

The Challenges of Publish-or-Perish Pressure on Academics in Administrative Positions

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Abstract

It is debatable whether academics in administrative positions are adequately compensated for the extra services they render to their universities by earning allowances and score during promotion. Such benefits may not suffice as they do not equate the value of publication count for academic promotion. The problem this study attempts to highlight is that academics holding administrative positions are disadvantaged by work overload to earn maximum score for promotion through publication in the face of the pressure to publish or perish. Anchored on the theoretical framework of Management by Objective which emphasises rewards based on goal achievement by individuals in an organisation, the study adopted survey method to obtain responses from fifty-five lecturers at Taraba State University, Jalingo through a questionnaire while data were analysed using simple percentages. The study found that the 'publish or perish' pressure poses serious challenges to the upward mobility of lecturers in administrative positions particularly those in the junior cadre who need more publication count to move up. Incidentally, such academics were found to occupy administrative positions more than their senior colleagues in the institution under study. The study recommends that the publication requirement for promotion of academics in administrative positions should be lesser.

Keywords: Publish or perish, Academic pressure, Academic community, Administrative position, Publication, Impact factor, University, Nigeria.

Introduction

It is indisputable that in contemporary academic setting, lecturers are under pressure to publish or perish. What this implies is that a lecturer or academic who intends to remain relevant to the system must be reeling out articles in learned, peer-reviewed journals with high impact factor. Impact factor is the aggregate number of citations of a particular academic publication by other scholars in a given field of study over a defined period. It is often used to rate both a publication like a journal and the published article. Of course, impact factor increases scholars' visibility in the global

academic landscape. Also, the lecturer must write books, monographs and contribute chapters to books, among other publications in order to secure promotion. The unfortunate thing is when the lecturer is found wanting in this area, he is not only denied promotion but may not be considered eligible for same assessment until after two or more years in some universities. Equally, when an academic consistently falls short of intellectual productivity (no publication to show), he does not need anyone to announce to him that he has inadvertently become an academic misfit in the university.

In UK and US universities for instance, an academic may not get tenure if he has not completed his second book or he is about doing so. Bauerlein (2011, p.3) attests to this thus:

The percentage of departments that consider research more important than teaching has doubled since the 1960s. Of those departments, one-third expect[s] development of a second book before they award tenure, the percentage of doctorate-granting departments alone raising that rate to 49.8 percent...

Bauerlein notes further that “The demands placed on candidates for tenure, especially, demands for publication, have been expanding in kind and increasing in quantity” (p.3). In some foreign universities, the lecturer is required to publish a number of academic papers in high-class international journals within a specified time frame. However, such academics are given necessary support to enable them concentrate on research geared ultimately to publishing. There is also an avalanche of funding agencies to which the researcher could apply and get funds in as much as he submits a good research proposal that suits the concerns of the donor agencies (Kalyango, 2017).

Back home in Nigeria, nearly all of these conditions are lacking, yet the pressure to publish or perish is even more pronounced here. In the Nigerian university system, the academic holding an administrative position is required to carry his administrative responsibilities along with his normal academic duties of teaching, research and community service. In spite of this enormous challenge, the academic is judged for promotion consideration on the same scale with his colleagues who are less saddled with such responsibilities. Dugga (2017, p.14) has observed that the emphasis unduly placed on publication count for career elevation in Nigerian universities over the years has been counter-productive:

Creativity was depleted with ill-motivated faculties that are poorly remunerated and provided near-minimal facilities. The university system placed premium on publications for career growth within the system at the expense of building relevant and efficient training modules. Cultural productivity took the back seat in the ensuing limbo and crises that continue to engulf the academic institutions (emphasis mine).

It is axiomatic that when a crucial matter of interest to an individual is at stake,

and the person is required to act in a certain direction or face dire consequences, that individual would stop at nothing to achieve the objective whether rightly or wrongly. This, to some extent, explains what goes on in the academic world where lecturers, for instance in a university system, are told in plain terms to consistently roll out publications or be sacked, not minding whatever they may be doing for the university in administrative capacity. The “publish or be sacked” order is so strongly emphasised in the academia nowadays that academics literally run from pillar to post to escape from what now looks like the proverbial sword of Damocles hanging over their heads. The observation of Gad-el-Hak (2004) gives us more insight into the perturbing phenomenon:

Three recent events, taking place in rapid succession, incited me to write this opinion. The first was an annual report from a major school of engineering whose dean proudly listed 52 papers that he wrote in the course of the previous year. Such an output is, on average, one idea conceived, executed, written, and published every week. That is an amazing feat for a busy administrator, or anybody else for that matter. The second was a physics professor who was introduced at a meeting as the author of 80 books. This man was not the superhumanly prolific Isaac Asimov, but a professor with a publication rate, over a 20-year career, of one technical book every three months.

The question is: what could have ever driven the scholars involved in these cases into such a 'mad rush' for publications? It simply boils down to the incubus facing every lecturer in a university in recent times: a marching order coined in the phrase 'publish or perish', which has become a sort of 'code of conduct' staring at every tenure lecturer in their career progression. In a similar vein, Talabi, Adaja & Adefemi (2017) note sarcastically that:

The era of 'publish-publish-publish' has made academics rush for whatever is available in the name of writing journal publications. In the early days of academic work, hardly could anybody, even a professor boast of 30 publications in his kitty before becoming a professor but today –there are young academics with 100, 200, 300 academic papers while some have surpassed 300 publications... we look forward to who becomes the first to break the record of over 1,000 publications in Nigerian universities.

In most cases in Nigerian universities, this 'threat' is not so pronounced to the elated prospective young academic at the point of appointment. The aspiring university don would soon realize from interactions with older colleagues that he has unconsciously positioned himself on the hot seat where he is expected to consistently research and churn out publications in designated journals across the world. The implication is that at certain periods in his career, the lecturer has to produce a required number of publications to his credit before he is considered fit for promotion.

This is understandably the unavoidable track the academic must tread to get to the pinnacle of his career as a professor. Fortunately, the lecturer gets some relief as he is not expected to shoulder the onerous burden alone all the time; he is allowed to co-author some of the publications with colleagues. After all, it is often said that two heads are better than one.

Ordinarily, the paramount concern of an academic in a university system is in three folds: teaching, research and community service. Of these three role expectations, the place of research is outstanding. This is because it is through research that the scholar and his sponsoring institution contribute to existing knowledge and reach out to colleagues and sister institutions globally through knowledge sharing. In line with this thought, Darko-Ampem (2003) cites Caraway (1995) who reiterates what Daniel Gilman, the first president of Johns Hopkins University, had once declared that, “It is one of the noblest duties of a university to advance knowledge and to diffuse it not merely among those who can attend the daily lectures – but far and wide”. This, obviously, attests to the unique quality of a university as being 'universal' both in staff and student composition as well as in cross-fertilization of ideas. Darko-Ampem (2003, p.20) further states that “Publish or perish! is a fundamental psychological, indeed physiological imperative that is rooted in the very metabolism of scholarship as a vocation. Publishing is not only integral to the scholarly activities of the university, but constitutes an essential part of its organic wholeness”. Similarly, Bauerlein (2011, p.1) writes that “One of the standard labour practices of research universities is to hire, pay and promote faculty members on the basis of the research they produce”.

In contemporary times, academics have become global scholars through the instrumentality of technology, especially the Internet. The once invisible college of scholars is becoming less vague with greater interactions among its members. The social media have added impetus to this intellectual revolution as they provide avenues of linkages of like minds in the global academic terrain. Expectedly, every academic worth his onions should be glad to actively participate in this exciting virtual world of learning. As such, publishing should not be a headache for academics because they are eager to showcase their intellectual worth to the ever waiting world of colleagues. Darko-Ampem (2003) again notes the significance of publishing to the academic community saying:

Scholarly research and publishing have become an integral component of the academic world. The importance of publishing to any academic is perhaps best underlined by the maxim 'publish or perish'. Indeed, publishing in the academic world determines a scholar's standing or status both within the local research community and internationally. At the centre of the scholarly communication process is the academic reward system—the issue of promotion and tenure—that is integrally tied up with the formal peer-reviewed publication. *The reward system present in most universities recognizes publication as*

evidence of scholarly achievement and is required for rank and tenure and to satisfy criteria for grants (my emphasis).

Simply put, job security, reward and prestige (academic status) in the academia hang on relentless publishing. However, when an academic is handicapped from engaging himself in this exhilarating exercise of constantly investigating phenomena and publishing the outcome owing to his being saddled with administrative responsibilities in the university, would it be rational for him to be adjudged unproductive and therefore unqualified for promotion because he is unable to meet up with publication requirement? Should such a scholar be put on the same pedestal of assessment with his colleagues who are less burdened? Should the extra service rendered administratively not make up for the gap in publication requirement for promotion? These are the questions this paper seeks to ask.

Incidentally, the administrative posts under consideration are not usually handled by non-academic staff of universities because the duties attached to the positions are academically inclined. Again, administrative positions are usually meant for senior academics but in reality, most new generation universities experience a dearth of such top-ranking lecturers and are constrained circumstantially to fill the positions with lecturers on lower cadre. For instance, an academic department should be headed by a professor, which makes any other person occupying that position an acting head. But where are the professors in the first place in most of the new generation universities in Nigeria?

In the context of this paper, administrative positions include Dean of Faculty, Director of academic unit, Unit coordinator, Head of Department, and Departmental examinations officer. By accepting any of these positions, the occupant invariably becomes a management staff of the institution at the level he is operating. A fall out of this appointment is that the appointee's time, effort and resources would have to be shared between coping with the demands of the administrative office he is occupying and discharging his normal academic responsibilities of teaching, conducting examinations, marking examination scripts and supervising students' project, and dissertations. No doubt, a lot of stamina is needed to make a successful combination of responsibilities in a dual capacity as described above.

Statement of the Problem

Publish or perish pressure is such a vexed issue in the university system so much that even lecturers who are not holding administrative positions in the universities do not find it funny to cope let alone those who are saddled with added responsibilities. From a personal experience as a head of department on three different occasions in two universities, this researcher has observed that lecturers in such positions hardly have time for themselves not to talk of having time for research. Other colleagues in similar positions have often been heard complaining. Sometimes lecture times are rescheduled when they clash with an important meeting/programme in the university

to suit the convenience of the academic holding an administrative post who doubles as a member/participant in such events. Again, some lecturers in this category teach across board viz undergraduate and postgraduate (Master & Doctoral) while some also belong to one committee or the other within the university system. The question here is: what time would such a scholar have for a rigorous research? Is this not sufficient grounds for academics in administrative positions to be given preferential consideration during promotion beyond the little marks and allowances granted them in the present setting?

At Taraba State University under study, heads of departments and examination officers, for instance, are each paid twenty thousand Naira (N20,000) monthly as responsibility allowance, and may not earn more than two points during appraisal for promotion. The conditions of service are applicable to all staff as obtainable in any public university in Nigeria. From a personal experience, what is paid, as allowance, is never commensurate with the enormity of services attached to the positions.

Secondly, awarding marks during promotion for administrative positions held especially at a lower cadre is at the discretion of each university in Nigeria. Such added responsibilities often count at the senior level or professorial rank. Even where marks are awarded to junior lecturers for this purpose, the quality of marks given needs to be compared with the score awarded for academic publications in such assessments. Any academic who does not have the requisite publications to back up the points earned from holding an administrative position stands the chance of losing the promotion.

The point being stressed here is, no matter how much an academic is seen to benefit from the marks awarded him for occupying an administrative position over his colleagues during promotion assessment, such a beneficiary would still lose promotion if he is deficient in publications. In this regard, Talabi, Adaja & Adefemi (2017) rightly submit that “...among the requirements for promotion in the Nigerian Universities, paper publication is the backbone or the most important pillar. *No matter the dexterity in the classroom work or the administrative affairs, the ultimate for promotion lies in the number of papers presented for promotion*” (emphasis mine). These scholars further observe that “...one may have been the best he could in administrative and classroom teaching but if he fails to publish in academic journals –no plea will suffice. Apart from promotion value of paper publication, it is also the key or yardstick for evaluating productivity in academia”. These are some of the issues which necessitate the advocacy for a greater and more meaningful consideration for academics in administrative positions with regard to promotion as discussed in this paper.

Research Objectives

This paper, therefore, seeks to

1. Identify the categories of academic staff that majorly hold administrative positions at Taraba State University.
2. Evaluate how academics in administrative positions in the university under study are coping with publish or perish pressure.
3. Assess how publish or perish pressure affects the level of intellectual productivity of academics in administrative positions at the university.
4. Find out whether academics in administrative positions think they should be given special consideration for promotion.

Research Questions

1. What categories of academic staff majorly hold administrative positions in the university under study?
2. To what extent do academics in administrative positions cope with the publish-or-perish pressure?
3. How does publish-or-perish pressure affect the level of intellectual productivity of academics in administrative positions?
4. To what extent do academics in administrative positions think they should be given special consideration for promotion?

Review of Related Literature

As indicated earlier in this discourse, the job expectation of an academic in administrative position is tasking because the same academic who is expected to attend chains of meetings in the university is equally required to carry out his teaching responsibilities faithfully, and attend to his supervisees with some supervising across two or three levels viz Diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate (Master's and Doctoral). This is evidently a tight schedule for a university lecturer to operate and still be expected to measure up in terms of publication requirement for promotion. It behoves the embattled lecturer to painfully forfeit his promotion or find a workable alternative. On this note, Olukoju (2002) observes with reference to Nigeria that:

As might be expected, Nigerian scholars themselves have devised alternative strategies to cope with this crisis. The most popular method is to ask contributors to a book or issue of a journal to contribute towards its production after their papers had been assessed and accepted for publication. The contributors pay sums of money sometimes running into a few thousands of Naira, and receive copies of the journal or book in compensation for their financial contribution towards its production.

In a situation as this, it is not very unlikely that contributors might be tempted to include names of colleagues who never probably read the paper, just to offset the

publication cost of their articles. Olukoju, however, cautions that “It should not be assumed that all scholars based in Nigeria perpetrate sharp practices or short circuit the due process of peer review and quality research and publishing”. Indeed, the 'publish or perish' syndrome in the university system cannot be said to be far from being a crisis. The race to catch up with the pressure has made even junior academics without experience to venture into book writing as noted by **Gad-el-Hak** (2004) that:

Pressure to add books to one's resumé parallels the pressure to publish journal articles. Junior faculty members have started to publish books, a privilege that was traditionally intended to cap years of accumulated wisdom in a particular field. Book acquisition editors working for certain for-profit publishers showed up in scientific meetings and, swarming like timeshare condominium salesmen, convinced unsuspecting potential authors of how easy it is to publish a book based on a thesis or an internal report. With computers, a camera-ready manuscript can be prepared mostly by cutting and pasting from one's prior publications, and in a few short months or even weeks, a book is born, to be purchased by blind library contracts and by a few innocent souls.

Indeed, the urge to publish and not perish has a lot of implications on the way university lecturers go about their duties in the present academic setting which obviously calls for intellectual investigation.

The dilemma occasioned by the advent of publish or perish syndrome in the academia has been a source of worry and paradoxically an interesting subject of exploration to scholars over the years. This segment of literature reviewed here peeps into the genesis of this practice and the perceptions of scholars on its impact on scholarship in the global university system.

Fanelli (2010) observes that 'Publish or perish' is a phrase coined to describe the pressure in academia to rapidly and continually publish academic work to sustain or further one's career. A scholar demonstrates academic talent by publishing frequently and this attracts attention to him and his sponsoring institution. By this means, continued funding and the individual's progress in his career can be guaranteed. A successful publication by an academic is, therefore, profitable to both the author of the work and the institution where he works.

The origin of the phrase 'publish or perish' in the academic community is not certain because there is no consensus on which particular institution or place that first adopted the practice as a tradition. Garfield (1996), relying on evidence provided by Fred Shapiro, the Librarian of Yale University Law School and editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of American Legal Quotations*, says indicators point to Marshall McLuhan, the renowned media-and-society scholar, as the first to use the phrase in a note he wrote to the poet Ezra Pound on June 22, 1951. The note was said to have been contained in the *Letters of Marshall McLuhan published by Molinaro, McLuhan, and Toye (1987)*, in which McLuhan posited that “'Publish or Perish' is the beanery motto”

(p.226).

Garfield further states that Fred Shapiro “located an even earlier reference in *The Academic Man: A Study in the Sociology of a Profession*, a 1942 book by Logan Wilson”. The book was said to have been published in New York by Oxford University Press, but reprinted in 1964 by Octagon Books, New York, and in 1992 and 1995 by Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey. Still on the genesis puzzle, a 1927 journal article in a publication entitled *Sociology and Social Research*, Vol. 12, by the University of Southern California Sociological Society (digitised January 8, 2007), contains an early known use of the term 'Publish or perish' in an academic context. The phrase was said to have equally appeared in a non-academic context in the 1932 book, *Archibald Cary Coolidge: Life and Letters*, by Harold Jefferson Coolidge. In 1938, the phrase appeared in college-related publications.

What we can glean from the above accounts is that in spite of the uncertainty surrounding its origin, 'publish or perish' as a phrase currently used in the academia to check on career progression of scholars is probably an intellectual 'fad' that has come to be rooted and engrafted into what some may describe as 'academic rituals' observed in the world of learning. What is more of concern to this researcher is its impact on the quality of scholarly works turned out in the process.

On this note, Olukoju (2002) has observed the decline in the quality of scholarly publications in Nigeria in recent years. The scholar avers that “Compared to the situation up to the late 1970s, academic publishing in Nigeria, the concomitant and index of scholarly research, has declined in terms of output, quality and regularity of publications”. According to him, “This reflects a general decline in the standards and funding of education, a consequence of prolonged military rule characterized by lack of accountability and a thinly veiled culture of obscurantism”.

Olukoji observes that some scholars in Nigeria reacted to the negative trend by resorting to what he described as “self-publishing” by which academics start up a journal with the intention of publishing their own works supplemented with a handful of other scholars' works. The *modus operandi* in this case is “once the editors and their friends had published themselves and their friends, and achieved their immediate objective, they lose interest in the journal”. Olukoji criticizes this practice because it “clearly reflects a defeatist attitude and an unwillingness to pay the price required to survive in the competitive environment of international publishing. It also represents a self-immolating response to the pressure of 'the publish-or-perish' culture of academic promotion exercises which the less endowed or less committed scholar always seeks to circumvent”.

Nevertheless, it would be unfair to heap the whole blame on the academics for looking the other way, although not to be condoned, to meet up with publication requirement for promotion in a most challenging situation. This is why critics are voicing out their condemnation of the vigorous implementation of the practice in spite of the fact that times have changed in the world of learning where little or no

motivation is accorded the struggling academic especially in developing countries like Nigeria.

Darko-Ampem (2003, p.31) notes that “Tenure requirements have risen across board and the process has become more elaborate. In the humanities, publishing one or two books has become the norm for tenure. The production of scholarship has accelerated, quantity has trumped quality, and what earns tenure has become the goal”. This is a clear application of the 'publish or perish' rule without any reservation. Darko-Ampem goes on to write that:

The pressure to publish is therefore as strong as ever, forcing university departments to put greater emphasis on the research output of their staff. For reasons mentioned above the scholar would not deem it enough merely to be seen to be doing research. It has to be measurable in published output and has to be published in a reputable (i.e., peer reviewed) journal or by a well-established publisher to gain the maximum prestige.

Quoting another scholar, Sarah Pedersen (1998), with particular reference to the demerits of the publish or perish practice in the UK system, Darko-Ampem avers that there is “too much pressure on academics to publish at the expense of teaching excellence and the rash of conferences whose sole purpose seems to be to increase the publication count”. The question is: given the threat hanging over the heads of academics should they fail to meet up, who would not like to increase his publication count at any given opportunity? Just as noted by another critic, Bauerlein (2011, p.15), this rush has a dangerous consequence as it forces scholars to go the easy way and shy away from engaging in more beneficial long-term projects. He writes:

...projects that won't fit the deadlines are avoided. Lines of inquiry that have no quick prospect of finding a publisher are avoided. Research becomes less exploratory and provisional, more aligned with prevailing trends and interests. Most importantly, scholars slip into a nerve-wracking schedule that is contrary to humanistic study (and emotional well-being). The best way to restore it is to solicit fewer printed pages from them.

Gad-el-Hak (2004) equally comments on the result of driving academics hard to publish:

Currently, more journals in a particular research field are published than anyone can reasonably keep up with. The publishing craze has now extended to all-electronic journals. Many articles, both print and electronic, remain without a single citation five or more years after publication. Although more difficult to measure, I presume even more papers remain unread by anyone other than their authors. The way some papers list their authors today, some articles may not even be read by all their respective coauthors.

These days, academic papers are written, presented at conferences and

published without anyone evidently reading them beyond the immediate environment where they were published. The impact factor of such publications, which measures their rate of citations in subsequent works, becomes questionable. Nevertheless, authors of such articles are not usually bothered because they would have achieved their primary objective to earn promotion. But what happens to the overall objective of promoting scholarship? Gad-el-Hak (2004), however, proffers a panacea that:

In an ideal world, counting the publications of individuals should not be used to evaluate them. Instead, the impact of the individual's publications should be what is important. But measuring impact is neither easy nor straightforward, despite the availability of the Science Citation Index and similar measuring tools. For example, particularly for young researchers, the number of citations per publication is a fairer index of competence than the total number of citations.

Bauerlein (2011) believes that "By lowering research demands on professors, universities may be able to steer them toward more productive and meaningful practices" (p.15). We hasten to add that this consideration should include all categories of academics and especially, those in administrative positions as this paper argues in order to make them constructively productive.

A retired professor of Physics, Peter Higgs (2013), recounts his experiences as an academic and how he would have been frustrated out of the university were it not the Nobel Prize that came his way to save the situation. The eminent scholar is reported in an interview with *The Guardian* (London), en route to Stockholm to receive the 2013 Nobel prize for Science, that "he would almost certainly have been sacked had he not been nominated for the Nobel in 1980". The Nobel winner reveals that Edinburgh University's authorities, where he was teaching were in a dilemma as to what to do with him but took the view as he later learned, that he "might get a Nobel prize – and if he doesn't we can always get rid of him".

The physicist is quoted as saying that he became "an embarrassment to the department when they did research assessment exercises". According to him, a request would go around the department saying: "Please give a list of your recent publications." Higgs would simply send back a statement: 'None.' By the time he retired in 1996, according to the newspaper, Higgs was uncomfortable with the new academic culture. The scientist remarks: "After I retired it was quite a long time before I went back to my department. I thought I was well out of it. It wasn't my way of doing things any more. Today I wouldn't get an academic job. It's as simple as that. I don't think I would be regarded as productive enough."

The celebrated British physicist criticizes the present practice of driving academics hard in publishing and he is reported in the newspaper as doubting if "a similar breakthrough [his Nobel Prize winning-research] could be achieved in today's

academic culture, because of the expectations on academics to collaborate and keep churning out papers”. Higgs laments, "It's difficult to imagine how I would ever have enough peace and quiet in the present sort of climate to do what I did in 1964."

The sum of the literature reviewed above is that the 'publish or perish' pressure in the academia has become a nightmare to scholars. On the other hand, the response of universities across the world to the development is simply to tighten the noose in setting the criteria for promotion to academic ranks. This is where a divergence of interest on the issue arises especially considering the plight of academics holding administrative positions in the universities. While publishing to disseminate new knowledge is widely acknowledged as a cardinal responsibility of universities the world over, making it the deciding factor for career advancement in the universities could be disturbing and counter-productive. Undoubtedly, the pressure would not produce the required quality works expected of scholars to be able to meet up with current global challenges. At most, scholars would only observe the practice just for someone to move on in their career. There is, therefore, every need to ascertain how lecturers in Nigerian universities are faring in the face of the threat to publish or perish posed by their respective institutions with regards to the scholars' eligibility for academic elevation.

Theoretical Framework

This study takes its theoretical bearing from a postulate called Management by Objective (MBO) expounded by Peter Drucker in his book, *The Practice of Management*, published in 1954 although the concept itself became popular in the 1960s. Owuamalam (2007, p.311) notes that MBO “is a management strategy which ensures that the planning and measuring functions [of an organisation] are properly carried out in an organized manner....It is aimed at improving organisational effectiveness through the development of planning and measurement procedures”. An online publication, study.com (n.d), avers that through MBO “Organisational goals and planning flow top-down through the organisation and are translated into personal goals for organisational members”. In this case, “Goals are set down in writing annually and are continually monitored by managers to check progress. Rewards are based upon goal achievement”.

MBO has some distinct advantages according to the online source cited above as “it provides a means to identify and plan for the achievement of goals” because “If you don't know what your goals are, you will not be able to achieve them”. However, Rodney Brim, a CEO and critic of the MBO technique cited in study.com has identified some weaknesses of the practice, that “There is often a focus on mere goal setting rather than developing a plan that can be implemented”. In his view, “The organisation often fails to take into account environmental *factors that hinder goal achievement, such as lack of resources or management support*. Organisations may

also fail to monitor for changes, which may require modification of goals or even make them irrelevant” (*my emphasis*). This point is very important in relation to our study in which case universities set goals to constantly churn out research output without considering what it would take the academic staff, particularly those holding administrative positions, to achieve the set goals.

Among the salient factors identified with this practice as emphasised by Owuamalam are that MBO

1. Establishes a plan for achieving the result associated with the set objective and it provides a clear account of the approved procedure for achieving the defined results.
2. It monitors the achievement of results based on provided guidelines that enable the evaluation of performance.
3. It helps in implementing management approaches and practices. It also uses an efficient and effective communication process to support performance and directions.

Owuamalam (2007, pp.311-312) identifies certain functions of MBO to include the following as they pertain to our study:

1. Delegation of authority must be effective; meaning that those assigned any duty must be proficient in order to accomplish a task
2. Motivation must be enticing because it addresses the selfish passion of humans, who like to work for economic and social rewards, closely associated with work effort.
3. Communication must be persuasive and the essence of performance must be articulated and presented in a logical and convincing manner to all those involved in a production. It is when the motive of performance is clear and the benefits derivable are understood that effective result can be achieved.

Looking at this postulate from the standpoint of our discussion in this paper, it could be deduced that the academic environment provides a suitable ground for the application of MBO. Universities are set up to achieve certain objectives outlined by the powers behind their establishment. Again, there is usually a plan of action for achieving the set objectives which must be adhered to if the university would succeed. No doubt, one major objective which every university strives to attain is turning out knowledge in the form of research from time to time for the benefit of society. This objective is vigorously pursued through the hard work, diligence and commitment of the academic staff with the support of non-teaching personnel. It is what gives rise to the demand placed on academics to publish consistently without which their career advancement is truncated or revoked in extreme cases.

Further, the university as an entity monitors the achievement of its objectives

through the output of its staff based on provided guidelines. For teaching staff, such guidelines form a plank for evaluating their performance for promotion consideration. Administrators in the university system implement management policies related to staff recruitment, career progression, discipline and reward for performance. They do this by ensuring that the essence of performance is articulated and presented in a logical and convincing manner to all those involved in the system. Particularly the academic staff, such an orientation becomes a compass with which they navigate the murky waters of their careers knowing full well that performance is the basis for upward movement in the academia.

In Nigerian universities, such guiding principles are enshrined in a document entitled 'Conditions of Service' often given to staff at the point of recruitment while in some other places, for instance, at the University of Illinois as documented by Darko-Ampem (2003), it is contained in a "Faculty Handbook," with statements such as this: "For most faculty members, the primary basis for promotion and tenure will be evidence of high quality in both teaching and research, *with consideration also being given to evidence of valuable public service or service to the University and to professional communities*"(my emphasis). And this from the University of Vermont handbook: "In considering candidates for reappointment, promotion, and/or tenure, each candidate will be judged with respect to the proposed rank, status, and duties, considering his or her record of performance in teaching, scholarly research or other creative work, and service". We need to add that even though 'other services' rendered by the academic are mentioned here as part of considerations for promotion, the place of research and publication is given a greater emphasis.

The import of the provisions discussed above is that universities operate based on defined principles which are geared towards achieving their set objectives. It follows, therefore, that anyone who is recruited into the organisation must abide by the principles enunciated and if such an individual is found wanting, he would be shown the way out of the organisation. For academics, this is what is meant by the 'publish or perish' syndrome which this study is set to explore.

Method of the Study

Survey method was used to generate data for this study because the issue under discussion required getting the opinions of the people affected by the phenomenon under consideration. This is supported by Owuamalam (2007, p.266) that there are phenomena under study which require seeking the views of those directly involved in what is studied. According to him, "The survey method enables an inquiry into the audience composition...opinion articulation can be determined through the expressed feelings of an audience, like in opinion surveys." Again, since the target population is known as exclusively comprising lecturers who are holding or have held administrative positions in the university, there was no need for the use of probability sampling.

Consequently, census sampling, an aspect of purposive sampling, was used in which every lecturer who had held an administrative position or is holding one currently at Taraba State University, Jalingo, was administered a questionnaire. Census sampling involves “studying the entire population or universe of study and is a quantitative method” (Hasan, 2014, p.589). It has to do with the selection of all the available elements in a population because they have the same qualities that the researcher is looking for.

Ofo (2001, p.65) says that in purposive sampling, “the researcher simply hand-picks the sample because to his judgement, they are typical to what he wants. In essence, the researcher selects a sample which simply satisfies his specific needs”. This is equally supported by Taylor, Sinha & Ghoshal (2009, p.48) that purposive sampling “is concerned with the choice of a sample explicitly because of particularly interesting features of each element”. In all, the population of academic staff currently holding administrative positions at Taraba State University is 98 spread as follows: Directors (05), Deans (09), Unit-Coordinators (08), HODs (38), and Departmental Exams officers (38). These figures were collated from Senate proceedings of the university. However, it is worth noting that this figure excludes the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors and the Librarian, who are academics but by virtue of the demands of their offices, could hardly have time to teach courses. Nonetheless, the number of lecturers who have held administrative positions could not be ascertained.

The research instrument (questionnaire) was distributed and retrieved using two administrative staff as research assistants. The questionnaire was designed to determine how lecturers cope with the 'publish or perish' pressure in the university. Nearly a hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered but only fifty-five (55) were retrieved owing to the fact that the university was on break. The researcher was compelled by circumstances to work with the number retrieved for time exigency in view of the fact that the study was designed for a conference presentation.

The questions were more closed-ended than open-ended to ease coding while analysis of data was done through simple percentage. All categories of lecturers were included in the survey so long as they occupy the office of Director, Dean, Head of Unit, Head of Department and Exams Officer respectively. Other offices like student adviser, departmental secretary, and level coordinator were not included since the responsibilities attached to these offices appear lesser compared to what obtains in the other categories used in the study. Taraba State University has the following Faculties with quite a good number of departments under each: Agriculture, Arts, Education, Engineering, Management/Social Sciences, and Sciences. Each faculty is headed by a Dean while the academic departments are under the various Heads of departments with each department having an exams officer.

Data Presentation/Analysis

The survey had a slightly higher percentage of male (53%) than female (47%) respondents. It is a pointer to the fact that more male lecturers are appointed into administrative positions in the university than their female counterparts. In fact, practical observation has shown that there are more men than women teaching in tertiary institutions in Nigeria at the moment.

Research Question 1: What categories of academic staff majorly hold administrative positions in the university under study?

Table I: Respondents' Academic Ranking.

Rank of academics	%
Professors	5%
Readers	10%
Senior lecturers	15%
Lecturer 1 & below	58%
No response	12%
Total	100% n=55

Table 2: Respondents' that Hold Administration Posts

Admin post held	%
Directors	5%
Deans	10%
Unit-coordinators	17%
Heads of depts.	27%
Exams officers	29%
No response	12%
Total	100% n=55

In terms of ranking of academics holding administrative positions in the university under study, the survey established that lecturer 1 and below hold more administrative positions in the university than their senior colleagues. Although this is not an ideal situation as pointed out earlier in this paper because administrative positions are usually held by senior colleagues, the reality is that most new generation

universities experience shortage of top level academic staff, which gives opportunity to the junior ones to take over those positions as it is seen in the university under study. From the survey, it could be seen that majority of those holding administrative positions are lecturer 1 and below acting as exams officers (29%) and heads of departments (27%) as against Directors (4%), Deans (11%), Unit-coordinators (17%) while No response category had (11%).

Research Question 2: To what extent do academics in administrative positions cope with the publish-or-perish pressure?

Table 3: Respondents' opinions on how to cope with publish or perish pressure

Responses on ability to cope with publishing rigours	%
Coping very well	11%
It has been easy for us	19%
Fairly able to cope	59%
Not able to cope at all	11%
Total	100% n=55

Looking at the figures above, one could deduce that it is quite uneasy for lecturers to combine their normal academic schedules with administrative responsibilities because those who admitted that they were not coping at all added to the number that claimed to be coping fairly gives 70% as against 30% who attested that they were coping easily and well.

Table 4: Respondents' reactions to how many papers they are able to write per semester

Publication rate per semester	%
One paper	39%
Two papers	37%
Three or more papers	17%
No paper written	7%
No response	-
Total	100% n=55

Table 5: Respondents' reactions to how many papers they single-authored per semester

Percentage of responses (after appointment)	Percentage of single-authored papers
57%	53%
31%	19%
9%	13%
-	8%
3%	7%
100% n=55	100% n=55

Matching the sets of figures given above, there is clear evidence to believe that the rate at which respondents published academic papers in a semester declined sharply while holding administrative positions. Rather than seeing an increase in their publications from two to three or more papers each semester while holding administrative positions, the reverse is the case as a good number of the respondents (57%) understandably, were struggling to churn out even one paper as against 39% that were on that category before taking up administrative positions.

Another implication of the above statistics is that most respondents (53%) could not publish more than a single-authored paper in a semester while holding the administrative post. This is likely to push them into joint authorship of academic papers in order to meet up with publication requirement, which although ideal, could be grossly abused because some may simply request their colleagues just to add their (the latter's) names to papers submitted for publication consideration. This claim appears to have some validity in the opinions expressed by respondents on ways through which academics cut corners to meet up with publication requirements.

Thirty-three per cent of respondents admitted that lecturers do cut corners at times in order to meet up with publication requirements. Even though 73% of respondents did not indicate ways in which this is done, 28% specified fraudulent activities like co-authorship of papers without any reasonable contribution to the field work/content, writing papers for colleagues, plagiarism among other acts of intellectual dishonesty. Perhaps, those involved in the practice would not have done so if the urgency to publish for career advancement was not so pronounced and vigorously implemented as it is in the present university system.

Research Question 3: How does publish or perish pressure affect the level of intellectual productivity of academics in administrative positions?

Table 6: Respondents' opinions on how keeping admin post impacts on publishing

Response category	%
Admin position slows down publication	48%
Admin post does not slow down publication	15%
Not really sure if it slows down publication	37%
No response	-
Total	100% n=55

Table 7: Respondents' opinions on whether keeping administrative positions impact on quality has negative of papers published

Admin post has negative impact on paper quality	%
Agreed	35%
Disagreed	24%
Not really	40%
No response	1%
Total	100% n=55

Opinions expressed here tend to indicate that holding an administrative portfolio in a university has a way of rubbing negatively on a lecturer's productivity by slowing down his pace of publishing (48% as against 15% who indicated 'No', and 37% undecided) and lowering the quality of his publications (35% as against 24% in the negative and 40% undecided).

Research Question 4: To what extent do academics in administrative positions think they should be given special consideration for promotion?

Table 8: Respondents' opinions on giving special considerations to academics in admin posts

Response category	%
Special consideration should be given	53%
Special consideration should not be given	24%
Undecided category	23%
Total	100% n=55

Table 8 above indicates that a majority of the respondents, irrespective of rank, years of service or gender, think that academics holding administrative positions deserve special consideration during promotion.

Discussion of Findings

The fact that the survey had a slightly higher percentage of male (53%) than female (47%) respondents shows that there is lopsidedness in the appointment of academic staff into administrative positions in the university under study. The study, therefore, indicates gender disparity in academic staff appointment. This may not be too different from what is obtainable in other new generation universities in Nigeria. From the survey, it could be seen that majority of those holding administrative positions are lecturers in the lower cadre. This has confirmed our earlier stand that in most of the new generation Nigerian universities, shortage of top ranking lecturers has paved way for junior academics to occupy administrative positions in the universities. However, this has some serious implications on the career progression of the staff concerned because if they are unable to cope with publication requirements, the marks awarded to them for administrative posts may not be weighty enough to make them eligible for promotion as noted by Talabi, Adaja & Adefemi (2017) cited earlier in this study.

The study also reveals that it is quite uneasy for lecturers to combine their normal academic schedules with administrative responsibilities. This is not surprising because most of the academics holding administrative positions also function in several other capacities which make them not to have time for serious

research. If such lecturers have graduate assistants attached to them as it is obtainable in universities in the western hemisphere, the situation would probably be different. Unfortunately as things stand in Nigeria at the moment, a graduate assistant assumes the role of a tenured lecturer. Moreover, academics studied here (majority of whom are lecturer 1 and below) are not yet qualified to have graduate assistants.

Therefore, holding an administrative portfolio in a university has a way of rubbing negatively on a lecturer's productivity by slowing down his pace of publishing. This is partly what Darko-Ampem (2003) cited in the literature reviewed criticized in saying that there is “too much pressure on academics to publish at the expense of teaching excellence and the rash of conferences whose sole purpose seems to be to increase the publication count”. It is not out of place for such academics to think they deserve special consideration in promotion exercise in as much as they are assessed alongside their colleagues on the same scale.

The study also shows that the rate at which respondents published academic papers in a semester declined sharply while holding administrative positions. This further point to the fact that academics acting in dual capacity find it difficult to cope with publish or perish pressure in the university system. Most respondents (53%) could not publish more than a single-authored paper in a semester while holding the administrative post. This would not have been a cause for concern in as much as there is a provision for co-authorship of publications in the university system. But some fears can be entertained in this regard because the process itself could be grossly abused by those involved.

The fears expressed here may not be unfounded in view of opinions of respondents who admitted that lecturers do cut corners at times in order to meet up with publication requirements through such means as co-authorship of papers without any reasonable contribution to the field work/content, writing papers for colleagues, plagiarism among other acts of intellectual dishonesty. After all, Bauerlein (2011, p.15) cited in the literature reviewed has noted that “this rush [publish or perish pressure] has a dangerous consequence as it forces scholars to go the easy way and shy away from engaging in more beneficial long-term projects”. As the theoretical framework of this study indicates, it is the same rush that gives rise to the demand universities place on academics to publish consistently without which their career advancement is truncated or revoked in extreme cases since they would be seen as not contributing to the university's attainment of its set objectives.

Conclusion

This study sets out to explore the challenges of publish or perish pressure to academics in administrative positions at Taraba State University, Jalingo. It was found that academics functioning in a dual capacity in the university find it difficult to cope with the stress of publish or perish, making some to look the other way to meet up with the challenge. Therefore, the study concludes that publish or perish syndrome is a serious challenge to the career growth of an academic in an administrative position

in a university especially if the academic is still within the lower cadre, which in this context, refers to lecturer 1 and below.

Recommendations

Based on the findings above, this study makes the following recommendations:

- i. Since publication count ranks higher in promotion consideration than marks awarded for administrative positions held, academics holding administrative positions in a university should be given preferential consideration in terms of promotion requirement. Their publication requirement should be lesser than those of their colleagues.
- ii. A higher score should be accorded single-authored publications especially those written by academics in administrative positions than co-authored papers. This would go a long way to encourage such scholars who, despite their busy schedules, still involve themselves in research. At Taraba State University as it is with other public universities in Nigeria, both single-authored and jointly-authored papers earn the same score whether locally or internationally published.

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