

# Assessing the Functions of Faculty Administrators in the University of Education, Winneba

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## Abstract

The Faculty Officer in University Administration is a Senior Administrator who represents the Registrar in the Faculty and closely works with the Dean of the Faculty, the lecturers and other academic and administrative staff in the Faculty. The Registrar in the Administration of Public Universities in Ghana is the Chief Administrator, who is charged with the responsibility of directing, coordinating, controlling, planning and supervising the work of all non-teaching staff in the University. This paper establishes the roles and responsibilities of the Faculty Officer, and the challenges the Faculty Officer is confronted with as a representative of the Registrar who is the hub around which Faculty administration revolves. In addition, the paper has, among others, suggested that a system of faculty administration which gives the Faculty Officer some semi-autonomy, should be adopted by UEW in order to make the UEW Faculty Officer an effective and efficient administrator.

**Keywords:** Faculty Officer/Administrator

## 1. Introduction

The development of many institutions usually starts with a small administrative unit which coordinates and manages the organization for effective resource management and to ensure that staff are fully engaged productively. As the organization grows, it becomes necessary that roles are reviewed for content load and effectiveness. In that sense, sections may become focused, and new units are established, or set up to deal with specific jobs and schedules. Universities as institutions are no exceptions to these institutional developments. The public universities in Ghana are usually given mandates by the Government of Ghana in the form of policy documents which include their mission and vision statements that guide them to achieve their mandates. The public universities in Ghana were either established by Government Ordinances and/or Acts and Laws of Parliament. This is confirmed by Daniel (2014) when he indicated that Higher Education also has its enabling instruments, beginning with the law establishing the institution. According to him, it is that instrument, which sets the stage by articulating mandate, identifying basic infrastructure and lead actors or 'principal officers'.

The University of Education, Winneba (UEW) derived its authority as the only public university in Ghana that is responsible for the training of professional teachers for pre-tertiary institutions from Act 672 of the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana, entitled "The University of Education, Winneba Act 2004". These documents: Ordinance, Laws and Acts, provide public universities with their power to undertake their functions of teaching, researching, rendering community service, awarding certificates for degrees and diplomas, and performing other activities that are ancillary to these functions. The University is a complex administrative and academic organization made up of teaching and non-teaching staff. These two groups work together in harmony to achieve the University's overall goals. In order to have a smooth and effective university administration for the achievement of its mandate, it is necessary that systems and policies are put in place to guide its activities some of which are controlled, directed and coordinated at the faculty level by the Faculty Officer.

In the Public University's administration in Ghana, the Registrar is the Chief Administrator and is the head of non-teaching staff. In the words of Daniel (2014), the Registrar is the Secretary to Council and he collates, analyses, and reviews for viability options for consideration in a committee-run system. He adds that the Registrar is assisted by colleagues with expertise in finance, human resource, public relations and other professions. From these categories, a Faculty Officer is appointed and charged with the responsibility of being the Senior Administrator of a Faculty. By virtue of this position, the Faculty Officer represents the Registrar at the Faculty level and is empowered to direct, control, coordinate and supervise the work of all non-teaching staff at the Faculty. The Faculty Officer also functions as an adviser to the Dean, who is the head of the Faculty, on matters pertaining to the statutes, rules and regulations, and conventions governing the University. The Faculty Officer does not discharge his duties without challenges and frustrations, yet, the success or otherwise of the faculty depends on the ability of the Faculty Officer to overcome or handle these challenges effectively.

The focus of this paper therefore is to examine the administrative roles of the Faculty Officer, the challenges the Faculty Officer faces in carrying out his responsibilities and suggest various ways by which the Faculty Officer could be helped to become effective in his role for effective faculty administration as pertains in UEW.

## 2. What is a Faculty?

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 2007), a faculty may generally be defined as a group of related Departments, Sections, Centres and Units in a College or University with or aiming at a common goal. These Units, Sections and Departments in the Faculty and the Faculty itself help in the management of the entire university administration. Faculties are basically responsible for the formulation and implementation of academic policies such as teaching and research, curriculum development, international collaborations, resource allocation and community development. To a very large extent the Faculties' efficiency and effectiveness are taken as proxy for the University's efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out its principal academic functions. The administrative roles in carrying out these functions which are performed at the Faculty are usually carried out by the Faculty Officer, the Registrar's representative, in consultation with the Dean, who is the head of the Faculty.

## 3. Who is a Faculty Officer?

It has already been said that the University is a complex administrative cum academic organization made up of teaching and non-teaching staff. These two groups work together to achieve the University's binary institutional goals. The Faculty Officer is one of such non-teaching specialized professionals sometimes referred to as Senior Administrators in the Faculty. In the public university set up, the Registrar is the head of non-teaching staff in administration and he is normally referred to as the chief administrator of the University. The Registrar, by the statutes of the universities in Ghana is the custodian of the University's Statutes, Seal and Acts and Laws establishing the University. He is also the advisor of the Vice-Chancellor and the Secretary to University Council, Academic Board and all other Boards and Committees. In pursuance of these roles as the Registrar of the University, s/he is assisted by other registrars in the various positions as Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrar among which the Faculty Officer is appointed. The idea for establishing separately administered faculty offices manned by career administrators other than academic administrators came to the fore following the work of Fielden and Lockwood titled, *Planning and Management in Universities: A Study of British Universities*, published in 1973.

Fielden and Lockwood's (1973) work followed a project which originated from discussions between Peat, Marwick, Michell and Co and the then University Grants Commission of the United Kingdom on the effective administrative systems and exploring ways of financing University Education at a minimal cost in the United Kingdom. In the University Rationalization Committee Report (URC 1988), Ghana, the creation of the post of the Faculty Officer was also underscored. According to Bondzie (2000), until 1988, the offices of the faculties of the Universities of Ghana were manned by only the Deans with the support of Administrative Assistants and Clerks. The Committee recommended among other things that;

- Each Faculty and similar university organization should be assigned a Faculty Officer with the Status of Assistant Registrar
- The Faculty Officer should be responsible to the Dean of the Faculty and not the Registrar
- The Faculty Officer should assist the Dean in all aspects of administration, including acting as Secretary to the Faculty Board and other Faculty Committees.

However, Fielden and Lockwood (1973) advocated that, though the Faculty Officer should work directly with the Dean in the discharge of the administrative work at the Faculty including acting as the advisor to the Dean, the Faculty Officer should be professionally responsible to the Registrar, who is the Chief Administrator and the Head of Administration in the University. Besides, the Faculty Officer is representing the Registrar at the Faculty, since the head of administration (i.e. Registrar) cannot practically be at every department and or faculty at all times, by virtue of his schedules.

## 4. The Responsibilities of the Faculty Officer at the University of Education, Winneba

Afful-Broni (2004), postulates that administration is an activity that requires getting the work of an organization done by utilizing and coordinating the efforts of others. In this context, the Faculty Officer has a role and responsibility to coordinate and direct affairs at the Faculty in getting things done within the University's settings. Educational administration deals with the process of getting things done within educational settings like the University. Management of educational institution on the other hand, is a collective effort aimed at providing an environment in which teaching and learning can flourish, resulting in student satisfaction, high performance, retention and a wide range of career opportunities (Mayers, Recordati and Hohmeier, 1995).

Effective teaching and desirable student performance cannot take place in a poorly managed environment. Thus, Mohammedbhai (2010) as cited by Effah (2014) indicates that a key attribute of the academic leader is the ability to understand the institution, to have a future vision for it, and to help bring it about in a consultative manner. Based on an understanding such as this, it becomes evidently clear that it is incumbent on the Faculty Officer or the University Senior Administrator to help the Faculty and Staff to recognize the best prospects of realizing the Faculty's mission and vision, in line with that of the Institution (McGregor, 1960).

According to Fielden and Lockwood (1973), in a University where there is devolution of responsibility within unified frameworks, the Faculty Officer fulfils a key role. In the universities of Ghana, the devolution of responsibility is pursued while at the same time maintaining a unified system of administration. The Faculty Officer at the University of Education, Winneba is part of the unified system, serving the faculty and departments as well as providing common faculty-based services. In this way, the Faculty Officer becomes the focal point for channeling work from the departments to other sections of the administration of the University. In a similar vein, the departments should also aim to work with the faculty and its departments through the Faculty Office. It is therefore important to stress this crucial role of the Faculty Officer.

Fielden and Lockwood (1973), opine that the Faculty Officer should be the baseline of university administration. This is against the background that the faculty is considered as the largest academic and administrative section of the University's structure of governance. The role of the Faculty Officer, as emphasized by Fielden and Lockwood involves working in many areas of University management. This Officer acts as a channel through which efforts are directed to meet the Faculty's needs. The Faculty Officer at UEW occupies a central place and plays a central role in the realization of the Faculty's goals, and for that matter the university's goals. The Faculty Officer as the term may imply is responsible for the day to day administration and management of the Faculty. Thus among others, the Faculty Officer as a representative of the Registrar in the Faculty is also the custodian of the University's Statutes and Rules, implement the rules and regulations and ensure compliance or enforcement at the faculty and departmental levels.

The Faculty Officer also coordinates all the activities of the faculties and the departments and also ensures that policies and decisions are implemented to the letter and in a cost effective manner. The Faculty Officer provides advice on institutional policies, strategies and tactics in pursuance of the Faculty's and University's objectives. The Faculty Officer should also see him/herself as a training and staff development officer. In consultation with the Dean, the Faculty Officer should be able to arrange training programmes even for the young and the new lecturers appointed into the Faculty on the rudiments of teaching and learning in the University. Most of the young lecturers who enter University teaching profession have very little teaching experience and skills. It is therefore not out of place if the Faculty Officer commits himself/herself to organizing in-service training in university teaching. It must be noted that the Faculty Officer will not necessarily do the training himself or herself. His/her role will be to arrange for experts to provide the training. The Faculty Officer at UEW is a multi-faceted individual whose concerns are for both the institution and the human resources. He/she is also seen as being responsible for:

- Servicing the Faculty Board and its sub-committees, registration of undergraduate students, and the maintenance of students' records for examinations.
- Establishing work in connection with teaching and non-teaching staff in the Faculty
- The preparation of teaching and examination time tables for the faculty
- Control and maintenance of equipment in the Faculty
- Liaison with the Estate Officer for accommodation of teaching staff of his faculty
- Preparation of annual budget and administration of expenditure from funds available to the Faculty
- Supervision of staff (non-teaching) in the Faculty
- Creation, retention and disposition of records.

From the above, it can be realized that the Faculty Officer is an important officer/person as far as the administration of the University is concerned. Considering the many important functions/roles/responsibilities of the Faculty Officer, it will be very difficult for the University to do without him as a working partner of the Registrar, in the University administration. It is necessary therefore, for the University to recognize the role the Faculty Officer plays in the smooth running of the University, and provide him with a conducive working environment for him to be effective.

The Faculty Officer at the University performs creditably alongside the following indicators to achieve goals of the Registrar at the faculty level. These indicators are:

- The Faculty Officer representing the Registrar should be knowledgeable of the university's vision and mission and work towards it at the faculty level.
- Must have good skills of retrieving records and information and also a good record keeper
- Must have very good administrative skills
- Must have effective communication skills
- Must have monitoring, supervisory and appraising skills
- Must be very confident, available and accessible to all members of staff

The roles and responsibilities of the Faculty Officer outlined above, nevertheless, do not come without challenges. The Faculty Officer is greatly challenged in the discharge of his duties in many ways.

## 5. The Challenges of the Faculty Officer

There are no qualms that a Faculty Officer could be faced with some administrative challenges at the Faculty. If these challenges are not professionally controlled with the required administrative skills, they may disrupt the administrative setting of the Faculty and the University as a whole. The challenges of the Faculty Officer hinges on the fact that academic leadership is complex. This is because in an academic institution, the goal is not growth or market share but intellectual excellence, not increased productivity in economic terms, but increased intensity of thinking (Giamatti, 1998, cited in Chait et al (1996). Blake (1981), claims that individuals who are capable of advancing knowledge are clearly of unusual calibre. Their presence on the campus creates one of the difficult aspects of Academic Administration. At the Faculty, there could be a serious objection to the extent of the role to be played by the Faculty Officer. S/he administers the Faculty, including its teaching and non-teaching staff. The teaching staff constitutes the largest number in the Faculty. The question that arises then is how the Faculty Officer will administer the teaching staff? The Faculty Officer can deal with this challenge by putting his ideas and suggestions in written forms of memoranda to the Dean. The Dean may then help by giving his consent to the suggestions, and partnering the Faculty Officer to handle faculty challenges.

Blake (1981:40) identifies “burn-out” as one of the problems at the faculty in managing the staff. According to Blake, some tenured professors lose their commitment to academic pursuits years before they retire. How can the faculty officer reactivate a “burnt-out” professor? How can the Faculty Officer relate to purely academic matters in the Faculty? For instance, if a lecturer is not performing, will it be the Faculty Officer’s concern, if the Head of Department decides to be passive? However, the Faculty Officer in consultation with the Dean can reactivate a burn-out professor and other non-performing lecturers by enforcing Annual Performance Review of teaching staff.

Another challenge to the Faculty Officer at the Faculty relates to resources in general. Resources as we know are now so limited that some faculties and departments now run with virtually nothing, except their salaries which they know will be regular. Funds for research have seriously dwindled in many cases. As a result of these resource constraints, the administrator at the Faculty level and in the University as a whole is faced with the difficult task of accessing funds for some obviously worthwhile programmes. The Faculty Officer therefore should be able to advise on the use of Faculty funds and resources. The Faculty Officer must also cultivate strong interpersonal sensitivities with the staff in the Faculty. There is the tendency that because of the kinds of problems the Faculty Officer deals within the Faculty, mostly teaching staff including professors, relationships may be rigid rather than cordial, especially against the background that the Faculty Officer may be improved by the principle of “Management by walking about”. The Faculty Officer cannot administer the Faculty from his desk only. He is required to move from one department to the other to acquaint himself/herself with the situation on the ground and also interact with staff of the various departments. When the Faculty Officer visits the departments unannounced, the officer puts some fear and seriousness into especially the administrative staff, making them aware that the Faculty Officer can visit any time.

It is important for the Faculty Officers to be conversant with the rules and regulations, policies, conventions and the statutes of the University since they are the Dean’s immediate advisors on administrative and personnel issues in the Faculty in particular, and the University in general. This is because some important decisions, policies and conventions are taken at both Executive and Management levels without necessarily communicating to the Faculty Officers who in turn will use these decisions and policies to advise the Dean accordingly. An efficient Faculty Officer is not just an administrator of rules, procedures and routines but an efficient Faculty Officer is a Faculty’s change agent. A Faculty Officer who is not aware of such statutes and conventions, will, indeed, be very challenged in the discharge of his duties.

Another crucial challenge to the Faculty Officer is his/her ability to motivate his/her staff. The concept of motivation poses the nagging question. “What stimulates people to work?”. For the Faculty Officer, this question may be extended further as: “What can the Faculty Officer do to harness the energy of the staff to improve performance at work?”. Motivation is therefore of great importance in management and has undoubtedly become perhaps, the most talked about issue in management.

## 6. Observations from Faculty Administration at the University of Education, Winneba

In spite of the many challenges that the Faculty Officer is presented with in discharging his duties effectively, it has been observed that he is limited and/or constrained in several ways. These limitations, if not addressed, will continue to negatively affect his performance and the smooth administration of the faculty. Some of the observed limitations are found below:

- It has been observed that the Dean, the Faculty Officer and the Faculty Accounts Officer who represent the Vice Chancellor, Registrar and Finance Officer respectively cannot even sign the cheques they prepare for sitting allowances for scheduled meetings. This is because such cheques have to go through the central administration for approval before it could be honoured. This makes the Dean handicapped in terms of the finances allocated to the faculty. They cannot sign cheques with the Faculty Office

and/or the Faculty Accounts Officer, to execute even the minimal work needed to be done at the faculty with prompt attention. This practice defeats the purpose of decentralizing the University administration to Faculties as discussed effectively at the seminar on Higher Education Administration in Ghana sponsored by the then Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals at the University of Cape Coast between April 7 and 8, 1994. KNUST has decentralized these bureaucratic processes to the faculties, and has enhanced their Faculty/College administration.

- It has also been found out that most Faculty Exams Officers rely solely on the expertise of the Faculty Officers for arrangement of their students' records. The Faculty Exams Officer's roles normally conflict with those of the Faculty Officer, because the Faculty Officer supervises the Departmental Exams Officers concerning exams results.
- Another observation is that the Faculty Officer and the Dean to some extent do not have any idea about some staff in the Faculty who may be due for annual leave. This creates problems for the Faculty. A clear example is that of a situation where the driver of a departmental vehicle goes on annual leave without the knowledge of the Head of Department. This situation is so because of the driver's allegiance to the Transport Officer, rather than the Head of Department, Faculty Officer, or Dean.
- Again, major decisions concerning Faculties do not normally involve the Faculty (the Deans) for the onward transfer of information to the Faculty and the Department in particular.
- The burden on the Finance Officer and his Deputies keep increasing with the increasing departments and faculties. Almost every claim(s) must pass through the Finance Officer's desk. An effective delegation of some of Finance Officer's responsibilities to the faculty accounts officers can help minimize load and improve the work at the Faculty. This will help to lay bare the full potential in the Faculty/Departmental Accounts Officers.

## 7. Recommendations

In the light of the above observations, the following recommendations are made for the consideration of the University authorities, in order to help the Faculty Officer to realize his full potential.

- It is recommended that the Dean, Faculty Officer and the Faculty Accounts Officer representing the Vice Chancellor, Registrar and Finance Officer respectively, should be given some powers such as preparing and signing cheques on their own without forwarding them to Registrar's outfit for approval. Some amount of threshold may also be given to the Faculty so that the Dean can effectively administer to a certain level, and also maintain equipment at the Faculty without passing everything through the central administration as it is being practiced now. This will help to get work done in relatively shorter periods, and consequently enhance the progress of the faculties.
- It is recommended that the appointment of Faculty Exams Officers in the various Faculties be given a second look, and their responsibilities be rather attached or added to the Faculty Officers, since they play the supervisory role in the Faculty. This will help to avoid misunderstanding and conflicts of power between the Faculty Officer and the Faculty Exam Officer regarding who is in charge during examination periods.
- It is recommended that the Human Resource Division should delegate some faculty schedules desk to the Faculty Officers to handle. This will help curtail unfortunate situations such as the one in which a faculty driver went on leave without the knowledge of the Dean or the Faculty Officer.
- When major decisions are taken at Management meeting concerning faculties or a particular faculty, same information should be communicated to a particular Faculty or Faculties (Deans) so that the Deans will be in the know of the kind of decisions that have been taken in relation to their outfit. This will help to curtail the embarrassment Deans and the Faculty Officers go through when they are confronted with issues they have no knowledge of.
- The system which is being practiced at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), in relation to the allocation of funds to the Faculty/College for the Dean and Faculty/College Accounts Officer to be in a position to sign cheques, should be implemented in UEW to help improve administration at the Faculty level.
- In order not to hinder the progress of work at the Faculty, funding should be easily accessible and adequate, and its transfer to the Faculty should be timely. The practice whereby officers of faculties have to follow up and queue to see the Finance Officer, and at times appeal to the Vice Chancellor for intervention to approve and receive funds for Faculty activities is a waste of time and creates frustration. Most importantly, this practice retards the Faculty's development on one hand, and the holistic development of the University on the other.

## 8. Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, it will not be wrong to place the challenges at the faculty within the entire University administration. This is done on the understanding that faculty issues at the faculty level are often dictated or influenced by issues at the university-wide level. The Faculty Officer has been considered as the vehicle for greatest challenge to the Faculty Officer. The answers to these challenges and questions seem to lie within the central administration's willingness/readiness to delegate certain powers to the Faculty Officer. It is only when the Faculty Officer is given such powers that he can demonstrate his full potential by working to ensure the growth and development of the faculty. Until such time that the Faculty Officer is allowed, or given the kind of relevant semi-autonomy that this advocates, the administration of the faculty in particular, and the University in general, will continue to suffer setbacks.

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