

1985 LECTURE SERIES ON THE UNIVERSITY STRUCTURE AND ADMINISTRATION

ROLE OF THE OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR:
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. INTRODUCTION

It is most appropriate that the 1985 Lecture Series on the University Structure and Administration is rounding up today with the last lecture on the Role of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor. This series of lectures which has been going on for the past sixteen weeks since the 17th of April, 1985, has been designed to cover all aspects of the operation of the University Administration and

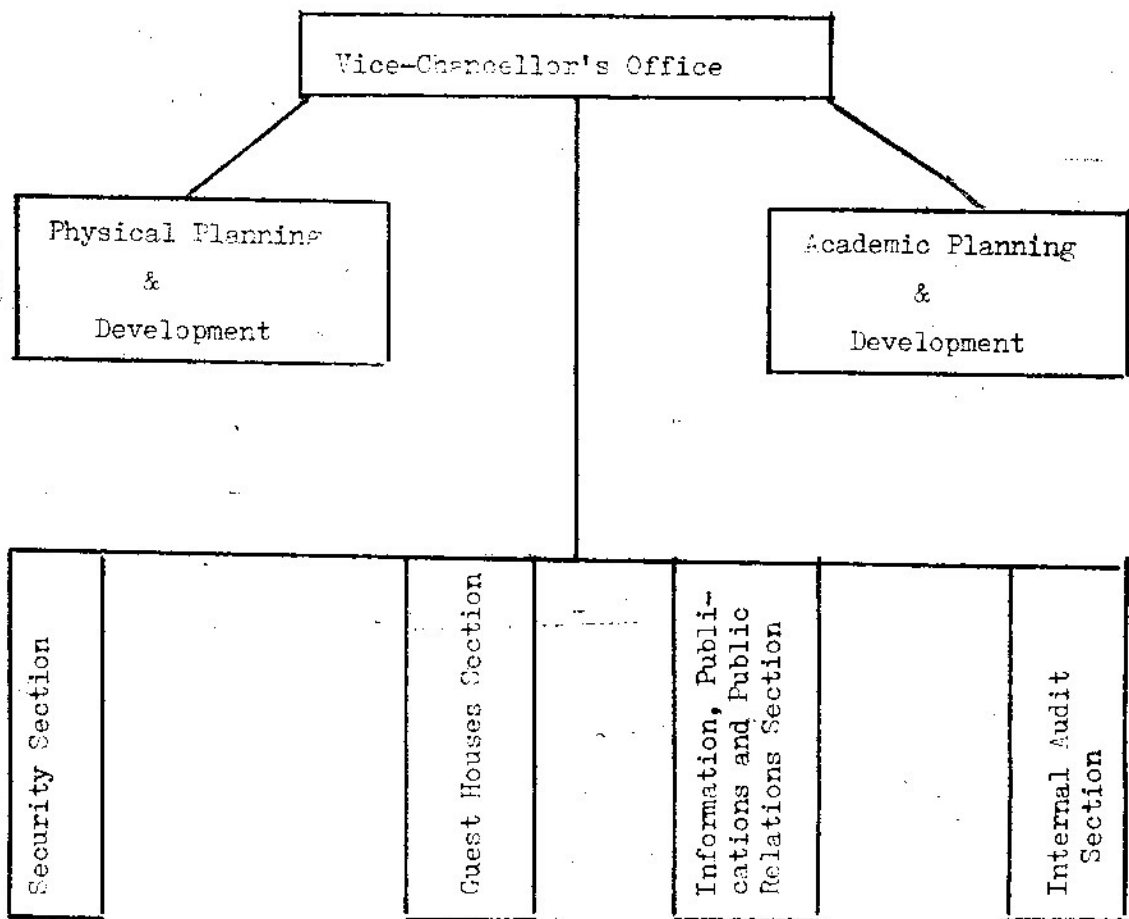
Management. I am happy that all the officers responsible for the various Sections of the University have been able to give comprehensive accounts of the operation of their respective sections within the context of the overall policy and set-up of the University. This has made my presentation today light and easy.

The Office of the Vice-Chancellor may be regarded as the "power house" as well as the "rubbish heap" of the University. As a power house, the Office of the Vice-Chancellor is expected to propel and keep the University alive and in the right direction, by initiating and formulating policy proposals, co-ordinating and directing the activities of the various arms of the University. As a rubbish heap, the Office of the Vice-Chancellor is responsible for adding "cold water on hot issues", and "putting things to rest." Statements such as 'I consider this matter closed', are therefore, a common feature of the numerous correspondence that go out from the Office of the Vice-Chancellor to staff. (I assure you, this final statement is always made after deep thinking, and very careful consideration).



2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Office of the Vice-Chancellor is made up of Units/Sections as shown below:



In the narrow sense of this arrangement, the Office of the Vice-Chancellor functions as a Department/Unit within the set-up of the University, with the Vice-Chancellor as the Head.

A question may arise as to why some Sections of the University should have a specially close relationship with the Vice-Chancellor in this way. The answer is simple - involvement and sensitivity.

(a) Involvement

Academic and Physical Planning Units present a typical example. For a young Institution like ours, planning, both academic and physical is the major pre-occupation of the Chief Executive. It is therefore necessary that the available expertise is closely associated with the Vice-Chancellor's Office for easy consultation and effective co-ordination to ensure that the philosophy of the Institution is properly integrated in all the stages of planning. The roles of the planning units, in the University context, have been adequately

explained by both Directors of Academic and Physical Planning, and I do not intend to repeat them here. Suffice it to say that the Vice-Chancellor must be the driving spirit behind all forms of planning and development.

(b) Sensitivity

Some areas of activities revolve on sensitive issues for which prompt decisions and actions are often required, and any delay might result in some serious consequences.

For examples:

(i) Security

The security of the entire University is a major concern that weighs more heavily in the mind of the Chief Executive than any other issue. The Chief Security Officer, therefore, must be in a position to be able to have constant consultation and dialogue with the Chief Executive. Often, there is need for taking quick decisions, particularly, during emergencies, or in order to forestall any danger to life or property.

(ii) Information and Publicity

This Section is responsible, among other things, for publicizing the policies and the activities of the University for general information of the public, and by doing this, to project the image of the institution. There is no better place for keeping abreast with the policies and coordinated activities of the University than the Office of the Vice-Chancellor. Furthermore, it is important that no incorrect, pre-matured, or contradictory information goes out to the public, and this can be assured through the control mechanisms within the Office of the Vice-Chancellor.

(iii) Internal Audit

Prudent financial management and control is one cardinal responsibility of the Chief Executive of any Organization, with the Bursar as his Chief Adviser and the day-to-day Manager. The Internal Audit is the watch-dog for the day-to-day spending of the available resources. It is the responsibility of this Section to ensure that the process of spending follows the laid down procedures, and that it is being done in accordance with the general financial regulations.

While it is necessary that the Section works very closely with the Bursary Department, it is important that ~~their~~ source of power to get access to all documents dealing with financial matters at any time, should come directly from the Chief Executive. In this way the Chief Executive is kept constantly and directly aware of the prudence or otherwise of the management of the available resources.

3. THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

The Vice-Chancellor's Office, as distinct from the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, which is made up of a number of Units/Sections, can be seen to have got two roles, with the Vice-Chancellor as the Principal Actor:

- (i) As the seat of the Head of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor
In this capacity the Vice-Chancellor's role is similar to that of any other Head of Department in the University; e.g. Academic Registrar, Director of Works, etc; and
- (ii) As the seat of the Chief Executive of the University
In this capacity the Vice-Chancellor's Office functions as the co-ordinating centre for the University, and strictly speaking, it is the Vice-Chancellor's Office rather than the Office of the Vice-Chancellor that is the "power house and the rubbish heap" of the University, mentioned earlier.

4. VICE-CHANCELLOR AS CHIEF EXECUTIVE

(a) Legal Provisions

In accordance with the Draft Decree establishing the University, the Vice-Chancellor shall:

- (i) in relation to the University, take precedence before all other members of the University except the Chancellor and the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council. He will also take precedence before the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council when acting as Chairman of Congregation, Convocation and Assemblies held for the conferment of degrees; and
- (ii) to the exclusion of any person or authority, subject to the provisions in Sections 5, 6 and 13, of the Draft Decree for the Functions of Council and its Committees, Senate, as well as the Functions of the Chancellor and of the Visitor; have the general

function, in addition to any other functions conferred on him by the Draft Decree or otherwise, of directing the activities of the University, and shall be the Chief Executive and Academic Officer of the University and Ex-Officio Chairman of the Senate.

(b) Functions and Responsibilities

- (i) As the Chief Academic Officer of the University, the Vice-Chancellor has the responsibility of ensuring that the academic programmes align with the policy guidelines and are offered in conformity with the philosophy of the University. This can be achieved through effective co-ordination within the Academic Planning Unit of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor. It is also his responsibility to ensure that acceptable academic standards are generally maintained. This, he can effectively do in his capacity as the Chairman of Senate and the Academic Staff Appointments and Promotions Committee.

The Vice-Chancellor is an ex-officio member of all Schools Boards, and although he may not find it possible to attend all meetings of the Boards, he receives the minutes of the meetings of all the Schools Boards. He is therefore kept well in the picture of the academic activities in the University.

- (ii) As Chief Administrative Officer of the University, the Vice-Chancellor is responsible for the effective co-ordination of the activities and services within the University to ensure that no sections of the University are neglected. This is achieved through constant dialogue, consultation, and occasionally, circular-directives to Heads of the various Departments/Units and staff in general.

Furthermore, the Vice-Chancellor's Office serves as the only channel through which external official information, directives, etc, pass to reach the University community. It is also the only channel through which official communications pass out, except as expressly delegated to some other arms of the University.

- (iii) As Chief Management Officer of the University, the Vice-Chancellor is responsible for the overall management of all the resources of the University, both human and material. Management of universities is becoming increasingly more complex and difficult because of the ever diminishing available financial resources. This has resulted in the

less liberalisation of staff establishments we are now witnessing.

It has also been made clear that it is an act of mis-management to continue to keep inefficient and unproductive staff, staff with questionable characters, as well as staff with proven destructive tendencies, and it is the responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor to ensure that these evidences of mis-management are not allowed to flourish in the University.

(iv) As Chief Executive of the University, the Vice-Chancellor is responsible for ensuring that:

(a) the University is run in accordance with the provisions of the Law establishing it;

(b) the objectives for which it was established are realized;

(X) the Government Policies as they affect:

- the technological developments;

- students admissions; and

- staff appointments;

are vigorously pursued, and strictly adhered to.

There is no doubt that the functions of the Vice-Chancellor's Office are numerous and complex, placing an enormous responsibility on the Vice-Chancellor as the Chief Executive. It seems almost an impossible task for one person. However, the operational organization, and particularly, the Committee system of management within the University, enables the Vice-Chancellor, who invariably is the Chairman of most of the Committees, to remain constantly at the centre of all major activities. Needless, of course, for me to comment on the efforts required by the Vice-Chancellor to keep up with the demands imposed on him by the Committee meetings, and the inevitable need for wise delegation of responsibility to his deputies and other senior members of the University.

(c) Powers of the Vice-Chancellor

The powers of the Vice-Chancellor may be considered to be in direct proportion to the functions conferred on him by the Law establishing the University. He seems to have at his disposal unlimited discretionary powers in line with his general function of directing the activities of the University to the exclusion of

any other person or authority, as subject to the provision of the Law mentioned earlier. Such wide powers are necessary for the Vice-Chancellor for effective management, control, and maintenance of discipline, both within the staff and student community.

5. CONCLUSION

- (a) The Vice-Chancellor's Office is the focal point where:
 - (i) all developmental policies of the University are formulated;
 - (ii) all activities of the University are coordinated and controlled; and
 - (iii) directives for implementation of policy decisions are sent out.
- (b) The Vice-Chancellor's Office is a symbol of all that the University stands for: Academic and Research excellence; service to community; progress; discipline; justice and fairplay; unity; etc, etc !!!
- (c) The wide powers associated with the Office of the Vice-Chancellor are intended to help the Chief Executive maintain the necessary disciplined academic environment, and should not be evoked for any reasons other than those beneficial to the maximum number of the members of the University community, and geared towards the overall good of the University.
- (d) The enormity of the responsibility associated with the Office of the Vice-Chancellor as well as the unlimited discretionary powers associated with it, demands that the Chief Executive must always live above the level of pettiness, and the conterminating influence of "dirty politics", if he is to succeed in discharging his responsibility creditably, and to carry both the staff and students along with him in the task of maintaining a conducive atmosphere for academic pursuits, and upholding a good image for his institution at all times.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank You.

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