

## **Human Resources Policy Development and Portfolio Administration in Nigerian Universities**

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### **Introduction**

#### **Registrar and Registry in the University Human Resources Development**

Human resource management (HRM) is the process of employing people, training, compensating, and developing policies relating to them, and developing strategies to retain them.<sup>1</sup> HRM is very crucial in line with universal principles of administration known as POSDCORB (*Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting*) in the management of formal organizations<sup>2</sup> and big institutions like universities.

The traditional function of the Registry in the Nigerian University system includes the administration of Human Resources (HR) portfolios, which is generally the administrative work and professional coordination of HR matters through its Establishment Division,<sup>3</sup> while the HR policy direction is under the guidance of University Management and policy statements of various Appointment and Promotion Committees codified and approved by Council.

The role of Registrars in the administration of Human Resources in the Nigerian University system about its statutory organs and departments is diverse. No doubt, the administrative system adopted in Nigerian universities like other British Commonwealth is centralized with the Vice-Chancellor (*President in the American System*) being the Chief Academic and Executive Officer while the Registrar is the Chief Administrative Officer reporting to the Chief Executive on the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://open.lib.umn.edu/humanresourcemanagement/chapter/1-4-cases-and-problems/>

<sup>2</sup> **Mark H. Moore**, *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government*, Harvard University Press; Revised ed. edition (January 1, 1995) ISBN-10: 0674175581; ISBN-13:978-0674175587

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Dr. Omojola O. Awosusi, (*former Chairman, Association of Registrars of Nigerian Universities and retired Registrar of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti*), 64 years old, September, 2023;

administration of all aspects of the university, particularly management services and corporate governance which covers secretarial services and human resources etc.<sup>4</sup>

At Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, the administrative structure of the University of Ibadan was adopted from its inception. The University also follows the Federal Government Salary Scale and reviews all matters of industrial relations and staff development based on recommendations from appropriate University organs of the University and the approval of the Governing Council.

The Registrar plays a vital role in the administration of human resources ensuring that the university's HR system supports its strategic goals and objectives. The Registrar is integral to the administration of human resources across the university statutory organs and department, effectively coordinating and implementing HR policies and practices<sup>5</sup> as follows:

- a. Compliance with regulations: The Registrar ensures that the university complies with all relevant regulations related to human resources, such as employment laws, labour laws, and anti-discrimination laws.
- b. Secretary to the statutory bodies: The Registrar is the secretary to all the statutory bodies of the university, such as the Governing Council, Senate, and Congregation responsible for record-keeping, taking minutes of meetings, preparing agenda, providing necessary information to guide policy making and ensuring that decisions are implemented.
- c. Head of the Human Resources Department: The Registrar is the Chief Human Resource Officer and head of the human resources department of the university responsible for the overall administration of human resources, including recruitment, selection, training, development, performance management, and compensation and benefits.
- d. Liaison with other departments: The Registrar liaises with various departments of the university, such as the Bursary (finance department), the estates department (Works and Services), and the legal office on matters related to human resources to ensure that there is a coordinated approach to human resources management. This ensures coordination between the different departments regarding human resources matters.

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<sup>4</sup> J.E.T. Babatola, *Registry Manual, 2017* – See [https://www.academia.edu/36613356/Registry\\_Training\\_Manual](https://www.academia.edu/36613356/Registry_Training_Manual); See also J.E.T. Babatola, *The Role of Secretary in Committee of Nigeria University System, 2014* - <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313668466>

<sup>5</sup> J.E.T. Babatola, *Registry and HRD Policy Development* - <https://bard.google.com/share/d05006b78b35>

- e. Promoting a positive work environment: The Registrar promotes a positive work environment in the university by liaising with Staff, Faculties, and the Congregation and assisting the Management and the Appointments and Promotions Committee (Committee of Council) to draft, develop, and implement policies and procedures to promote respect, fairness, and inclusion in the workforce, subject to the approval of the Governing Council. This includes also advising the Management to ensure that all employees are treated fairly and equally and that they have a safe and healthy working environment.

The Registrar's role in human resources administration in a Nigerian university varies based on the institution's size, complexity, staff count, policies and procedures and traditions. The overall goal is to equip the Registrar with the authority and resources needed to manage HR functions effectively, ensuring a well-functioning system<sup>6</sup> that supports the university's strategic goals and objectives by:

- a. Advising the Vice-Chancellor and other senior management on human resources matters.
- b. Overseeing the implementation of the university's human resources policies and procedures.
- c. Developing and implementing training programs for human resources staff.
- d. Researching human resources issues and
- e. Representing the university at conferences and other events related to human resources.

The Department overseeing Human Resources administration on the other hand assists the Registry in the following tasks:

- a. Overseeing recruitment and selection process: Assist the Registrar in the recruitment and selection process for all staff, including academic and non-teaching staff by developing job descriptions; advertising positions, screening applications, and conducting interviews.
- b. Managing employee records: Helps the Registrar to maintain employee records, such as personnel files, performance appraisals, commendation and achievement reports, and disciplinary records.

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<sup>6</sup> National Universities Commission (NUC), *Manual of University Management*, Chp. 4, NUC, Abuja, June 1997.

- c. Providing advice and guidance to staff: Provide advice to the Registrar in guidance to staff on a variety of human resources matters, when required to do so such as Staff rights and responsibilities, Staff benefits, and Staff disciplinary procedures.
- d. Resolving employee disputes: Responsible to the Registrar for resolving employee disputes as required or directed by the Management, such as disputes on salary matters, disputes of promotion, or disputes on the mode of staff discipline or disciplinary action.
- e. Monitoring the performance of the human resources department: Monitors the performance of staff as required of the human resources department to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the university.

### **Professionalizing Human Resources Portfolio in the Nigerian University System**

The increasing need for focus on workers' well-being, employee relations and manpower development, professionalism, and work specialization in Human Resources development policies has made some universities over time rename or create additional Human Resources Units in the Registry separate from the Establishment (Personnel) Division.<sup>7</sup> In Universities, where additional HR Units exist, they are known as:

- a. Human Resources Development Centre,
- b. Pensions and Industrial Relations Office,
- c. Industrial and Labour Relations Office,
- d. Staff Development and Training Unit, and
- e. Staff Welfare and Manpower Development Unit

These above-named offices handle some aspects of human resources activities of the Registry in the University and are coordinated by qualified Human Resource personnel who are staff of the Registry. It is only in the case of the University of Lagos that the Human Resources Development Centre is running as an academic directorate for the training of staff and other academic programmes of the University.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Dr. Omojola O. Awosusi, (*former Chairman, Association of Registrars of Nigerian Universities and retired Registrar of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti*), 64 years old, September, 2023;

<sup>8</sup> <http://hrdc.unilag.edu.ng/>

In all cases where the Establishment Office exists separate from the Human Resources (sometimes performed by the General or Central Administration Unit of the Registry),<sup>9</sup> the functions of the Establishment Office (Personnel Unit) are well specified and continue to exist as a responsibility of the Registry under the Registrar<sup>10</sup> as summarized below:

1. **The Establishment (Personnel) Office** is responsible for the following functions:
  - a. Recruitment and selection of qualified candidates for employment including sourcing candidates, screening applications, and conducting interviews.
  - b. Compensation, benefits, and onboarding new employees by providing them with information about the university, the job, and benefits and determining and administering salaries, wages, bonuses, and benefits for employees.
  - c. Maintaining personnel records which include keeping track of employee information such as names, addresses, dates of employment, and job titles.
  - d. Processing employee paperwork which includes processing new hire paperwork, termination paperwork, and other employee-related paperwork.
  - e. Performance management by setting performance goals and monitoring performance to provide feedback on employees to the Management and Council.
  - f. Providing information to employees about their benefits which includes explaining the university's benefits policies, answering employee questions, and resolving problems.
  - g. Ensuring compliance with employment laws and regulations by staying up-to-date on changes in employment law and ensuring that the university is conversant with laws and regulations on employment and employee relations.
  - h. Administering the university's payroll system which includes calculating employee wages, deductions, and taxes, and issuing paychecks.
  - i. Providing support to the Human Resources Office by providing data and information and assisting with the implementation of training and development programmes.
2. **The Human Resources Development Unit** on the other hand is responsible for the following functions:
  - a. Managing the performance appraisal process by setting performance goals, monitoring performance, and providing feedback to staff.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ui.edu.ng/content/office-deputy-registrar-administration>

<sup>10</sup> J.E.T. Babatola, Registry and HRD Policy Development - <https://bard.google.com/share/d05006b78b35>

- b. Planning and implementing training programmes for employees by identifying their training needs, developing and delivering training programmes that are aligned with the university's strategic goals and objectives and designed to improve employee skills, knowledge, and competencies.
- c. Delivering training programmes for employees that may be done in-house or by contracting with external training providers and evaluating training programmes to improve the effectiveness of the University and ensure that they meet the needs of employees and the university.
- d. Managing employee development records such as training certificates and performance appraisals.
- e. Providing career counselling and guidance to employees by helping them to identify their career goals, develop career plans, and find opportunities for career development and providing career counselling to employees to help them develop their careers and progress within the university.
- f. Providing answers to employee questions, and resolving problems on their contract of employment that requires Management review in line with extant law and University regulations.
- g. Overseeing health and safety in the workplace by ensuring the safety and health of employees.
- h. Administering the university's employee relations policies by handling employee grievances, resolving disputes, and promoting a positive work environment.
- i. Equal opportunities by ensuring that all employees are treated fairly and equally, regardless of their race, gender, religion, or other factors.

The Establishment Office and the Human Resources Office whether combined or separate, share many functions and overlapping responsibilities despite some distinct differences. While the Establishment Office focuses on human resources administration, personnel records management, and compliance with rules, the Human Resources Office emphasises staff development, training, talent management and welfare. Together, they ensure the university has a well-trained and motivated workforce. Their specific activities vary based on the university's size and complexity allowing them to harmonize resources and capabilities to support the university's strategic goals and objectives.

## **HR Policy Development for Staffing Needs and Development in Nigerian Universities**

The challenges of Human Resources Development in Nigerian Universities are diverse. The University faces several challenges that can be summarized as follows:

1. Limited resources and limited funding for training and development
2. Lack of qualified trainers and coaches
3. Competition for talent from other institutions and organizations and
4. Lack of a culture of continuous learning and development due to cultural barriers often associated with environmental factors and workers' attitudes, enabling environment and infrastructure
5. Work schedule and lack of time for staff to engage in training and development.
6. Resistance to change.

Human Resources policies in Nigerian Universities are designed to address growing challenges aligning with the University's strategic plan, ensuring a comprehensive and integrated approach to human capital development. These policies ensure the university has the right people with the right skills to meet strategic objectives, fostering a skilled and motivated workforce<sup>11</sup> to achieve its goals through:

- a. Recruitment and selection of high-quality staff
- b. Training and development of staff to meet the changing needs of the university
- c. Performance management and appraisal of staff
- d. Career development and progression of staff
- e. Employee relations and welfare

Developing human resources policies is crucial for attracting, developing, and retaining a skilled and motivated workforce essential for achieving the university's goals and enhancing its human capital. These policies provide various training and development opportunities helping the University create a learning organization capable of meeting the 21st century challenges.

An effective HR policy development in the University system in line with fulfilling National Universities Commission (NUC) institutional accreditation requirements is therefore expected to:

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<sup>11</sup> J.E.T. Babatola, Registry and HRD Policy Development - <https://bard.google.com/share/d05006b78b35>;

1. Align with the University's overall strategic plan.
2. Be flexible enough to adapt to the changing needs of the University.
3. Be regularly communicated to all staff for effective compliance and
4. Be regularly evaluated to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.

### **Key Principles of Human Resources Development in Nigerian Universities**

The key principles guiding the review and implementation of human resources policy development in the Universities are:

- a. The University's commitment to developing its staff as a strategic asset.
- b. The need for the University to provide a variety of training and development opportunities to meet its staff needs.
- c. The University's determination to integrate the values and respect for diversity and inclusion in its workforce.
- d. The management's desire and intention to create a supportive environment for learning and development in the University.
- e. The budgetary provision for effective pursuit of training and development activities of the staff in the University and regular communication of the benefits of training and development to staff.
- f. The University desires to offer flexible training and development options to accommodate the staff's needs.
- g. The University's determination to create a culture of continuous learning and development by providing opportunities for staff to learn new skills and knowledge in their careers.

### **Goals and Objectives of Human Resources Policy Development in Nigerian Universities**

The goals of the human resources policy development are to:

- a. Attract and retain the best and brightest talent.
- b. Promote a high-performing and motivated workforce.
- c. Create a culture of continuous learning and development and
- d. Develop the skills and knowledge of staff to meet the changing needs of the university.

The specific objectives of the human resources policy development are to:

- a. Develop a comprehensive training and development plan for all the staff.
- b. Provide opportunities for staff to learn new skills and knowledge.
- c. Encourage staff to take on new challenges and responsibilities.
- d. Recognize and reward staff achievements.
- e. Create a supportive and encouraging environment for learning and development.

### **Activities of the Human Resources Development Department in Nigerian Universities**

The variety of activities to support the development of the University's human capital includes:

- a. Onboarding and orientation programmes for new employees
- b. Training and development programmes for current employees
- c. Mentorship and coaching programmes
- d. Leadership development programmes
- e. Career development counselling
- f. Employee wellness programmes

### **Strategies for Implementing Human Resources Development in Nigerian Universities**

The strategies adopted to facilitate the implementation of human resources development include:

1. Attracting, developing, and retention of high-quality staff.
2. Enhancing skills and knowledge of staff to meet the changing needs of the University.
3. Creating a learning organization that encourages continuous improvement
4. Promoting a culture of innovation and creativity.
5. Providing various training and development opportunities, including on-the-job training, workshops, seminars, and online courses.
6. Offer tuition reimbursement for staff who wish to pursue further education.
7. Creating a mentoring program to pair experienced staff with new staff and subordinates.
8. Establish a learning and development budget to fund training and development activities.
9. Measuring the impact of training and development activities to ensure that they meet the university's needs.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation on Human Resources Development in Nigerian Universities**

The human resources development plan should be continuously evaluated to ensure it meets the needs of the university and its staff. The monitoring and evaluation process which includes feedback from staff, managers, and other stakeholders can measure the following:

- a. The university's specific needs such as course offerings, research activities and campus locations.
- b. Availability of resources, including funding and training facilities.
- c. Staff satisfaction with training and development opportunities.
- d. Impact of training and development on skills and knowledge.
- e. Contribution of training and development to the university's strategic objectives.
- f. Challenges in human resource development such as a lack of skilled trainers and high training costs.
- g. Fair and transparent recruitment based on merit and qualifications.
- h. Provision of training and development opportunities for all staff, including types of training and eligibility criteria.
- i. Creation of a performance management and appraisal system to ensure staff perform to their full potential and receive necessary feedback.
- j. Designing a career development and progression system to provide staff with opportunities to advance within the university.
- k. Developing an employee relations and welfare system to meet staff needs in health and safety, equal opportunities, and disciplinary procedures.
- l. Proper implementation and regular review of the HR policy to ensure that it meets the university's needs.
- m. Consideration of the cultural context and societal values and expectations of university staff.

## **Case Study of Human Resources Portfolios in selected Nigerian Universities**

The Aboriginal Establishment Office in the University system were routine workers, who were not specialists in Human Resources but trained to handle administrative duties including regular matters such as leave, maternity, sabbatical, study leave, promotion, service investigation panels

etc. Nonetheless, most federal, state, and private universities in Nigeria modelled their human resources administration along the same pattern as what exists at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria (*Nigeria's Premier University*), University of Nigeria, Nsukka, (*Nigeria's first full-fledged University*) and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (*Northern Nigeria's Premier University*) with the headship remaining a senior Registry Staff (*an Administrative Officer*) in the rank of a Deputy Registrar, Senior Deputy Registrar or a Director.<sup>12</sup>

The components of Human Resources Units in the above-mentioned Universities consist of the Establishments Division (HR/Personnel Services) responsible for Staff Recruitment, Staff Deployment, Management of Staff related affairs such as Housing, Leave, Training, Discipline and promotion, Retirement/Pension Registration, etc and divided into either:

- a) Establishment (HR/Personnel) Division (a University of Ibadan model) comprising: The Personnel Office, Welfare Department and Industrial Relations Unit are now under the supervision of the Deputy Registrar (General Administration) who coordinates the activities of the following Registry Units: Estate Office, Publications Unit, Training and Industrial Relations Unit and the Secretariat of Development Committee with its three Sub-Committees (Finance, Academic, and Research Grants). Additionally, the Deputy Registrar represents the Registrar on the Board of Health, Senior Staff Housing Committee, Board of Survey, Ceremonials Committee and serves as Secretary of Senior Staff Disciplinary Committee and Congregation.
- b) Establishment (HR/Personnel) Division (a University of Nsukka Model) comprising: Personnel Administrative Desk, Records/Statistics Unit, Staff Committee (SC) Desk, Recruitment, Training and Development (RTD) Office.
- c) Establishment (HR/Personnel) Division (a University of Lagos Model) comprising: Academic Staff Unit, Administrative and Technical Staff Unit, Junior Staff Unit, Staff Training and Development Unit, Health and Safety Unit and Pension Unit.
- d) Establishment (HR/Personnel) Division (an Ekiti State University Model) comprising: Academic Staff Unit, Non-Teaching Senior Staff Unit, Junior Staff Unit, Staff Development and Training Unit and Staff Welfare, Industrial Relations and Pension Unit.

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<sup>12</sup> J.E.T. Babatola, Registry and HRD Policy Development - <https://bard.google.com/share/d05006b78b35>;  
<https://registry.unn.edu.ng/2020/07/17/operational-strategic-offices-of-the-registry/>;

Several universities, such as the University of Lagos, Akoka; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife<sup>13</sup>; Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye; Covenant University, Otta; Baze University, Abuja, Hallmark University, Itele and Redeemers University, Ede have restructured their human resources management by renaming the Establishment Department as the Human Resources Department (HRD). The department is typically headed by a senior Registry Staff (*an Administrative Officer*) either a Deputy Registrar or a Director. In instances where a Director of Human Resources is appointed, they report to the Registrar who in turn reports to the Vice-Chancellor. The HRD oversees a team of professionals specializing in recruitment, selection, training, and development, performance management, compensation and benefits, employee relations, health and safety, and equal opportunities within the university framework.

At Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, the Registrar's Office oversees all administrative and operational functions of the university. The Directorate of Personnel Affairs reporting to the Registrar's Office manages staff appointments, promotions, and disciplinary matters, while the Staff Training and Development Unit within the Personnel Division handles ongoing training initiatives. Additionally, the Directorate of Planning, Budgeting and Monitoring/Management Information Systems also under the Registrar's Office develops the university's data bank for planning and budgeting purposes and manages its information systems.

At the University of Lagos (UNILAG), the Personnel Division now known as the Human Resources Department within the Registry plays a central role in managing human resources. It oversees recruitment, appointments, staff promotions, welfare, capacity building, leave processing, retirement and staff exit, disciplinary actions and ensures proper establishment and job descriptions. The department is organized into units dedicated to Academic Staff, Administrative and Technical Staff, Junior Staff, Staff Training and Development, Health and Safety and Pension. Additionally, UNILAG has established a Human Resources Development Centre as an academic directorate focused on staff-certificated training and fostering collaboration with professional bodies for professional and academic development opportunities.

At Mountaintop University, Prayer City, the Human Resources (HR) Unit overseen by the Registry manages various aspects of staff administration. This includes recruitment,

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<sup>13</sup> <https://oauife.edu.ng/registry/>; <http://hrdc.unilag.edu.ng/>

appointment, promotion, welfare, training, and development. The Unit oversees also handles leave, and staff redeployment as needed within the university's operational framework. Working closely with committees the Appointment and Promotion Committee under the Registrar's direction, the HR Unit places internal and external job advertisements, manages recruitment processes, from shortlisting to issuing appointment letters; ensures new staff comply with university regulations including medical examination and orientation programs, facilitates staff redeployment and manages the clearance process for departing staff members.

At Hallmark University, the Human Resources Department operating within the Registry oversees and coordinates all Academic, Non-teaching, and Junior Staff matters. Supported by a dedicated Data Entry and Statistics Unit, it manages leave records, updates service records, maintain staff nominal rolls, oversees staff file storage, monitors ICT server operations related to personnel, manages annual personnel budgeting, oversees the APER form and appointments/promotions schedule, verifies staff credentials, issues letter of introduction as needed by staff and handles other assigned duties within the unit.

At Baze University, Abuja the Human Resources Department focuses on diversity management and proactive partnerships to recruit, develop, and retain a highly skilled and engaged workforce. The division aims to inspire and support staff in achieving their personal and professional goals while delivering the University's mission. Committed to fostering innovation and better decision-making through a diverse workforce, the HR team oversees all aspects of employment including conditions of service, recruitment, faculty services, compensation, benefits, training, development, educational opportunities, employer-employee relations, pension, staff awards, onboarding, health and welfare benefits, employment verification and maintaining a safe work environment. They are dedicated to preserving the confidentiality and privacy of entrusted information.

At the Redeemers University, Ede, the Human Resources Department is a separate Registry Unit that performs core HR activities and functions like the Registry of UNILAG and also plays the role of:

- a. Planning and budgeting: involving the planning and budgeting process for the university, as it relates to human resources including forecasting staffing needs, developing training budgets, and managing compensation and benefits costs.
- b. Information management: maintaining the university's human resources information system including tracking employee data, such as personal information, job history, and performance appraisals.
- c. Research and analysis: Conduct research and analysis on human resources issues, such as employee turnover, compensation, and benefits. This research is used to inform the university's human resources policies and practices.
- d. Public relations: promoting the university's human resources policies and practices to employees, students, and the public. This includes developing and distributing publications, such as employee handbooks and recruitment brochures.

In universities where the Human Resources Department replaces the Establishment Office, they undertake the following core activities:

- a. Recruitment and Selection: Advertising positions, screening applications, conducting interviews, and making hiring decisions to recruit qualified candidates.
- b. Training and Development: Providing formal and informal training opportunities, such as on-the-job training, workshops, and seminars to enhance the skills and knowledge of the university's employees.
- c. Performance Management: Developing and implementing a system to set performance goals, monitor performance, and provide feedback to employees to improve their effectiveness.
- d. Compensation and Benefits: Determining and administering salaries, wages, bonuses, and other benefits while ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations.
- e. Employee Relations: Handling grievances, resolving disputes, and fostering a positive work environment through policy development and enforcement.
- f. Health and Safety: Ensuring workplace health and safety by developing and enforcing policies that protect employees from hazards.

- g. Equal Opportunities: Promoting fairness and equality for all employees regardless of race, gender, religion, or other factors, through inclusive policies and practices.
- h. Administrative Tasks: Maintaining employee records, processing payroll, and managing benefits administration efficiently.

### **The Registry and Human Resource Management at Ajayi Crowther University**

The office of the Registrar is responsible for a good number of administrative works of the university such as:

- a. Keeping the university records,
- b. Overseeing the administration of academic records;
- c. Handling establishment matters;
- d. Providing corporate information and undertaking public relations;
- e. Assisting with the coordination of student affairs;
- f. Seeing to arrangements for recruitment and promotion of staff;
- g. Secretariat of University committees and
- h. Other functions are assigned by law or delegated by appropriate organs of the University and the Vice-Chancellor.

As earlier mentioned, the Registrar is Secretary to the statutory bodies in the University, including the Council, Senate, their committees, and others. The Registrar discharges his responsibilities to the management and various committees through the Registry. Ajayi Crowther University Registry office is presently a combination of the following offices:

- a. Office of the Registrar
- b. Establishment Division: Establishment Desk for Academic Staff; Establishment Desk for Administrative and Technical Senior Staff; Establishment Desk for Junior Staff and Establishment Desk for Staff Welfare, Training and Development)
- c. Academic Affairs Division: Academic Matters & Senate Secretariat; Examinations & Record Office; Admissions Office; and Committee of Deans and Other Senate Committees

- d. Council Affairs and General Administration Division: Council Secretariat and Records; and General Administration, Central Registry and Facility Management
- e. Student Affairs Division: Student Records Administration; Students Welfare; Hostel Administration; Students Guidance and Counselling; ACUSA and Students activities; Students Clubs and Societies; Students Scholarship, Grants and Academic Prizes; NYSC Mobilization, Voluntary Services and Public Enrolment
- f. Faculty Offices/Centre/Directorate Administration and Programme Secretaryship

### **Activities and Duties of Establishment Division in Ajayi Crowther University Registry**

The Establishment Division at Ajayi Crowther University serves as the central hub for human resources management, overseeing policies, and administrative functions related to personnel. The Human Resources Officer in the University under the direction of the Registrar and ultimately accountable to the Vice-Chancellor, manages a broad spectrum of staff categories including academic, senior, junior, non-academic, and technical roles. Responsibilities encompass recruitment, welfare, training, and development initiatives across the university.

The Establishment Officer operates within a structured hierarchy where recruitment decisions for teaching and senior non-teaching staff necessitate approval from the Vice-Chancellor, with the Registrar overseeing junior staff and casual workers' approvals. This process aligns with budgetary oversight and administrative reporting requirements mandated by the Vice-Chancellor. The role also involves frequent coordination with supervisory staff (Schedule Officers) in the Department to relate with the Registrar and have direct access to the Vice-Chancellor when essential, particularly in assisting with delegation of duties and processing of cases before Appointments and Promotions Committees cases and policy execution under Registrar's guidance.<sup>14</sup>

Policy development within the HR framework is pivotal, driven by the Establishment Officer's execution of approved recruitment processes. Upon the Vice-Chancellor's approval to fill vacancies, the Registrar directs the Establishment Office to proceed with advertising, sourcing for the right hand, applicant shortlisting, interview organization and issuance of appointment letters, ensuring compliance with university regulations and operational efficiency.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.acu.edu.ng/the-registry/>; ACU Law (2003); ACU Condition of Service (under review)

The statutory roles of the Registrar as the Chief Administrative Officer which is often delegated or devolved in an Establishment Office under the Registrar's guidance or directives include:

1. Assisting the top management of the University in the interpretation of policies that relate to personnel or workforce, for the purpose of facilitating management decisions.
2. Advising the line managers in the University as a staff specialist.
3. Acting as staff advisors by explaining policies to staff and advising them on how to adhere to the university's rules and regulations governing staff employment and conditions of service.
4. Assisting the direct supervisors and managers in dealing with various personnel matters.
5. Acting as counsellors and attending to problems on employees' grievances as they relate with the University.
6. Acting as mediating professionals and serving as a link between management and staff.
7. Serving as the scheduling officer to the Appointments and Promotions Committee and the Senior Staff Disciplinary Committee which are statutory committees of Governing Council.

The administrative and professional activities of the Establishment Division of the Registry therefore consist of the following:

- a. Devising, storage and preservation of HR information and policy documents.
- b. Keeping of staff records and other matters in relation to staff employment.
- c. Servicing the various statutory committees such as the Appointments and Promotions Committee (Academic Staff); Senior Staff Appointment and Promotions Committee (Non-Teaching); Senior Staff Disciplinary Committee; Junior Staff Committee (Appointments, Promotions and Discipline).
- d. Implementation of Appointments and Promotions Committee decisions as well as management policies and policy decisions that relate to university staff.
- e. Preparation of minutes and issuance of decision extract of the committees serviced.
- f. Handling all pensions and gratuity claims.
- g. Handling issuance on appointments and promotions, staff discipline, and transfer of staff; also handles issues relating to leaves (training leave, study leave, leave of absence, annual leave, and sabbatical leave).

- h. Attending Faculty meetings to guide regulations and acquaint members of staff and management with policies and decisions on issues affecting staff of the unit and departments.
- i. Interpret, guide, and advise Appointments and Promotions (Academic, Senior, and Junior) Committees in the regulations of the University as contained in the conditions of service guiding staff on issues relating to promotions, appointment, transfer, confirmation of appointment, welfare, and discipline.
- j. Organizing the placement of advertisements for vacant positions.
- k. Treating emails and correspondence with dispatch.
- l. Updating staff records.
- m. Initiating disciplinary process as it relates to academic staff members.
- n. Preparation of Appointments and Promotions (Academic, Senior, and Junior) committee reports for the governing council's consideration and approval.
- o. Conveying the Governing Council's decision extract as it relates to academic staff and other categories of employees from time to time.

The functions of the Establishment Division handling the University Human Resources<sup>15</sup> is summarized as follows:

1. Recruitment and Staffing: The Establishment Office oversees finding and employing academics, support personnel, and administrators. Posting job openings, reviewing applicants, holding interviews, and extending job offers all fall under this category. They ensure that the university selects capable people who are consistent with the institution's objectives and values.
2. Onboarding and Orientation: Following hiring, the Establishment Office assists new hires with the onboarding procedure. This includes orienting new employees, outlining university regulations and procedures, and assisting staff members with the relevant documentation.
3. Management of Employee Records: They keep track of and update employee records, including personal data, contracts, job descriptions, performance reviews, and records about pay, benefits, and leave. This requires the regular update of Nominal Rolls.

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<sup>15</sup> J.E.T. Babatola, Registry and HRD Policy Development - <https://bard.google.com/share/d05006b78b35>;

4. **Compensation and Benefits:** The department oversees employee compensation packages, which may include salaries, bonuses, and perks like health insurance, retirement plans, and financial aid for tuition. They make sure that salaries are fair and in line with the university's standards and any applicable laws.
5. **Payroll Processing:** The Establishment Office oversees payroll processing, ensuring that employees are paid accurately and on time. They calculate salaries, deductions, and withholdings, and address any payroll-related issues.
6. **Employee Relations:** They mediate and resolve conflicts between employees, offer guidance on workplace issues, and facilitate communication between staff and administration. They also provide support during grievance processes.

The Establishment Office at the University remains pivotal in overseeing the workforce, ensuring adherence to employment laws, promoting a conducive workplace, and aligning human resources practices with the institution's mission. These responsibilities are crucial for nurturing a capable, engaged, and diverse staff that enhances the university's overall achievements.

To better manage the extensive responsibilities and diverse operational areas of Ajayi Crowther University, the Establishment Office can be structured into specialized units similar to practices in other universities. These units would streamline operations and focus on key functions such as recruitment, employee relations, compliance with regulations and fostering a supportive work environment viz.

- i. Academic Staff Unit in charge of Academic staff matters
- ii. Senior Staff (Non-Teaching) Unit in charge of non-teaching senior staff
- iii. Junior Staff Unit in charge of Junior Staff and Casual Workers
- iv. Staff Development and Training Unit
- v. Pensions and Staff Welfare Unit
- vi. Staff Investigation, Discipline and Policy Enforcement Unit

### **Transforming Human Resources portfolio in the University System**

The basic requirements and outlines for setting up, transforming, and dividing the portfolio and activities of a human resource department in the university system require the following:

- a. The human resources department should have a clear understanding of the university's strategic goals and objectives.
- b. The human resources department should have a strong understanding of the Nigerian labour market and the challenges facing human resource management in Nigeria.
- c. The human resources department should have a team of qualified and experienced professionals.
- d. The human resources department should have access to the resources it needs to be effective, such as funding, training, and technology.
- e. The human resources department should be organized in a manner that will give room for the arrangement of schedules to cover the following important areas among others:
  - i. Recruitment and Selection Team: Develop a strategic approach to recruitment and selection aligned with the university's goals. This includes creating clear job descriptions, using diverse recruitment methods, and conducting thorough interviews.
  - ii. Training and Development Unit: Provide training opportunities for all staff, covering both mandatory areas like health and safety, and optional professional development.
  - iii. Performance Management and Appraisal System: Implement a performance management and appraisal system to ensure staff perform to their full potential and receive necessary feedback for development.
  - iv. Career Development and Progression Monitoring: Establish a system for career development to ensure that staff have opportunities to advance within the university.
  - v. Staff Welfare and Relations Unit: Ensure staff needs are met in health and safety, equal opportunities, and disciplinary procedures.
  - vi. Compensation and Benefits: Determine and administer salaries, wages, bonuses, and other benefits.
  - vii. Employee Relations: Handle employees' grievances, resolve disputes, and promote a positive work environment.
  - viii. Risk Management, Health, and Safety Matters: Ensure workplace safety and health and evaluate risks associated with employees' activities.
  - ix. Equal Opportunities, Diversity, and Inclusion Process: Ensure all staff are treated fairly and equally, regardless of their race, gender, religion, or other factors

In addition to the key areas listed above, the human resources department may need to focus on the following HR issues for expansion purposes viz.

1. Employee records management,
2. Human Resources Information System implementation, and
3. Maintenance and sustainability.

## **Conclusion**

The challenge of staffing is not peculiar to one University, rather it is a common phenomenon in Nigerian University settings. A major factor is the preponderance of new public and private universities which naturally is attracting away and invariably depleting the pools of academics in the older universities. The newly established universities are poaching several academics and experts across the university sector apart from the challenge of aging professoriate which is negatively impacting the number of staff at the Senior Academic cadre. Despite all these challenges, every University should focus on asserting its leadership in the academic enterprise by attracting and securing desirable crops of academics that would help it achieve its primary goal of becoming a 21st-century Class University.

Looking at the role of the Registry in the portfolio and policy development of human resources in universities, a foremost respected University Administrator, and retired Registrar affirmed in what can be translated into a pillar of University HR Guidelines as follows:<sup>16</sup>

- 1) Every university operates under its enabling law, similar to the University of Ibadan Act of 1962 amended by Decree 11 of 1993, and the Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 2003 amended in 2012.
- 2) Unlike corporations or government agencies, universities have Governing Councils and Senates. The Council's authority includes staff appointment, promotion, compensation, and discipline. The Registrar, as the Council's Secretariat, ensures administrative integrity crucial for effective university governance.
- 3) The Registrar as the Chief Administrative Officer of the University reports staffing matters to the Vice-Chancellor, although Council retains ultimate responsibility.

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Dr. Omojola O. Awosusi, (*former Chairman, Association of Registrars of Nigerian Universities and retired Registrar of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti*), 64 years old, September, 2023;

- 4) A unified Human Resource Department should incorporate the functions of an Establishment Division, avoiding duplication. Roles can be delineated for clarity: the Establishment Office focuses on appointments, discipline, staff records and welfare while HR manages staff development and training.
- 5) The Registrar as the Secretary to Council naturally occupies the role of Human Resources Manager in any University. Other Administrative Officers are Registrar's aides (Registry staff) trained to manage university functions and administrative duties including human resources functions while faculty focuses on teaching and research.
- 6) The Vice-Chancellor is distinct as Chief Academic and Executive Officer of the University CANNOT combine his roles with the Registrar, who manages administrative operations as a Principal Officer of the University.
- 7) In a centralized administrative system, the Vice-Chancellor or his aides are not required to keep multitudes of records generated from different segments of the University since administrative functions of record keeping are under the purview of the Registry. Multiplication of records apart from taking space, being wasteful and distractive would not validate records outside the repository and custody of the Registry.
- 8) The distinction between the Human Resources Unit and the Establishment Division lies in workload scope and not the removal of HR functions from the Registrar's oversight.
- 9) Staffing matters follow university statutes and tradition, overseen by the Registrar, with HR activities delegated to the Registrar's authority, reporting to the Vice-Chancellor and the Governing Council as appropriate.
- 10) The functions of Human Resources Departments sometimes enrich the process of employee relations and staff management through advertisement, recruitment, tests and interviews, selection, appointment, onboarding, staff development and training, talent management, succession planning etc unlike the portfolio of the Establishment Division that strictly implement policies on personnel administration without making specific input to the process outside of what is obtained in the books.

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