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An Assessment of the Administrative System in Prithvi Narayan Campus

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ABSTRACT

The article attempts to investigate the problems, challenges and prospects of administrative system of Prithvi Narayan Campus (PNC) that has been functioning under Tribhuvan University. The qualitative data are obtained from the respondents mainly through the focus group discussion and in-depth interviews. Quantitative data were received from the campus administration. The study unveiled that the mismanagement of human resource, duplication of work, and insufficient coordination among departments and between the campus administration and the central office of Tribhuvan University as a major problem. Likewise, as in other sectors of public service delivery, the administrative system is incapable of maintaining good governance, integrity and transparency. In order to maintain quality administration, the concerned authority needs to strengthen the administrative capability of the campus, recruit quality human resource, adopt e-governance and maintain quality information system.

KEYWORDS: Academic environment, administration, human resource, service delivery, teaching-learning process

INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities operate in complex and diverse social settings as well as in unpredictable environments. Every academic community faces a number of challenges during the process of their operation internally as well as externally. For instance, "environmental, structural, interpersonal and cultural" (Bess & Dee, 2008) challenges have been faced by various academic institutions. Unlikely, the explicit studies on colleges' and universities' administration in Nepal has not been found so far. However, some administrative thinkers like Max Weber, Frederick Taylor, and Henri Fayol have developed various theories of organization on how to lead the organization or to build a quality administration for efficient and effective service delivery system that is applicable to all types of offices.

Taylor (1911) lays emphasis on organizational efficiency and productivity in an organization that the scientific selection and training of employees should be in place and standardization of working methods and working conditions should be adopted. Likewise, the cooperation between an employer and employees should be practiced in order to meet the organizational objectives. It is the responsibility of the manager in the organization to

make plans, while the job of the employees is to carry out the plans (Prasad, Prasad, & Satyanarayan, 1992). Similarly, an ideal model of bureaucracy developed by Max Weber made a clear distinction between public and private lives of bureaucracy. He describes some essential features of an organization in order to maintain quality in administration. Riggs (1961), on the ecology of the public administration of the developing world, revealed that the administrative system of any country generally operates in the social-cultural, political and economic environment producing a continuous interaction between the environment and the administrative system. His analysis of the process of administrative development provides a guideline for the policy makers in different organizations (Ali, 1990).

Another theory of organization is known as the general system theory, propounded by Boulding (1956) and Bertalanffy (1968) and was subsequently adopted in different fields, including public administration. Eventually, the concept was widely used, which was borrowed from Easton (1965) and other scholars. It takes an organization as a social system composed of different parts, namely input, conversion, output and feedback loop. These components continuously act and interact with its environment. The application of general system helps to analyze the internal problems of an organization and redesign the organization to achieve the stated objectives (Naidu, 1986). Hence, this study is based on general system theory and suitable "framework for resolving organizational problems taking into consideration for the various parts and aspects of an organization" (Shrestha, 2007, p. 102) suitable to explain the administrative problems and rearrange working methods and people within work groups and finally helps in building quality administration in the organization.

The paper aims to assess the administrative system of the campus, identifying the problems and challenges in effective service delivery system and find the way outs in order for the service delivery process at the administrative system of the campus to be efficient and qualitative.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

A system is made of several parts; the parts are interrelated and interdependent as well as it has boundary and purpose, goals and objectives (Naidu, 1986). The system theory consists of inputs, a transformation or conversion process, outputs, feedback loop, and the environment. The efficiency of an organization depends upon the effective functioning of several sub-systems. It has the components such as inputs, conversion, and output, which are encircled and influenced by the respective environment.

Inputs: An organization receives inputs from the environment and transforms them into output. Inputs are in the form of man, money, materials, machines and information resources as well as demands, structures, which are used to produce goods and services to the environment. In the case of an academic institution like ours, it includes academic and non academic staff, curriculum, and financial infrastructures allocated in the annual budget.

Conversion: The process of conversion from input into output is known as throughput. The organization follows polices, processes and methods and takes decisions.

The environment of an academic institution consists of the social, political, economic and cultural aspects that exist in the organization. It influences the system in the form of 'inputs'. Such environment might also be the administrative functioning, peaceful and harmonious classrooms, punctual and easily available teachers and so on. Those inputs are then 'converted' into 'outputs' by the system or systemic interaction in

the institution. And finally, those outputs happen to cause the emergence of new inputs as a process of 'feedback'.

Outputs: The outputs take the form of goods and services. At an institutional level, efficient and effective service delivery system seeks transparency, accountability and sympathetic relationship with inter and intra-institutional stakeholders.

Feedback Loop: Information about the performance of the organization and environmental responses to outputs.

Environment: A organization operates in an environment that continually interacts with the political, economical, social and cultural factors of the country.

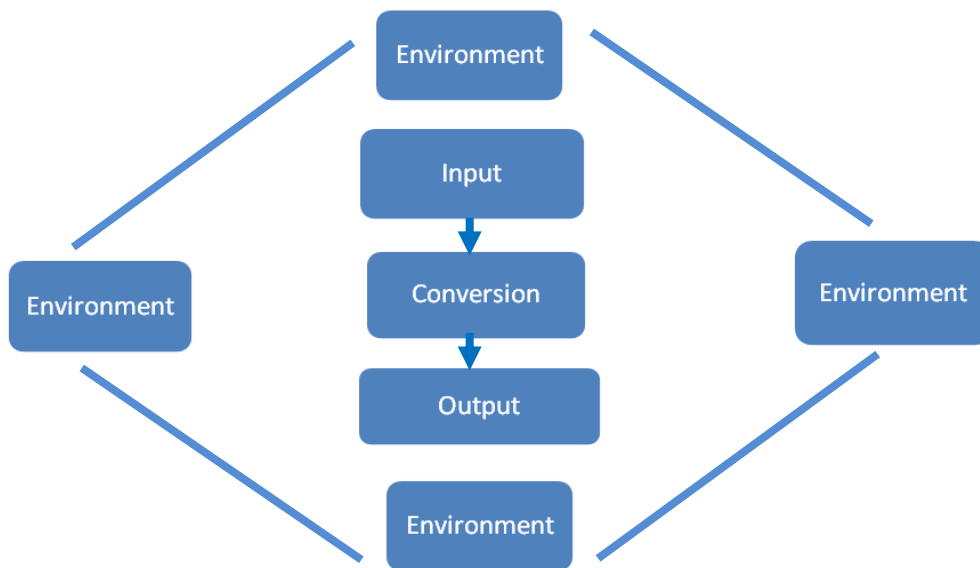


Figure 1: The input output loop in an administrative environment.

THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY ADMINISTRATION

The word 'administration' denotes to serve, to govern, to direct, to control or to manage both the public or private affairs. It is the arrangement of man, money, materials, and information activities by a cooperative group of an organization to achieve the desired goals. Hence, the campus administration is a branch of university or college that is separate from academics. The non-academic staff are appointed to an administrative position full time and the new administrative positions are created only with the approval of the university. They are responsible for maintenance and construction: supervision of academic affairs and the institution; assist the students and teachers, maintaining records and formulation of plans and policies and their implementation in accordance with the policies, process and procedures.

The word 'administrative quality' is a slippery and multi-dimensional concept. This paper takes administrative quality in five senses as discussed by Harvey and Green's (2006) administrative quality as excellence, perfection/consistency, value for money, fitness for purpose, transformation (as cited from Kivistö & Pekkola, 2017, pp. 19-22). Such administrative quality possesses the features as qualified personnel, capacity to process handle information, innovative and efficient, integrity and so on (Sigeiman, 1976). Similarly, a study conducted by Dearlove (1998) on the administrative system of academic institutions which provide higher education in the UK revealed that there should be efficient management and good governance in the universities. It was also

emphasized in the study that the regular and coherent discussion of the administration not only creates opportunities for the betterment but also helps dispose of the disorders of administration.

CHALLENGES IN BUILDING QUALITY ADMINISTRATION AT PRITHVI NARAYAN CAMPUS

Education acts as a means of modernizing the society, developing the country and sustaining democracy. To achieve these objectives, Tribhuvan University (TU) was established in the country, following the introduction of democracy in 1951. Currently, the university has 60 constituent campuses that have been playing an important role in developing highly qualified youths for the nation. Besides Tribhuvan University, there are other universities in the country; they too are providing higher education under the jurisdiction of the Education Ministry.

Coming under the pressure of liberalization, globalization, advancement in science and technologies and a radical change in the political regime at domestic level, TU has reintroduced a semester system since 2014 replacing the annual system to improve quality of education, generate new ideas, and encourage innovation and develop dynamic citizens for the country. It is now believed that the semester system of university education is now a demand of the globalization in the contemporary world.

The traditional method of teaching and learning has become irrelevant today. Although the semester system is not new for Nepali education system, it was introduced in the college level in 1970. Undesirably, the system was not able to sustain for a long time due to the then multiplicity of factors. Subsequently, TU replaced the semester system into the annual system again in 1980. According to the current directives of the university, Prithvi Narayan Campus has now implemented semester system after practicing the annual examination system for a long time. Presently, many campuses, including PNC have started academic sessions for master's degree program under the semester system as TU has decided to phase out all master's degree programs run under the annual system in its constituent and affiliated campuses across the country.

The campus administration a designated role "to provide maintenance, integration and coordination, support and supervision serving the core missions of teaching-learning process as well as research and public service" (Kivistö & Pekkola, 2017, p. 9) on the basis of the prescribed rules and regulations designed by the university. In the age of globalization and digitization, every university and college needs skilled administrative human resource so as to be more creative and more innovative. This gives rise to a flawless information system, sound technical service delivery system as well as transparency in performance in order to achieve the organizational goals. To accomplish these goals, the administrators and supporting staff have an uninterrupted interaction with academic communities and stakeholders, civil society, government institutions, business and so on.

As PNC has recently commenced the semester system of education at master's level of university education, there might have some space that needs to be regulated for maintaining the standard of administrative system. Meanwhile, the adoption of semester system in the campus needs more efficient human resource as well as other prerequisites as compared to the annual system of education. The campus administration is therefore certain to face new managerial problems and challenges that have not been faced so far. Therefore, it is necessary to make an appraisal on the challenges of the administration so as to create an academic environment in the campus. Thus, in the backdrop of this reality, this paper attempts to find out the major challenges in the administrative system of the campus so as to ascertain quality administration.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on qualitative information obtained from the teaching and non-teaching staff of PNC. The tools employed for collecting the qualitative data were in-depth interview and focus group discussion. In-depth interviews (Kvale, 1996) were conducted with campus leadership ($n=3$), administrative heads ($n=2$) and teaching staff ($n=3$). Likewise, focus group discussion (Schensul, 1999) was intended to obtain information from the sampled students ($n=17$), teachers ($n=6$) as well as the representative administrative staff ($n=15$) working in different departments in the campus. The data collected was edited and transcribed before making the qualitative analysis in order to orient the assessment as per the research objectives. The quantitative data was collected from the campus record and utilized as per the need of research. Some of the transcripts have been presented originally in the native language (with translations in the parentheses) keeping in view that the paper addresses the local audience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Input

The record maintained at PNC shows that there are 100 employees working on a regular basis as full time staff. Besides working full time in one of the prescribed shifts, 72 percent of them have been working in different academic departments and administrative units in another shift as an extra time workers. Of the total working staff, 42 percent are office helpers while 18 percent have been working as office assistants. This reveals that every 3 staff among 5 is of the lowest profile post that requires no special technical skill. Only a small portion (11%) of the working staff population is of gazzetted officer level. The administrative workload in the campus has been allocated among those staff in three shifts: morning, day and evening (*Based on data obtained from campus administration on 2074/11/30 BS*).

Among the employees at PNC working extra time, the proportion of unskilled level posts is higher. With regard to the functioning of different units, the traditional system of administration has been in practice so far. However, there have been many attempts in order for the administrative activities to be efficient and effective to meet the contemporary needs. One of the reasons of complexity and sluggish functioning can be considered as declining staff due to mandatory retirement on the basis of age. The staff when recruited locally under the decentralization policy of TU, there is influence of trade unions and the probability of getting a competent human resource gets decreased.

Regarding the recruitment of the staff at the moment of implementing the semester system at master's level, a conversation with one of the staff right after the announcement of admission application in the campus revealed that there is a dilemma on the administrative process and other details of the procedure of running the courses are yet to come. In addition, the number of existing staff will hardly support the new academic system. One of the participant staff in the focus group discussion stated:

... हामी अहिले अँध्यारोमा हुँदा हान्ने जस्तो अवस्थामा छौं किनभने दिनको कार्यालयबाट आएको सुचना अनुसार हामीले विद्यार्थीका लागि आवेदन फारम खुला मात्र गर्‍यौं । अरु कुराको थाहा जानकारी केही छैन । सेमेष्टर प्रणाली अनुसार विद्यार्थी भर्ना गर्ने हो भने दरबन्दी अनुसारका शिक्षक कर्मचारीको लोड छैन ... । (*..... We are in a dilemma that there are a shortage of detailed information and guidelines regarding the admission process of master's level semester system and which is why we just made a call for admission. There is no clear specification regarding the faculty members and employees ...*)

One of the important physical infrastructures such as the library has also been under crisis in terms of the human resource, teaching-learning resources as well as the working schedules.

One can effortlessly make out the situation to hear the voice of one of the staff working there. The excerpts from what has been said:

We had requested the campus administration for the necessary competent human resource for the library, but what we received is the unskilled and ineffectual ones. However, if we are looking for quality education in the campus, we must make library functions stronger and more efficient.

Physical infrastructure such as the work station for the personnel needs to be well-equipped and the working environment must be motivating and hygienic. Likewise, the offices should be integrated into a single building or in an assimilated system in order for the service delivery to be free from the complications to the students. This not only increases the efficiency in performance but also provides quality assurance of the service to the students. An interviewee staff informed about the situation:

कार्यालयहरू छरिएर रहेकाले विद्यार्थीहरूलाई गुणस्तरीय सेवा प्रदान गर्न अप्ठ्यारो परिरहेको छ । त्यसैले विद्यार्थीहरूलाई सेवा प्रदान गर्न प्रत्यक्ष रूपले सम्बन्धित कार्यालयहरू एउटै भवनमा वा एकिकृत रूपले व्यवस्थित भइदिने हो भने काम गर्न सजिलो हुने थियो । (As the offices are scattered in different places within the campus premises, it has been inconvenient to the students, teachers as well as the working staff themselves in qualitative service delivery. It would be better if we have an integrated office management system operated from a single building.)

Conversion

Delegation of activities to employees by the assistant campus chiefs seems quite unclear. There is also a shortage of clearly defined job description for the employees. This might be one of the reasons for ineffective administration. Another complication that the employees have to work extra load is for shift based activities. Three out of four employees have been working extra time on alternate shifts. The effectiveness of output from the exhausted staff can seldom be expected.

Regarding the quality of human resource, the mass of untrained and unskilled human resource present in the institution can hardly provide quality services. The majority of such population is unfit for the current needs and development paradigm in the campus administration. One staff says:

प्रशासनमा दक्ष जनशक्तिको आवश्यकता छ । तर कर्मचारीको अभावले गर्दा कार्यसम्पादनमा जटिलता उत्पन्न भइरहेको छ । कार्यरत कर्मचारीका लागि अभिमुखिकरण आवश्यक छ, पुनर्ताजगी तालिम चाहिएको छ । (Administration is in a shortage of skilled human resource, which has created complications in accomplishing good governance. Existing human resource requires orientation and refreshment training on information technology to meet the needs.)

Likewise, the need of job description for both the teaching and non-teaching staff is pointed out by another staff as saying:

शिक्षक कर्मचारीका लागि कार्यतालिका तोक्नु पर्‍यो । पुरा सत्रमा शिक्षक क्याम्पस भित्र रही शैक्षिक कार्यमा संलग्न हुन जरुरी छ । हाजिर गर्दैमा शिक्षक कर्मचारीको दायित्व पुरा हुँदैन । (There should be a clear demarcation of working hour for the faculty and the staff. Teachers too must be engaged full time in teaching activities. The duty is not over by making attendance only.)

The working environment is also uninspiring in some administrative departments. Staff usually complain of being lethargic and monotonous working long hours in such environment.

One of the campus authorities revealed that the quality of human resource is insufficient and there is a problem of integrity, transparency and accountability. He said,

कर्मचारी दक्ष छैनन् । अत्यन्तै न्यून मात्रामा दक्ष कर्मचारी रहनु प्रशासनको कार्यक्षमता माथिको प्रश्न हो । कर्मचारीलाई काम गराउन अत्यन्तै गाह्रो छ । एकथरी सुविधाभोगी छन्, जस्तो कि परीक्षामा कामै नगरी

पारिश्रमिक लिने तर अर्कोथरी निरन्तर आफ्नो काममा खटिरहेकै छन् । त्यसैले क्याम्पसको प्रशासनिक सुदृढिकरणका लागि गुणस्तरीय र इमान्दार जनशक्तिको आवश्यकता छ र नयाँ जनशक्तिको नियुक्ति प्रक्रियामा राजनैतिक भागबन्डाको प्रभावबाट मुक्त हुन सके राम्रो हुन्थ्यो । *(Staff are rarely skilled. The efficiency of the administration is questionable that the presence of a negligible figure of skilled staff in an organization. Making staff work efficiently and energetically in the campus is somewhat like squaring the circle. There is a division of staff in terms of seeking facilities rather than duties, while others go the extra mile. So, the recruitment of competent human resource without political influence is needed for the quality assurance of the campus administration.)*

Outputs

The quantitative data from the campus record, TU senate decisions as well as the qualitative data obtained from the focus group discussion revealed that there are numerous problems and challenges of the administrative system in the campus.

A number of non-teaching staff have been declining as many of them retire and the campus does not recruit the new staff to replace the retirees. This has created an extra load of work for the existing staff. Citing an example of the declining staff in the library, a participant would state:

विगतमा पुस्तकालयमा २४ जनाको दरबन्दी थियो, अहिले त्यो घटेर १६ मा आइपुगेको छ । अब दुई महिना पछि १४ जनाको दरबन्दी बाँकी रहन्छ । अब कार्य व्यवस्थापनको समस्या अझै बढ्ने अवस्था रहेको छ । *(In the library, a number of staff posts was 24, which now declined to 16 and it is going to be less than 14 soon. So, the shortage of human resource is certain to have problems in workload management in the library.)*

The poor coordination among the departments as well as among the staff of different administrative units creates dilemma in the functioning of the administration.

The implementation of new programs needs to have much coordination so as to have efficient output. Another participant asked for the coordination as well as the directives to the staff:

नयाँ कार्यक्रम सञ्चालन गर्दा आन्तरिक समन्वय हुनुपर्छ । विभिन्न शाखा बीच सम्बन्ध मैत्रीपूर्ण हुनुपर्दछ । काम गर्न गराउन उपयुक्त आदेश, निर्देशन र निर्देशिका आवश्यक छन् । सो भएको खण्डमा मात्र शैक्षिक वातावरण राम्रो हुन्छ । कर्मचारीलाई हौसला र प्रोत्साहन आवश्यक छ । कर्मचारीहरु बीच समन्वयको आवश्यकता छ । *(There needs to have internal coordination prior to launching of new programs. Interdepartmental relation must be friendly and directives are the prerequisites for quality output.)*

The views of the campus leadership seem to be similar regarding the coordination mechanism of TU and its constituent campuses. The insufficient coordination can have the consequences that the academic calendar is likely to

क्याम्पस तथा केन्द्र बीचको समन्वयको अभाव छ । गत वर्ष विश्वविद्यालय र कानून संकायको दिन कार्यालय बीच उचित समन्वय नहुँदा एउटै शैक्षिक वर्षमा गीच मा दुई छवतअज भर्ना गर्नुपर्ने अवस्था सम्म आएको हो । यसबाट त्रि.वि.का कार्यक्रमहरुको कार्यान्वयनमा एकरूपता छैन भन्ने प्रष्ट हुन्छ । *(Due to the lack of coordination between TU central administration and its constituent campuses, we were supposed to have new students admitted for two batches in the same academic calendar for the LLB program.)*

The employees working in the science laboratories have different experiences of grievances.

The inefficient coordination among the staff as well as the heads of departments has been revealed by one of the employees:

... B.Sc. CSIT / M.Sc. (Physics) कार्यक्रमका midterm / final term को प्रयोगात्मक परीक्षामा काम गरेको तर अतिरिक्त पारिश्रमिक लागु नहुने, त्यही काम अन्यत्र मान्य हुने, मेरो लागि क्याम्पस प्रमुखले तोक लगाउने तर लेखा शाखाले रोक्ने किन ...? *(The remuneration of extra time workload has not*

been maintained in the laboratories of B.Sc. CSIT and M.Sc. (Physics) programs while the same workloads have been considered in other programs in the campus.)

The question of accountability is prevalent even in the laboratories of various departments of science. For instance, laboratories have valuable and sensitive materials that need special care and attention, which should never be left unattended during the opening hours. However, the weaker notion of accountability is reflected from the words of one of the staffs in this manner:

... प्रयोगशालामा हेने हो भने कुनै कर्मचारी जवाफदेही छैनन् । कोठा खुल्लै हुन्छ, तर त्यहाँ रहेका Laptop र अरु सामानको जिम्मेवार कोही हुँदैनन् । यसलाई कसरी व्यवस्थापन गर्ने भन्ने चुनौती छ ... । (*Employees at the laboratory are not accountable. Nobody is responsible for whatever is there as they leave the room opened throughout.*)

Environment

Organizational culture is made up of people working there. Culture varies in different organizations. Our university system has been affected by political influence and working culture of the organizational efficiency.

Political unionism in the university system is one of the problems. This has been accepted by the teachers, students as well as the administrative staff in the informal discussions. However, the unnecessary political influence has still been prevalent, which is against the norms of good governance. It has been seen for decades that the appointment of the campus leadership has been influenced by the political sharing of portfolio among the teaching as well as non-teaching staff. However, the leadership has not been supported later by their political alliances. So, this signifies the political influence as such seldom favors good governance in the campus administration.

One of the student representatives opined that the existence of political organizations of the students, teachers and employees in the campus is unlikely to be relevant for maintaining quality in administrative activities. Here is what he would say:

सेमेष्टर प्रणालीलाई ठिकसँग लागू गर्ने हो भने शिक्षक, कर्मचारी र विद्यार्थीका दलीय संगठन विघटन गरौं । हामीले क्याम्पसमा अधिक राजनीतिलाई बढावा दियो र राजनीति हावी भयो । अब त्यो बन्द गरौं । क्याम्पसको संरचना बदलौं, शुल्क वृद्धि गरौं र विद्यार्थीलाई दिने गुणस्तरमा सम्झौता नगरौं । (*If we want to implement the semester system effectively, we need to dissolve political organizations of students, teachers and the employees in the campus. We have unnecessarily and excessively endorsed politics in the university system, which has been unproductive so far. It's time to restructure and proceed with no compromises in quality education.*)

The tendency of the administrative staff seems to disobey the organizational leadership. The leadership is therefore incapable of implementing the policies and directives due to their staff's tacit roles.

Likewise, the formal structure with informal rules has made the administrative system vulnerable. Long tea breaks during the working hours, procrastination in practice and lack of accountability have degraded the quality service provision mechanism in the campus. This is the reflection of the fact that the working environment has been ineffective for efficient administration. It is already revealed that the extra-time workers sometimes stay on leave but they get paid, which is quite uncommon. This can be considered to be the outcome of the ignorance of the leadership.

CONCLUSION

Quality administration is the core of teaching and learning environment in academic organizations. Poor administrative system is unlikely to produce quality human resource

and maintain accountable service delivery. The study revealed that there is a weak coordination of inter-and-intra-departmental relation as well as with the central administration. Existence of poor infrastructure with no modern equipment is seen. Scattered administration with poor monitoring and supervision has made the service delivery system unmanageable. In addition, there exist problems in communication and information dissemination. Drawing salary or remuneration without work is against the Weberian concept of bureaucracy. Honest and hard working staff have been deprived of the facilities.

Traditional form of administration is far from the achievements of education. The prevalence of mismanagement of human resource is nothing but the wastage of time and money for the institution. The product of the academic programs in such a milieu will always be insufficient for the global competition. Modern administration is therefore the heart of quality teaching learning process.

Recommendations

PNC needs to have a comprehensive reform process by restructuring the infrastructure as well as through the installation of e-governance system. In fact, the functioning of teaching and non-teaching staff should go simultaneously and spontaneously so as to foster quality service mechanism in the institution. Similarly, capability strengthening on dynamic executive committee, policy reform and restructuring tangible academic activities are also essential.

Regarding the institutional policy, there needs to design a comprehensive policy about job description as well as facilities for teaching and non-teaching staff. Need of annual work plan and detailed job description of the staff is sought. Restriction to the unionism and their non-academic activities should be initiated through the scientific selection of employees free from political influence. There is a need for regulating the information and communication process that will promote the information dissemination process. So, it is essential to set up an inquiry department and appoint an information and communication officer for facilitating the new students and media on campus rules, regulations and activities. In addition, infrastructure capability should be strengthened by the centralization of administration through the buildings with rooms equipped with central monitoring system, information technology (IT) based facilities and centralized departments. Policy delivery needs to be on the basis of performance based annual evaluation system for effective service delivery.

Regarding the individual level management, the recruitment and/or placement of the right person in the right place is required with regular training for the staff. There should be cooperation and coordination among the employees. People with good character should be in the position of leadership so that the chances of threat to system collapse due to leadership crisis will be averted (Sawshilya, 2012). This is the reflection of the fact that the administrators without good moral character will certainly annihilate the organization. So, the method of administration must be efficient, effective and economic in the modern world.

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