2018) that inadequate resources, lack of training and resistance to change are impediments to professionalism and effective management of higher institutions. The transactional leadership theory's emphasis on goal-oriented exchanges between leaders and followers aligns well with the study's finding that institutional reforms grounded in professionalism are viewed positively.

Based on the result, the implication of this on the university is that it will limit the university's ability to provide essential resources for effective administrative management, thereby affecting everything from infrastructure maintenance to technology, staff development and the entire academic system.

Conclusion

The study Factors Hindering Professionalism in Administrative Roles in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. First and foremost, the findings showed the critical role of professionalism in enhancing administrative effectiveness. Professionalism promotes discipline, adherence to institutional policies, and ethical conduct, which collectively improve organisational efficiency. In MOAUM, professional practices would not only improve internal operations but also enhance the institution's public image, credibility, and stakeholder trust, all of which are vital for long-term competitiveness and sustainability.

However, the findings of the study indicated that Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, has faced challenges in implementing policies that align with global best practices across essential operational units of the university, including academic management, human resource development, financial administration, and infrastructure maintenance. The inadequate condition of these areas is further intensified by the university's deficient maintenance culture, which jeopardises its capacity to consistently provide quality education and services. Additionally, the findings highlight that underfunding is a primary problem affecting professionalism and administrative management at Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi (MOAUM).

Recommendations

The management of the university should establish a Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Unit with clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for both teaching and non-teaching staff, while institutionalising regular audits and maintenance schedules to promote transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency.

The Management of Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, should implement mandatory professional development and ethics training programmes for all staff to reinforce institutional values, ensure compliance with procedures, and build a strong culture of professionalism in the university. Efforts must be made to adopt a strategic institutional development plan that integrates global best practices, including modern HR policies, transparent financial systems, and a sustainable infrastructure maintenance framework, to align operations with international standards. This will go a long way in repositioning the university's greatness and effectiveness in administrative management.

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