

Option of the Collegiate System at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST): Any Impact on the Provision of Library Service/a Decade of Collegiality-Prospects and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) adopted the collegiate system as a method of administration in 2004. What motivated this

system of administration? How has the system impacted on the provision of library services? Are there any measures, which could be put in place to ensure the sustenance of the new system? This evaluative piece is an attempt to answer the outlined questions. Data was gathered from selected interviews and secondary source, which is qualitative data. Data from each source was analyzed descriptively. The research revealed that, the collegiate system has fostered a strong sense of community, bringing together leading academics and students across subjects and year groups and from different cultures and countries. Colleges have invested heavily in facilities including extensive library resources and IT provision. Decision making in the library system has improved which before, decisions affecting library affairs in the faculties (as was the case) were taken by the faculty board in most cases with no representation from the library. With the adoption of the collegiate system, the College Librarian serves on all boards of the faculties and has direct influence on every decision taken at that level. Now, library matters have been brought to the fore and are now considered among top priorities in the agenda of all faculties. The improvement has also affected the budgetary allocation of the library. The collegiate system has triggered series of restructuring and expansion works. This has affected the provision of library services through redesign of library spaces in the colleges, recruitment of additional staff and the acquisition of relevant literature to support the teaching, learning and research. This evaluative research reveals that, the system has gained roots, structures continue to be improved, initial challenges are being overcome. The recommendations given is that, support is needed for periodic review of the new collegiate system. Such reviews will assist in ensuring that most created and anticipated impediments are managed and solved.

Introduction

The collegiate system is a common administrative practice found mostly

in the tertiary institutions of the United Kingdom (Howze 2003). It is a system that symbolizes the growth of such institutions. As an institution grows and expands, its mission becomes seemingly magnanimous. This is because its' needs, commitments and aspirations widen alongside the growth. To be able to focus still on its mission and to realize them, there is the need for a more prudent administrative practice that can accommodate such growth. In such a system, power and functions are decentralized and an appreciable degree of autonomy is granted the faculties and their committees and boards (Frank, Levene and Piehl 1991). Such faculties evolve from subjects to courses to programs, then to departments, before reaching such status, which theoretically is a conglomeration of related departments. The faculty, which is now grown and seen, as a complete entity, must now run its own business as an independent university college. In this view, the faculty is now a fully-fledged college. It is possible for a college to grow and mature into the status of a complete University and the cycle will continue in that chain of hierarchical structures.

Unlike other concepts and phenomena that can be given universal definitions, the collegiate system does not have such a feature. Any description of the system is pragmatic and contextual. As a result, the following descriptions were captured from the interviewees interviewed.

“Grouping of existing faculties into colleges to enhance teaching, research and entrepreneurship training” (Head of Department-Serials)

“A system where the administration of the colleges and their faculties and departments are organized in an autonomous manner devoid of central administration's interference” (Head of Department-Electronic Information)

“An organizational strategy to make colleges promote teaching, learning and research and at the same time becoming self-financing” (Head of Department-Reference)

“The formation of compact units to ensure easy administration by grouping together related faculties” (Head of Department-Lending)

A review of the system as practiced in the University of Oxford shows that the collegiate system is at the heart of its success giving students and academics the benefits of belonging both to large internationally renowned institution and to a small interdisciplinary academic community. There are 39 independent and self-governing colleges at the University of Oxford. Each college has its own governing body comprising the head of house and a number of fellows most of whom also hold university posts. There are also seven permanent private halls which were founded by Christian denominations and which still retain their religious character. The different roles of the university and colleges have evolved over time. The colleges and halls perform the following functions:

- Select and admit undergraduate students and select graduate students after they are admitted by the university
- Provide accommodation, meals, common rooms, libraries sports and social facilities and pastoral care for their students
- Are responsible for their students' tutorial teaching and welfare

Whilst the University does the following:

- Determines the content of the courses within which college teaching takes place
- Organizes lectures and seminars
- Provide a wide range of resources for teaching and learning in the form of libraries, laboratories, museums, computing facilities, etc.
- Admits and supervises graduate students and examine theses
- Sets and marks examinations
- Awards degrees

There is also the 'Conference of Colleges' that performs the following duties:

- Represents the common concerns of the colleges
- Negotiates with central university bodies on collegiate matters
- Appoint members of joint university/college committees

- Has representation on council, its committees and the four divisional boards
- Acts as a body of intercollegiate discussion and decision-making.

In the University of London, the nine largest institutions of the federal university, usually termed *the colleges*, are Birkbeck, Goldsmiths, King's College London, the London Business School, Queen Mary, Royal Holloway, the School of Oriental and African Studies, London School of Economics and Political Science and University College London (UCL). Formerly, a constituent college, Imperial College, London, left the University of London in 2007. For most practical purposes, ranging from admission of students to negotiating funding from the government, the 18 constituent *colleges* are treated as individual universities. Legally speaking, they are known as *Recognized Bodies*, with the authority to examine students and have the university award them degrees. Some colleges have recently obtained the power to award their own degrees and the University has amended its statutes to allow them to do so and yet remain in the University federation. For instance, beginning in the 2007/08 academic year, the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), King's College London, the Institute of Education, and University College London began awarding their own degree certificates while retaining their constituent-college status within the University of London.

Most decisions affecting the constituent colleges and institutions of the University of London are made at the level of the colleges or institutions themselves. The University of London does retain its own decision-making structure, however, the Collegiate Council and Board of Trustees, are responsible for matters of academic policy. The Collegiate Council is made up of the Heads of Colleges of the University. The 12 institutes, or *Listed Bodies*, within the University of London offer courses leading to degrees that are both examined and awarded by the University of London. Additionally, twelve universities in England, several in Canada and many in other Commonwealth countries (notably in East Africa) began life as associate colleges of the university offering such degrees. By the 1970s, almost all of these colleges had achieved independence from the University of London. An increasing number of overseas academic institutes offer courses to

support students registered for the University of London International Programme's diplomas and degrees and a new Institutions Policy Framework is currently being developed to accommodate these institutions. Up to now, no accreditation from London for these schools has existed other than the final examinations administered by the University of London, which all pupils take.

In the University of Cambridge, there are 31 Colleges in Cambridge. Three are for women (Murray Edwards [*the current trading name of New Hall*], Newnham and Lucy Cavendish) and two admit only graduates (Clare Hall and Darwin). The remainder house and teach all students enrolled in courses of study or research at the University. Each College is an independent institution with its own property and income. The Colleges appoint their own staff and are responsible for selecting students, in accordance with University regulations. The teaching of students is shared between the Colleges and University departments. Degrees are awarded by the University. Within each College, staff and students of all disciplines are brought together. This cross-fertilization has encouraged the free exchange of ideas which has led to the creation of a number of new companies. Trinity and St John's have also established science parks, providing facilities for start-ups, and making a significant contribution to the identification of Cambridge as a centre of innovation and technology. To them, a college is the place where students live, eat and socialise. It is also the place where they receive small group teaching sessions, known as supervisions. The supervision system is one of the main reasons for the University's success in the external reviews of learning and teaching. The Colleges and the University support access initiatives to encourage applications from able students from both state and independent schools. The most successful of these is the summer schools programme.

In addition to resources provided by the University of Cambridge, each College has its own library and sports facilities, and some have their own bars and theatres. Most Colleges have their own clubs and societies, offering a variety of non-academic activities for students to take part in. Students derive the following benefits:

- Teaching: The supervision system, where students receive tuition in

- small groups, is regarded as one of the best teaching models in the world.
- Accommodation: Almost all undergraduates live in College accommodation for the duration of their time at Cambridge.
- Welfare: A variety of support systems ensure that students are treated as individuals, allowing overseas students in particular to be fully integrated. This is one of the reasons why Cambridge has one of the lowest drop-out rates.
- Financial support: Many Colleges offer awards for their own members, in addition to funds available from the University.

Overview of KNUST

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology succeeded the Kumasi College of Technology, which was established by a Government Ordinance on 6th October 1951. It opened officially on 22nd January 1952 with 200 teacher-training students transferred from the Achimota College to form the nucleus of the new college. From then until its accession to a university status in 1961, it grew rapidly and underwent some major transformations; beginning from the establishment of School of Engineering and the Department of Commerce in 1952 to the establishment of the Faculty of Applied Science in 1965.

As the college expanded, government decided to make it a pure science and technology institution. In pursuit of this policy, the teacher training college, with the exception of the Art School was transferred in January 1958 to the Winneba Training College. In 1959, the Commerce Department was transferred to Achimota College to form the nucleus of the present University of Ghana Business School, Legon. In December 1960, the Government of Ghana appointed a university commission to advise it on the future development of university education in Ghana; in connection with the proposal to transform the University College of Ghana and the Kumasi College of Technology into independent Universities of Ghana. Following the report of the commission, which came out early in 1961, the Government decided to establish two independent universities; one in Kumasi and the other at Legon near

Accra. The Kumasi College of Technology was thus transformed into a full-fledged university: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) by an act of parliament on 22nd August 1961. The KNUST was officially inaugurated on Wednesday 29th November 1961. This name was changed after the overthrow of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah on 24th February 1966 to the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. The University has since March 2000 reverted to its original name, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

The principal objectives among others are to :

- *Promote teaching, learning and research,*
- *Produce the necessary and requisite manpower for the scientific and technological development of Ghana,*

The adoption of the collegiate system was motivated by the following reasons. Admittedly, KNUST had reached, after forty years of existence, a stage where the collegiate system was inevitable, looking at the growing student population, growth and strength of faculties and their departments, the involving nature of social and health activities; not forgetting the general administration of the University. Unfortunately, this exponential growth and expansion did not commensurate with the existing teaching, learning and research infrastructure.

As a sequel to this, challenges ranging from academic, administrative, finance, social and health became so pronounced giving every cause to reason that the original administrative structures which were more or less centralized, could not contain the situation. Out of necessity, the University started decentralizing its appendage administrative functions to the various faculties. After about fifteen years of implicit decentralization, it became apparently clear that any system that encourages the granting of autonomy to the various faculties to govern themselves as well as the institutions below them would be worthwhile.

The collegiate system fosters a strong sense of community, bringing together leading academics and students across subjects and year groups and from different cultures and countries. The relatively small size of colleges allows close and supportive personal attention to be given to academic development and welfare of individual students.

Colleges invest heavily in facilities including extensive library and IT provision, accommodation and welfare support and sports and social facilities

Prior to the adoption of the collegiate system a situational assessment was conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the university. Out of the several weaknesses identified, the major one was inadequate funding and poor allocation of resources for academic programmes. Consequently, infrastructure, remuneration and service conditions of staff, accommodation, staffing and interfaculty collaboration have all been affected. The over dependence on Government subvention, which has been inadequate since the mid 1980's has exacerbated the enumerated problems

In an attempt to salvage these seemingly intractable academic, administrative, health and socio-economic problem, a strategic plan dubbed PLAN2K14 was crafted. One of the major strategies to mitigate the described problem has been the restructuring of the KNUST from a widely fragmented collection of faculties and institutes to six compact and focused colleges; herein referred to as the collegiate system. These colleges include:

- Agriculture and Natural Resources,
- Architecture and Planning,
- Art and Social Sciences,
- Engineering,
- Health Sciences and
- Science.

Officially, the collegiate system took effect from the 1st December 2004.

A careful study of the structure and headship of colleges reveals the following. A provost appointed by the university council heads each college. The provost is assisted by a deputy provost who is elected from among the Deans in accordance with the university statutes. The provost holds office for a period of three years and is eligible upon completion of his term of office for reappointment for another term of three years only following favourable appraisal of his performance by a committee appointed by the council during the last year of his tenure.

There also exists a college board, comprising the provost, who is the Chairman, Deans of faculties, all professors, all heads of department, one representative each from cognate colleges, the college librarian, two (2) students' representative who are not in their first year and not of the same faculty elected by the students of the college, the college registrar and the college accountant. The term of office of the elected members is two years, but they may be eligible for reelection for another term of two years only.

The colleges consist of faculties, which are headed by Deans with the assistance of Vice Deans. The Deans and Vice Deans are elected from among all the academic senior members of the faculty who are of professorial status. They hold office for two years and are eligible for another two years. There exist in addition faculty boards whose membership consist of the following: the Dean who is the chairman, all Professors in the faculty, members of the college board elected by the academic senior members of the faculty, all heads of departments in the faculties, two members of each department elected by the academic senior members of the department, one representative of each cognate faculty, two student representatives and co-opted members as may be determined by the college or faculty boards.

Impact on the Provision of Library Services

The University Library System began in January 1952, when the library collection of the Teacher Training Department of Achimota College, numbering about 4,000 volumes, was transferred to the newly established Kumasi College of Technology, Science and Arts to form the nucleus of its library. That library was housed in a prefabricated building. By 1958, its book stock had increased to 19,000 volumes, while the journal holding stood at 580 titles. In November 1961, when the Kumasi College of Technology, Science and Arts was elevated to the status of a full-fledge University and became known as the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, its library automatically became the University Library. Within that same year, the University Library moved into a new permanent building with a stock of 24,362 volumes. The new University Library, which was built to cater for 100,000

volumes and to provide seating for 250 readers, had been stretched to its elastic limit by the 1976/77 academic year. In 1979, the excavation and foundation work on extension to the library building commenced. However, it was not until 1999 that the project was completed and put to use. The College libraries together have a collection of 81,064 volumes. This brings the total collection of the University Library system to 293,164 volumes. The six College Libraries provide information from both print and electronic sources for the academic programmes each of them runs.

The University Library is the management centre for all library operations within the University. It provides staff and technical services as well as coordinates the activities of the College Libraries. The University Librarian is the administrative and technical head of the University Library System, which is made up of the University Library and the six college libraries. He is directly responsible to the Vice-Chancellor in all administrative, technical and professional matters concerning the libraries in the University. The University Librarian is supported by a Deputy Librarian and six departmental heads in the effective and efficient running of the library. These heads of department are the means through which power and authority from the University Librarian flows down to the para-professionals and the Junior Library Assistants. There are eighteen professional librarians with the University Library System. Out of the number six have been posted to head the College Libraries, while the rest remain in the Main Library. There are also nineteen para-professionals, sixty-eight Junior Library Assistants, four administrative staff, twenty-one cleaners, one technician, three tradesmen, two drivers and eight security personnel. Added up, the total workforce of the KNUST Library System stands at 145. The University Library has seven functional departments; Administration, Acquisitions, Serials, Cataloguing, Lending, Reference and Research and Institutional Repository & Electronic Information Services.

The library derives its mission from that of the parent organization: the university. Thus, the historical development of the university library system has been influenced by the context in which the parent university operates. The vision, mission and strategies, which are selected by the university as a guide for meeting the core functions of

teaching, learning, research and providing community service, form the foundation on which the role of the university main library is based. Perceptions held by the university stakeholders on the role of the main library as a contributor to these core functions influence the environment within which the main library crafts its own mission and role. The components of such functions consist of

- Inputs: in the form of staffing, budgeting, collections and accommodation
- Processes: in the form of collection development, organization and management
- Output: in the form of reference services, usage of finding tools, catalogues collections and document delivery services
- Continuous training of users and service providers through direct contact
- Ongoing feedback from stakeholders: students, staff and the public

The library, which has supported and continues to support the University, currently, operates as the parent library. It supervises, regulates, controls and coordinates the faculty and departmental libraries. Currently, the library continues to function as usual but a degree of its authority has been usurped and given to the college libraries (*hitherto were known as faculty libraries*) Thus, the college libraries now prepare their own budgets, acquire books by themselves and process them as well. The college libraries could initiate rules and regulations relevant and peculiar to their colleges. It is possible also in a matter of time for the colleges to relinquish some of their given authority to the departmental libraries. Unlike the University of Ghana-Legon, which is piloting the same system at periodic intervals, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology implemented it at a goal.

Positive Impact

Decision making in the library system has improved. The University Library system comprised the main library and the six college libraries. The six college libraries are: college of art and social sciences, college of

engineering, college of health sciences, college of agriculture and natural resources, college of architecture and planning and college of science. Before the collegiate system, decisions affecting library affairs in the faculties (as was the case) were taken by the faculty board in most cases with no representation from the library. The University Librarian was supposed to serve on each board or at best the chairman of the library committee in that faculty (if any). With the adoption of the collegiate system, the college librarian serves on all boards of the faculties and has direct influence on every decision taken at that level. Through these, library matters have now been brought to the fore. Library issues are now considered among top priorities in the agenda of all faculties.

The improvement has also affected the budgetary allocation of the library. The financial needs of the faculty libraries were most cases glossed over. The libraries were either given some token to operate or nothing at all. The faculty came to the aid of the library when it senses an urgent need of a service or an item or maintenance. Now the situation is different. All colleges have budgetary allocations for the management of their libraries. Though the release of such funds is difficult, the librarian could get it through justification and persistence. This has reduced the load that the university library was carrying. With this, the colleges could purchase majority of their books and process them by themselves. The main library acquires additional copies of the books needed by the colleges.

Worthy of note is the expansion works that has taken place in the colleges. The collegiate system triggered series of restructuring and expansion works. This affected the provision of library services through expansion of library spaces in the colleges, recruitment of additional staff and the acquisition of plenty but relevant literature to support the teaching, learning and research needs of newly created departments. The college library in theory must provide the needs of students, faculty and supporting staff in the college and therefore departments were encouraged to create their own libraries in addition to the college libraries. The main library is gradually becoming the place of last resort.

Furthermore, the networking situation has been boosted. Before the collegiate system, schools, institutes and faculty libraries existed on their own. The faculties could not share information that each had. They

could not as well access information from the main library without physically visiting the premises. It was difficult for both the faculties and the main libraries to know what resources each had. But now, the resources of the colleges and the main libraries are coordinated through collaborated links via the internet. Each can have access to the other's resources online. The catalogues of each library have been made public through the internet. Users could now stay within their college and navigate the resources of the library.

Negative Impact

Despite the above achievements, the system has made more pronounced, the existing challenges of funds, space, personnel and user-related issues. The library within the context of the university is a special organized institution on its own; though an integral part of the university. It coordinates and supervises the allied libraries. Huge sums of money are needed periodically to acquire and process library materials for itself and the college libraries. However, the annual budgetary allocation for the library has not been sufficient for a couple of years now. The creation of the collegiate system has further reduced drastically the budgetary allocation to the main library.

In spite of this problem, the main library has managed to survive by adopting prudent and strategic administrative practices to ensure the achievement of the university's goals. There is still much more left that the library could have done if there were enough funds. For example, it could have purchased additional relevant and suitable learning materials as well as speeding up its bid in computerizing its acquisition, processing, storage and retrieval activities. Inadequate provision of funds has slowed down its automation programmes. Users have also had their share in the form of frustrations as they search for materials, which are either limited in supply, outdated or completely worn-out. *“Instead of using the main library as the last resort for relief, it has rather become the last resort for desperation”*-a final year chemical engineering student retorted.

The construction and opening of the new library block brought some smiles on the lips of users-because they had gotten enough space

to sit comfortably and read. This notwithstanding, the library does not only need space for archiving, binding, user training and reprography but also as offices for some of its departmental staff. The increase in student population is also a matter of concern.

Ghana as a country has only one institution, that is the University of Ghana-Legon that trains librarians. As a result, institutions that need librarians have to wait pensively for the trainees to graduate fully before they could employ them. Therefore, staffing has been a problem in recent times for the library. Other reasons have been that '*new recruits*' do not stay longer but leave for further studies or for other jobs which in their opinion are more lucrative, as far as remunerations are concerned. There is also the problem of lazy and recalcitrant staff. These categories of staff change their attitudes after they have been employed. Their attitudes land them into trouble and they are eventually sacked. Getting a replacement for dismissed staff is difficult. This is because the university has its own timetable for recruiting new staff. In the midst of this the university had to recruit more staff to be able to embrace the additional work involved in the collegiate system.

The problems often posed by users usually hover around theft, mutilation of books, smuggling food into the library, mis-shelving, noise, loss of books and delays in returning borrowed library materials. Apart from the few kleptomaniacs among the students, there exist actual thieves who come to the library not for any purpose but to steal. They steal rare books and make some money out of them as they duplicate and sell to their course mates. While some students summarize and jot down points at the edges of library books, others tear off pages, squeeze or mark sentences and other sections of the books. All these constitute mutilation. Nicodemously, users sneak food into the library and litter the reading areas with the leftovers and their accompanying wrappers. These leftovers invite insects into the library, which eventually chew up the books. What is frustrating is where users shelve back books removed from the shelves. Users do not know how the books have been arranged. As a result, they put them anywhere there is space. In librarianship a mis-shelved material is considered as a lost material. Those who do this intentionally come for the materials as and when they wish for their selfish use. The collegiate system which brought in its wake increase in

user population has invariably increased the offences described above. What is more, users quarrel over few chairs while others sit on textbooks, especially during revision weeks of the semester.

Conclusion

Deductions from the forgone exposition support the need for periodic review of the new collegiate system. Such reviews assist in ensuring that most created and anticipated impediments are thrashed out for the betterment of the university and its community.

Recommendations

Recruitment of staff before additional responsibility

The collegiate system apparently brings additional responsibility. It is therefore recommended that additional requisite staff is recruited before additional responsibilities are invited. Because there was no staff to take charge of the created additional responsibility, the few available staff were overstretched. The main library experienced this problem because six professional librarians had to move away from the main library to take charge of the college libraries. This created a big vacuum in the main library. The university had to struggle thick and thin to replace these professionals. If the recruitment of qualified staff had preceded the implementation of the collegiate system, some of the difficulties that occurred could have been avoided. In the same way, junior staff who were sent to augment the professionals to man the college libraries created some vacancies, which the university had to also struggle to fill.

Acquisition of appropriate programme materials before the introduction of new programmes

It is being advised that requisite literature is gathered for users before the introduction of corresponding programmes. In the university's bid to establish the collegiate system, new departments had to be created to beef up the existing departments in order to qualify for faculty status. For example, Sports and Exercise Science and Nursing had to be created to complement the existing department; Medical Laboratory Technology in

order to get faculty of Allied Health Sciences. This has brought pressure on the main library, because it has to acquire textbooks and other related materials to support the running of the new programmes. Even though the collegiate system has been in operation for eight years now, the main library has not been able to acquire enough materials for the new programmes and therefore pressure on the limited available materials continues unabated. This situation could have been mitigated if the main library had been given ample time not only to acquire materials but to process and organize them for the prospective users.

Adjustment in library infrastructure before additional intake of students

The convention that a library should be able to seat one third of its user population remains 'mutatis mutandis'. Provision for users must be made prior to their admission. The existing infrastructure and facilities should be adjusted in anticipation of increase in student enrolment, which the library is mandated to accommodate. This measure put in place could eliminate the struggle between staff and users over tables and chairs. However, this could only be done when the library is given advance notification.

Harmonization of functions between main and college libraries before the adoption of the new system

The main library has been providing administrative and technical functions since the genesis of the university. With the inception of the collegiate system, the college libraries now have some degree of autonomy to budget and acquire library materials. Where does the influence of the main library end in the college? Does the decisions of the College Board, which the college librarian is a member overrides any decision from the main library? At what point does the main library exercise its traditional powers, especially on budgeting and acquisition? Can the University Librarian from the main library deal with a college library staff without passing through the provost? The job descriptions and limitations if laid out could help iron out some of these uncertainties. Some of these issues need to be clarified before rolling new systems of management. The day-to-day running of the college libraries is in the hands of the provost.

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