**LEVERAGING ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) FOR ENHANCING ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS IN THE PAPERLESS SERVICING OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

 **BEING A PAPER PRESENTED BY:**

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**AT THE ANUPA NATIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR SENIOR ADMINISTRATORS FROM THE RANK OF PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT REGISTRAR TO DIRECTORS AT MERIT HOUSE, ABUJA ON 10TH JULY, 2019**

1. **INTRODUCTION:**

Administration has been described as the key to any governance process and structure that requires the coordination of activities to accomplish a predetermined goal or objective. In the management of tertiary education, the coordination of such systemic operations towards a specified direction is very important but usually saddled with numerous challenges, as such, new approaches are being sought to enhance the Administrative process.

No doubt, a good tertiary education system is required for the overall prosperity of a nation, however, the tremendous growth in the tertiary education sector had made the administration of tertiary education institutions complex. Furthermore, change is constantly occurring at an uneven pace in any growth oriented industry, and the education sector is no exception. Rapid growth in the field of education has made governance in the academic sector a very complex task. As the 21st century comes to terms with the tremendous advancements in technology which has led to far-reaching developments in the administrative system, cost-effective technology combined with the flexibility in learning and administrative activities is essential to enhance efficiency in the management of tertiary education. Digital technologies can be used extensively for educational administration as many researches reveal that the integration of ICT helps to reduce the complexity and enhance the overall administration of tertiary education especially University Education.

This paper has undertaken to identify the various functional areas to which ICT is deployed for information administration in Nigerian Universities and to find the current extent of usage of ICT in all these functional areas pertaining to Information administration especially as it regards to the servicing of Committee meetings. The various factors that contribute to functional areas including Committee servicing were identified. The imperative of obtaining the necessary skills for optimum performance in the Nigerian University system was explored as a desirable option through the application of

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for efficient running of any University. It was suggested that the efficiency and effectiveness of records management in the Nigerian University system requires the deployment of ICT skills and competences for effective discharge of the duties expected of Administrators. Worthy of note is the fact that critical skills such as minutes and reports writing are considered as necessary for an excelling Administrator to effectively capture relevant information on decisions and proceedings of meetings as well as in their dissemination using digital technologies.

The following are some of the areas where ICT can be used for effective educational administration (Ben-Zion Barta et. al. 1995):

• General Administration

• Administration of Student Data

• Inventory Management

• Personnel Records Maintenance

• Information Administration

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a vital role in supporting powerful, efficient management and administration in the education sector especially University education. It has been discovered that technology can be used right from student administration to various resource administration in tertiary education institutions. Despite the various administrative challenges confronting the Nigerian tertiary education system, it is obvious that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a tool that could enhance administrative activities in tertiary education institutions. This paper seeks to bring to the fore certain digital applications and platforms that could be strategically deployed to enhance efficiency in administrative services/management in Nigerian Universities with specific reference to the servicing of Committee meetings.

The major impacts of ICT in administrative services/management of students' and staff records, inventory management and information administration in Nigerian universities were identified and discussed.

Suggestions are made on how Nigerian universities can widen the scope of ICT application in administrative services especially in paperless servicing of committee meetings to fully reap the benefits of ICT.

This paper could also possibly guide policy makers, and provoke the University

Administrators to ensure total and effective application of ICT in administrative duties.

1. **DEFINITION OF TERMS:**

Let me confess at this juncture that I have taken the liberty to amend the topic of this paper from what was proposed by the ANUPA Training Team. What was originally proposed was “Servicing Paperless Meetings and Matching the Global Pace of ICT Deployment in University Administration: The Role of Public Administrators”. Let me, however, assure you that the amendment of the topic to the new title “Leveraging on Information Communications Technology (ICT) for Enhancing Administrative Efficiency in Nigerian Universities: The Role of University Administrators in the Paperless Servicing of Committee Meetings” does not fundamentally change the outlook and content of the presentation. Nonetheless, it is necessary to make some explanations and definition of terms and concepts used in this paper towards achieving some degree of clarity.

1. **University:**

The word ‘University’ derives from a medieval term that conceived University as a community. The Latin word ‘Universitas’ referred to a community, guild or corporation. And to make it distinct from other forms of communities, it was later referred to as ‘Universitas Scholarium’ (Community of Scholars) and ‘Universitas Magistrorium et Scholarium’ (Community of Masters and Students).

A University is defined as a community that provides both undergraduate and postgraduate education.

There is no standardized definition of the term ‘University’ as the concept varies widely across international and even some national boundaries. Typically, in the United States, the term has traditionally been used to describe research institutions and was once a designation for research, doctorate-granting institutions. The Privy Council in the United Kingdom is the only body of authority that can confer an institution with the title of being a University, under the terms of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

The various types/models of Universities include the British model which is the oldest due to its aristocratic origin and emphasizes liberal education, character and values. The American model is founded on egalitarian ethos and utilitarian orientation with emphasis on academic, professional and vocational training. The German or Homboldtian model conceived by Wilhelm von Homboldt was established on the principles of academic freedom, loyalty and intellectualism for undertaking research, organization of seminars and the use of laboratories. The French University model is anchored on strict discipline and control over every aspect of the University. There is also an African model that combines the essential elements of both the English and American models.

1. **Administration:**

Administration is derived from the Latin Word ‘administere’ which is translated to mean ‘to care for’ or ‘look after people, manage their affairs’. Scholars have defined administration as “the organization and direction of human and material resources to achieve desired ends”. J.M. Pfiffner and R. Presthus. For Luther Gullick “Administration has to do with getting things done, with the accomplishment of defined objectives”. On their part, Brooks Adams and Felix A. Nigro defined Administration as “the capacity of coordinating many and often conflicting social energies in a single organism, so adroitly that they shall operate as a unit” and the organization and use of men and materials to accomplish a purpose”.

For a better understanding of the concept, administration could be termed as “the activities of groups cooperating to accomplish predetermined goals”. Therefore, cooperative effort or cooperation in addition to goals attainment are the two essential elements of administration. Administration has also been referred to as “technology of social relationships”.

1. **Efficiency:**

The Cambridge English Dictionary defines efficiency as “working or operating quickly and effectively in an organized way” and “working or operating in a way that gets the results you want without any waste”. Google Dictionary also defines efficiency as “achieving maximum productivity with minimum wasted effort or expense” and “working in a well-organized and competent way”. For example, you can say “more efficient processing of information” or describe a person as “an efficient administrator”. The concept of efficiency describes how available resources are used to achieve desired outcomes, it emphasizes the effective relationship between inputs, processes and output.

1. **Information Communications Technology:**

Information Communications Technology is described as the gathering, processing, storing or retrieval of information. In more general terms, ICT emphasizes the role of communication in modern information technology, in the transmission or transfer of the information from place to place and over a distance. According to UNESCO (2002), ICT is a term used to describe a range of

hardware equipment (personal computer, scanners, digital camera), computer software (database programs, multi-media programs) and the telecommunication infrastructure (phones, faxes, videoconferencing equipment and web cameras) that allow us to access, retrieve, store, organize, manipulate, present, send material and communicate locally and globally through digital media. For Newhouse (2002), ICT typically refers to computer technologies, but believes should also include other technologies used for the collection, storage, manipulation and communication of information. Eadie (1999) stated that ICT is a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and create, disseminate, store and manage information. Generally, ICT is used to encompass all forms of telecommunication networks, including telephone, radio, and television. However, the driving power of ICT is obviously the internet,

a world-wide computer network built on telecommunication media, and which is usually the focus of discussions on ICT. The internet has emerged as a major driving force of this dynamic development of information and communications technology, which has impacted positively in virtually every sector. ICT has been fundamental for improving productivity and the development of knowledge-intensive products and services including the practice of administration.

1. **Committee:**

A committee is a group of persons nominated, appointed or elected to perform specific services or functions such as investigate, report on, make recommendation or act upon a particular matter. It is a mechanism for making decisions and is part of a process of the decision making system. It does not operate in isolation as other processes in the decision making system rely on the effective work of the committee to be efficient. Committees are able to generate and translate random information and ideas into structured decisions which can be implemented by people.

A committee usually consists of people who only devote part of their time to carry out committee assignments since they normally have other duties to perform. A committee may be set up to evaluate existing activities, review certain activities and make recommendations for improving effectiveness. It may investigate the areas assigned to it, report its findings and propose modifications or revisions.

There are some basic types of committees which include:

1. Permanent or Standing Committees: These are mostly formal and established by statute
2. Ad-hoc Committees: This is a committee set up on a temporary basis and created for a specified purpose mostly to solve short term problems rather than for administrative purposes.
3. Instrumental Committee: This comprises representatives of the interest that needs to be addressed both in decision making and implementation. This type of committee facilitates the smooth running of the organization for the attainment of its corporate objective. Examples of such could be Council, Senate and other statutory committees.
4. Problem Solving Committee: While the decision makers in an organization delegate authority to the instrumental committee, the Problem Solving Committee usually submits its report for consideration to the Instrumental Committee or the Chief Executive. Examples are Housing Loans Committee, Vehicle Loans Committee among others.
5. **The University Administrator at Work:**

Having attempted to define some of the working terms and concepts that would determine the direction and tenor of this paper, it should be noted that the combined application of the above variables will enable us discover new insights into the realm of contemporary administrative precepts and practices that should enhance our productivity going forward.

Since the Participants at this training workshop are mostly very senior University Administrators, I believe it is not very necessary for me to make any definitive statement on who the University Administrator is. But just to stimulate our thoughts, let me just share with you some ideas.

A University Administrator is an employee who works in the Registry arm of a University under the overall supervision of the Registrar. The job of the University Administrator is very critical to the existence, sustenance and continuity of the University system. University Administrators form the bulwark of the system and are undoubtedly the production forces that drive the system since no policy, academic/research or social movement can be pursued or implemented without their input. Despite their contribution to the system, many who are ignorant of their qualities and the duties they perform, refer to them as ‘non-academic’ and only ‘supportive staff’ which often times affect their status and the quality of the services they are able to deliver within the ambit of teaching, learning, research and community service for which Universities are established.

1. **Functions of a University Administrator:**

The specific functions and duties of Administrators largely depend on their area of posting within the system. Administrators can be located in Colleges, Schools, Faculties, Departments, Student Affairs, Library, Security Unit, Alumni Relations Unit, Academic Planning, Exams and Records, Public Relations Unit, Advancement Office, Establishment/Personnel Division, Council Office, Works and Maintenance Unit, Registrar’s Office, Vice-Chancellor’s/Rector’s/Provost’s Office, ICT Unit, SIWES Unit among many others. Identifying the specific duties they all perform would be cumbersome therefore let me highlight some of the most general of such duties. These include:

* Records Generation and Records keeping
* Dealing with official correspondences
* Committee servicing
* Follow Up
* Interpretation of Rules and Regulations
* Supervision of Subordinates
* Students Counselling

University Administrators have the mandate to process Students from Matriculation to Convocation; they also process Staff from appointment to retirement. University Administrators are process executors, tradition preservers and repository of information, custodian of rules and regulations and record keepers.

University Administrators need to be grounded in the ethics, rules and regulations that guide the administration of Universities and University Committees because the University system is Committee driven. There is ubiquity of Committees within the system such as Appointments and Promotions Committee, Central Admissions Committee, Finance and General Purposes Committee, Time-Table Committee, Budget Monitoring Committee, Academic Planning, Research and Publications Committee, Staff Disciplinary Committee, Exams Misconduct Committee, etc. Consequently, Administrators are required to be knowledgeable in servicing these Committees for Universities to render qualitative services. University Administrators as Secretaries of University Committees serve as the pivot on which University governance revolves.

1. **The Excelling Administrator in a Digital World:**

With the use of ICT, administrative duties, especially management of students’ and staff data in education institutions have become much easier. ICT has brought transformation and efficiency in the way many administrative tasks are handled. ICT has changed how information is processed, stored and managed making record keeping, document processing, clerical and similar other activities less cumbersome. It has made information transfer easier and faster, and information about institutions can now be effectively disseminated to the entire world through their websites. It has also made access to these institutions easy, and applicants can now process admission, fee payment, registration and several other services online. The positive effects of ICT on administrative services in education institutions are numerous.

There are, however, indications that Nigerian Universities are yet to satisfactorily enjoy the benefits of ICT, especially with the paucity of necessary facilities observed in most of them despite the fact that ICT provides several facilities and possibilities for educational administrators to do their tasks. Obviously, communication and information systems have changed the very nature of higher education administration with an increase recorded in the effectiveness and efficiency of management through the use of ICT.

ICT is used in maintenance of students’ and staff records and for communication and documents management. ICT resources can be applied in:

 Students admission and records

 Examination results and transcripts

 Finance database

 Human resource database

 Management information

Several studies have discovered that advancement in technology has created new opportunities with the integration of ICTs in several activities including administration, teaching, learning and research. The use of ICT in management of students’ academic affairs indicated that ICT is used for viewing result, record keeping and registration. Using ICT for registration could be used for tracking students’ registration progress by administrators and communication to students via e-mails. ICT could be accessed for communication between Administrators and other staff members and for returning results to students’ online as well as processing transcripts.

Three main areas significant to the management of Universities include: student administration, staff administration, and general administration.

For students’ administration, items that can be improved with the use of ICT include:

 Admission enquiry by students

 Applying for admission through e-media

 Registration/enrolment of students

 Course allotment and availability of information like time-table/class

schedule in electronic form, and attendance monitoring.

 Information about hostel accommodation

 Use of e-media for the processing and display of results of students, etc

Fee Payments

Items with potential for great improvement with the use of ICT under staff, and general administration include:

 recruitment and work allotment of staff in the institution,

 attendance and leave management of staff members, and performance

appraisal

 use of e-media for scheduling/allocation of examination halls,

Processing of Advance Purchase Request Forms, salary administration

Staff administration through ICT helps in processing of voluminous records in a quick and meticulous manner thereby making data retrieval easier. Clearly, record keeping occupies a strategic position in the efficient and effective management of the university system and the use of ICT for such purposes shows that it is convenient, efficient and reliable.

The effect of the adoption of ICTs by University authorities in the management of students and staff records could help universities to manage their information, efficiently fulfill their mandate, protect them from litigation, preserve their corporate memory, and foster accountability and good governance.

University administrators need to turn to ICT for solutions given that there are many applications available to them for online registration, communication with students and staff through online discussion forums in addition to the generation of reliable and consistent records with the records and data produced being easily searchable and quickly retrievable.

Administrators can further use ICT for enabling staff members to access services such as leave applications, e-forms for various purposes (Appraisal Forms, Cash Advance and DTA forms etc.), and personal financial information related to the university e.g. Salary information.

General administrative services supported by ICT include the dissemination of information about the institution through emails, website, text messages etc., day-to-day accounts and clerical duties.

1. **Adopting Digital Tools towards Enhancing Administrative Efficiency:**

Rapid growth in the field of education has made governance in the academic sector a very complex task. Tremendous advancements in technology are currently taking place which has led to far-reaching developments in the

Administrative system. As noted earlier, cost-effective technology combined with the flexibility in learning and administrative activities are essential in enhancing efficiency.

ICT can be used extensively for educational administration and areas where digital platforms can be used for effective educational administration include:

• General Administration

• Pay Roll and Financial Accounting

• Administration of Student Data

• Inventory Management

• Personnel Records Maintenance

• Library System

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) plays a vital role in supporting powerful, efficient management and administration in the education sector as a specialized technology that can be used right from student administration to human and resource administration.

The various ways of introducing technology in University administration include the following:

• Sending e-mail notices and agendas to staff, rather than printing and distributing them

• Submission of various Application forms through e-mail

• Foster technology growth by asking parents to write e-mail addresses on medical forms.

• creating students Web page

• Attend technology conferences to see what other Universities are doing to integrate technology in their institutions

• Admissions through web-enabled services.

• All day-to-day activities of the institution (General

Administration)

* Staff administration
* Committee Servicing

ICT has played a major role in reducing operational inefficiency and improving decision-making in many areas of governance. An integrated Tertiary Education Service System is one such concept that can empower the University authorities to administer the progress of their Strategic Plan and serve various stakeholders in a much better manner. Administrative subsystems include Personnel administration, student administration, resources administration, financial administration and general administration.

Essentially, Communication and general administration are the two main areas in which ICT is currently being used in the management of Nigerian Universities. But as mentioned earlier, administrative activities in Nigerian Universities can further be sub-divided into student administration, staff and resources administration, communication and general administration. According to Hossein Zainally (2008), “Information and Communication technology provides several facilities and possibilities for educational administrators to do their tasks”.

Communication and information systems have changed the very nature of tertiary education, allowing information to be transferred, stored, retrieved, and processed by almost all who work, study or interact with a given institution. Several research works have established that there is an increase in managerial effectiveness and efficiency through usage of Information and Communications technology. ICT is used in administration processes of tertiary education institutions, and supports the implementation of dynamic new strategies that are encouraging a new paradigm shift in University administration. This has facilitated creation of large and complex institutions that could function with increased efficiency and user-friendliness. ICT usage in University administration involves “harnessing technology for better planning, setting standards, effecting change and monitoring results of the core administrative functions of Universities”. Undoubtedly, the integration of ICTs in tertiary education is inevitable (UNESCO, 2002). ICT fosters the dissemination of information and knowledge by separating content from its physical location. This flow of information is largely impervious to geographic boundaries allowing remote communities to become integrated into global networks and making information, knowledge and culture accessible to anyone seeking such. For the management of institutions, ICT enhances day-to-day engagements in functional areas such as the following:

• Timetabling

• Students admission and Tracking

• Financial Management

• Medical services

• Procurement and Store management

• Records and Data generation and management

* maintenance of student and staff records and for communication and document management

The various research studies conducted to evaluate the extent of usage of Information and Communication technologies in multiple aspects of tertiary education have revealed that user satisfaction is a widely used measure of ICT success. Invariably, the positive perception towards the use of ICT in higher education has been mentioned. The more popular among the students of different Universities is the usage of ICT for communication and for online discussion forums. ICT facilitated contact and information exchange and also promoted access to tertiary education. ICT usage included systems for student admission and records, examination results and transcripts, finance database, human resources database, and management information systems.

Importantly also, Information administration is one part of overall administration of education institutions which mainly covers general and day-to-day operational activities. Hence, it could be concluded that Information administration cycle includes three major components namely, Student administration, Staff administration and General administration.

Information administration in this context refers to activities relating to the management of Universities which are generally considered as managerial activities in tertiary education institutions. The administrative systems include Personnel administration, student administration, resources administration, financial administration and general administration.

Student administration is an important and integral part of information administration. This involves various activities commencing from the admission process to learning activities till processing of results and performance analysis.

The integration of ICT into this process enhances the overall admission activities of Universities by making it more accessible to many. The important items identified under this category relates to the automation of admission process through e-media. This includes admission enquiry by students, applying for admissions through electronic media, digital registration/enrolment, course allotment, and availability of information like timetable/class schedule in electronic form and quality assurance monitoring/maintenance through e-media. Furthermore, it includes the various communications relating to transport, hostel accommodation and other communication with guardians/parents. The integration of ICT also helps in expansion of the geographical boundaries for students’ intake, thus facilitating cross-border tertiary education.

Staff administration includes recruitment and work allotment of Faculty and staff in the institution, their attendance and leave management, and performance appraisal. This also includes relevant communication to and from the institutions and among peers. Staff administration done through Information and communication technology (ICT) helps in processing of voluminous records in a quick, meticulous, and impeccable manner thereby making data retrieval easier.

Another very important part of Information administration is general administration of Universities which includes the various day-to-day activities of the entire system. It is evident that the integration of ICT into general administration has brought increased efficiency and optimal resource utilization. The various items classified under this category include usage of electronic media for scheduling of halls and other resources, fee payment, and handling internal and external examination activities in coordination with the Faculty members, all day to-day activities, intra and inter communication and particularly for our purpose as Administrators, Committee servicing. ICT helps improve overall environment and operational efficiency of Universities through effective inventory control, allocation of resources, fiscal management, communications, pupil/personnel services, student records, employee productivity etc.

In general, a good communication system should also be in place for the overall effectiveness of administration. ICT helps in providing a good communication system in the tertiary education system. ICT helps in providing timely information to all concerned and communication could be for internal and external information acquisition and dissemination. It includes communication between the important stakeholders of the system such as sending e-circulars to students, Faculty and staff. The dissemination of information about the institution using e-news bulletins is also very important as are other relevant aspects of communication within the University community.

1. **SOME VITAL ITEM CATEGORIES FOR INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION**
2. **Student Administration**
* Usage of electronic media by students to apply for admissions
* Usage of computers/mobile devices for student registration/enrolment
* Availability of timetable/class schedule in electronic form
* Usage of computers/mobile devices for maintenance of attendance of students
* Communication of academic details of students to their parents/ guardians through e-media
* Usage of e-media for notifications regarding hostel accommodation
* Usage of e-media for notifications regarding transportation
1. **Staff Administration**
* Usage of computers/mobile devices for recruitment and work allotment of staff in the institution
* Automation of attendance and leave management of staff members in the institution
* Usage of electronic media for performance appraisal
* Communication with staff using e-media (emails, SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)
* e-circulars from the institution regarding official matters
* Digital Cash Advance Forms
1. **General Administration**
* Usage of e-media for scheduling/allocation of halls for examinations
* Dissemination of information in the institution through e-news bulletins, SMS, emails, WhatsApp chat groups, Twitter, Facebook etc
* Usage of e-media by students to apply for university examinations (Post UTME Screening etc)
* Usage of e-media for the processing and display of results of students
* Facility for students to make fee payments electronically
* Servicing of Committee Meetings using digital platforms
1. **The Committee System and University Administration:**

Nigerian Universities are administered through the instrumentality of the Committee system of governance. This system of administration provides the opportunity for University employees to effectively participate in their institution’s decision making processes. Intrinsic in the running of a Committee system of administration is the need to ensure a democratic system of governance and consensus building. And because University governance has now become complex, dynamic and facing a myriad of challenges, operating a Committee system has become all the more necessary. The Committee system has, therefore, been identified as a strategic tool for positive administration of Universities and the realization of their goals and objectives. The Federal Ministry of Education under the leadership of a former Honourable Minister, Professor Babalola Borishade convened a Summit on Higher Education between 11th and 15th March, 2002 which was attended by critical stakeholders. Participants at the Summit, after exhaustive deliberations, resolved that an effective Committee system of management should be established where the system does not exist and strengthened where it does exist.

For professional Administrators, the Committee system provides an opportunity for them to strengthen their skills in applying University policies and to contribute their quota towards making the governance of their institutions’ more effective.

Committees are set up by other bodies or individuals normally superior in a hierarchical system. Members of Committees are normally informed of their appointment in writing with the Chairman and Secretary clearly indicated and Terms of Reference (TOR) clearly spelt out. The appointing body or individual determines the composition of the Committee with issues like expertise, representation of certain interests and designation given particular consideration, depending on the functions of the Committee and the rationale behind setting it up.

1. **Need for University Committees:**

The functions of the organs of the University are diverse and complex, calling for regular and particular attention in several instances and in some other instances being technical or specialized in nature. The main authorities vested with the power to regulate the affairs of the University, the Council and Senate only meet a few times at regulated intervals. The day-to-day functions of University governance are enormous and therefore these two bodies can hardly cope without delegating some of their functions. Most Nigerian Universities have between twenty-five to sixty Committees depending on their size and constitute Committees with well-articulated Terms of Reference, acceptable procedure, conventions and schedule of meetings.

1. **The Role of the Secretary in Committee Servicing:**

Committee servicing refers to the services provided by a Committee’s Secretariat (i.e. the Secretary) to ensure the Committee’s mandate is properly discharged. In order to be effective, efficient and orderly, a Committee needs administrative support from a Secretary. Such support services include the following:

* Arranging meetings of the Committee including sending invitation notices, booking and organizing rooms/venues and ordering refreshments/lunch
* Drawing up the agenda paper in consultation with the Chairman
* Preparing and circulating papers to members
* Advising the Committee on procedure
* Attending meetings
* Recording the Committee’s decision in the minutes
* Conveying the decisions of the Committee and taking all follow-up actions

**b. Preparations for Servicing Committee Meetings:**

When preparing for a Committee meeting, there should be consultation with the Chairman to decide on the date, time and venue of the meeting as well as ensure that facilities in the venue of the meeting are in proper order (seats are well arranged, adequate illumination, electrical fittings are working, conveniences open and ready for use, etc). Arrangements should be made for refreshments if necessary. If the venue of a meeting changes and the Secretary does not have the opportunity of notifying members in good time, a notice of change of venue should be conspicuously displayed by the entrance to the original venue. However, there are digital tools now available to assist a Committee Secretary inform members about any change in real time and we will explore this shortly.

1. **Drawing up the Agenda in Consultation with the Chairman**

The Agenda is a list of items to be considered at a meeting and is a very important tool to a Committee. It directs the flow and moderates deliberations while making the meeting more focused. The Agenda should be drawn and arranged in order of sequence and substance by the Secretary in consultation with the Chairman. Importantly, every notice of the meeting should be dispatched to the members ahead of time accompanied with the Agenda. Major items on the Agenda should include:

* Opening
* Apology(ies) for absence
* Adoption of Agenda
* Consideration and adoption of Minutes of the last meeting
* Matters Arising from Minutes of the previous meeting
* Substantive Business (new businesses to be considered)
* Any other Business
* Adjournment
* Closing
1. **Preparing and Circulating Papers to Members**

The magnitude and nature of the Committee’s work will determine whether the Secretary calls for items to be included on the Agenda with the supporting papers. These papers, the Minutes and Matters Arising from the previous meeting are prepared and collated by the Secretary and dispatched in folders to members on time to enable members have time to study and prepare adequately for the meeting.

1. **Advising the Committee on Procedure**

It is the duty of the Secretary to guide the Committee by offering advice on the due process (rules and regulations) of conducting their business to facilitate quick and the best decision(s) in line with the laid down rules and adopting the best method to do this. The Secretary also provides information where necessary to direct the lines of thought of members of the Committee and keep them in track with the Committee’s Terms of Reference

1. **Attending Meetings**

It is expected that members attend meetings punctually but for the Secretary, this is more mandatory being an Administrative Officer, a professional University Administrator for which timeliness is a necessary attribute. It is an act of indiscipline for a Secretary to arrive late to a meeting. Normally, the Secretary should be at the venue of the meeting about twenty (20) minutes to the commencement of the meeting. The Secretary should also meet and discuss procedures and strategies with the Chairman at least twenty-four (24) hours before the meeting and should normally not convene a meeting that they would not attend.

1. **Recording the Committee’s Decisions in the Minutes**

During proceedings of a meeting, the Secretary takes notes which he/she develops into Minutes/Reports. A draft Minutes/Report must be made available to the Chairman of the Committee for vetting before the final copy is prepared, reproduced and circulated to members or any other body.

1. **Conveying the Decisions of a Committee/Taking Follow-Up Actions**

A Secretary should normally communicate the decisions of a meeting to appropriate quarters within Forty-Eight (48) hours after the meeting and follow-up. This could be done through memos or emails. The Secretary may obtain the approval of the Committee Chairman on the decisions before communicating them depending on the urgency of the matter and the type of Committee. A Secretary who is normally a professional Administrator (an Administrative Officer) is a repository of information, custodian of the rules and regulations and an embodiment of continuity. He/she is required to advise and guide the Committees in their deliberations and decision making.

1. **A Brief introduction to Paperless Servicing of Committee Meetings:**

**Quote of the Day -** “To become the absolute best place to work, communication and collaboration will be important, so we need to be working side-by-side”

Marissa Mayer former CEO Yahoo

1. **WHAT IS PAPERLESS OFFICE?**

Paperless office is a work environment in which the use of paper is eliminated or greatly reduced. The concept was introduced by an automated office equipment company MICRONET, INC in 1978. The concept has been popularized as a computerized display of automated office functions.

1. **WHY PAPERLESS?**
2. Paper is one of the most “thrown-away” materials making it unfriendly to the environment.
3. Converting document into digital form (digitization) help to improve information sharing thereby increasing collaboration, efficiency and productivity.
4. Paperless office is believed to save cost.
5. Paperless filling system helps to save time as searching though thousands of files becomes easy.
6. Saves spaces as bulky file cabinets are made obsolete. A Whole cabinet of contents can be condensed into two gigabytes of neatly organized files on a hard drive.
7. **Transition into a Paperless Meeting Environment - Tips to Get Paperless Meeting Started:**

Paperless meetings are achieved when paper is replaced with digital devices as the medium through which information is presented and shared. By operating paperless meetings, we can reduce carbon footprint, access data any time, and save the University’s resources.

In today’s digital age, the challenge for institutions is to take a proactive role in sustainable development by investing in innovations that address the issues of today and create solutions for tomorrow. In this commitment to responsible service delivery, the first step would be to create a user-friendly workplace so as to establish and promote an enduring culture that seeks to support the need to go paperless to enable institutions to have more efficient, productive, and sustainable decision making process through Committee meetings. The benefits of using a paperless meeting environment is reduced Paper Usage which may seem like a difficult task to overcome, but implementing paperless operations within an institution can be achieved as they can cut down paper usage by as much as 100,000 pages per month through a paperless meeting environment. A paperless meeting environment would usually deploy cost-efficient meeting software which ensures that, aside from the logistical benefits, an institution’s bottom line can also significantly improve by going paperless. A modest amount can be saved thereby allowing the allocation of resources to more value-adding initiatives.

The UN’s Sustainability Development Goals provide institutions with a powerful aspiration in improving our world and gives them an opportunity to protect our planet. Paperless solutions can achieve sustainability targets by using eco-friendly approaches that inspire the entire workplace.

A paperless meeting environment enhances meeting preparation which ensures that Committee Secretaries no longer have to deal with huge piles of papers during meetings. Universities can eliminate tedious pre-meeting processes and cut down preparation time by 90% with paperless administrative portal. Meantime, dynamic meeting discussions through paperless Committee servicing fosters effective collaboration and a team-oriented culture to transform ideas into concrete action steps. Universities can increase engagement and participation at meeting venues with the use of a paperless meeting environment powered by intuitive and interactive meeting tools. The Fast Document Distribution capability of the paperless meeting environment ensures that institutions no longer have to deal with delays when it comes to disseminating information across board. Through a paperless meeting solution, Committee Secretaries can distribute meeting materials to all participants and allow them to review files with a single tap or click.

**Iv, Advantages of a Paperless Meeting Environment:**

Beyond cost savings and environmental benefits, paperless meeting solutions add value in an organization that goes beyond the boardroom. From enhancing interactions to improving team performance, paperless meetings can reinvigorate collaborations and inspire new innovations.

Seamless Linking - During Committee discussions, there will be an overlap of a lot of ideas thrown around by members. Bridging these topics together is an integral part of making informed decisions and strategizing for the institution’s direction. A paperless meeting tool helps members to connect complex concepts in an easy yet structured manner.

Agile Search - Shuffling through hundreds of pages during meetings can cause inconvenience not just for Committee members, but also Secretaries. The need to filter through vast amounts of materials manually can cause significant delays in decision-making which can adversely affect an institution’s performance. With a paperless meeting environment, relevant information can be easily accessed with a single click and resolutions can be made anytime and anywhere.

Comprehensive Analysis - In order to have a good understanding of the institution’s current stature, data must be presented in its best form. As such, a combination of tables, charts, and other visualization techniques will be used so as to spot trends. Printed versions of these aforementioned techniques might compromise data accuracy and lead to incorrect inferences. Digital meeting solutions enable analysis to be performed on the board materials without negatively affecting information precision.

Varied Information Representation - Printed materials can only accommodate a number of types of media. With paperless meeting solutions, the possibilities are endless. Non-text/graphic information such as audio and video can be easily incorporated into meeting materials in order to enhance and elevate Committee discussions. While moving into the digital age, the need for a flexible digital meeting solution becomes more pressing as Committee members become more proficient with technological advancements.

v. **Checklist for Paperless Meetings:**

As an institution shifts to a paperless meetings environment, it needs to prepare the following so as to make the transition as smooth as possible. By carrying out these action steps, a University can reduce risks and achieve its strategic goals:

Know the Software - Doing proper research can help identify the features and services that specifically fit your University. By doing so, a University can save not only money, but also headaches caused by security problems.

Provide Support - Provide employees with devices and proper protocols, so that they can start practicing and learn to avoid future problems.

Invest in Good Internet Connection - Research on proper internet infrastructure. If it turns out the company needs to revamp or change to another internet service provider, then do it. It’s a long-term investment towards efficiency.

Choose a proven Paperless Meeting Solution - You will need software to digitize the whole meeting process, so this is where the paperless meeting solution comes in. It is important to carefully pick a software that your University can trust.

1. **Benefits of Paperless Committee Meetings**:

Benefits of paperless meetings include –

* An organized Meeting environment
* Time saving, no unnecessary waiting for each other or looking for documents
* Flow in Meetings
* More job satisfaction
* Uniform way of working which results in efficiency
* Structure resulting in process control
1. **SUGGESTIONS FOR PAPER USE REDUCTION: HOW TO REDUCE PAPER USAGE IN HOMES & OFFICE?**
2. **APPS THAT AID IN PAPERLESS OPERATIONS**
3. **Cloud computing:** an on-demand service using remote servers to manage and share information rather than your personal computer or local network.

**ii. File sharing:** the practice of making files available to other users.

-halve your paper consumption by using both its sides.

-If you can forward, share or use the document digitally, do so instead.

-if you have limited internet access use USB sticks.

-instead of printing paperwork to sign them, sign document digitally.

**OCR** (optical character recognition): the process of converting of graphics (photo of a document), handwritten or printed text into machine encoded text.

 **iii.TECHNOLOGY AND PAPERLESS OFFICE KEY TEAMS**

-Think twice before you print.

-Try to avoid printing single emails or brief texts.

-Use cloud computing to store documents online, instead of printing them out on paper.

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Google drive Google sheet Google slides Google forms

** G SUITE **

Gmail

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 Google Hangout Google docs

1. **Google (native cloud):** make people collaborate faster, suitable for younger organization.

 

1. **Microsoft (grown cloud):** more popular, use the offline products for more mature users.

 

1. **Email: Gmail/outlook**
2. **Cloud drives:** Google Drive/ Drop box word processor
3. **Word processors**: Google docs/ Microsoft offices

OCR: Ever-note/Google keep

1. **Paperless servicing of committees: SCCOREP**

SCHEDULE COLLABORATE REPORT

**Calendar docs (Cloud) Email**

1. **Some Simple Suggestions on Practical Tools for Paperless Committee Servicing:**

With the assumption that the meeting tool for Committee Members is the Tablet, Laptop or Phone, these applications are considered very useful:

* **Preliminary Arrangements for Committee Meetings**

In consulting with the Committee Chairman on time, date and venue, the Secretary could communicate through email, text messages, WhatsApp, Google Duo (a video/audio messaging app), Skype, etc; notice of meeting and reminders could be sent through Google Calendar; any sudden change in venue could be communicated through email, WhatsApp, Facebook, text message; even refreshments could be ordered through online platforms or by phone call

* **Drawing up Agenda in Consultation with the Chairman**

Online Applications such as Google Hangout, email, Google Drive, Dropbox, Google Docs, Skype could be used to draw up and distribute the Agenda. A prominent feature of some of the aforementioned applications is that they allow for online editing and submission. The Agenda could be dispatched through email, Google Docs, Evernote, Dropbox, etc.

* **Preparing and Circulating Documents to Committee Members**

Supporting documents to guide members in preparing for Committee meetings and carrying out their assignment could be dispatched through email, Google Docs, Google Drive, Microsoft Office, Google Sheet, Google Slide and WhatsApp

* **Advising the Committee on Procedure**

As the custodian of the rules and regulations which are codified in Laws, Statutes, Standing Orders, Conventions, the Committee Secretary can deploy some ICT tools to present to members the due process requirements in carrying out their assignment. There is vast array of tools through which this can be done. They include Google Docs, Evernote, OneNote, Microsoft Office, Google Keep, Dropbox, Google Drive, etc.

* **Meeting Attendance**

To ensure proper mobilization of Committee members for punctual attendance at meetings and in greater number, some tools can be used including Google Calendar, Google Forms, WhatsApp, Text Messages, Facebook, email. For better participation of members during meetings, presentations could be made using PowerPoint, Google Drive, Microsoft Office, Google Sheet, Google Drive, File Share, etc. Video Conferencing devices could be used for members to participate during meetings while not even being physically present at the meeting venue. Mobile applications such as Google Duo, Skype and WhatsApp could be deployed for Video Conferencing and Conference Calls.

* **Recording the Committee’s Decisions in the Minutes**

The Committee Secretary has several digital options available for use when recording Minutes of Committee Meetings. These include Evernote, Notepad, OneNote, Google Docs, GoodNotes, Microsoft Office, etc. These devices allow for future editing and online sharing/editing so that the Secretary could develop the notes after the meeting and share the full Minutes with the Chairman for vetting.

* **Conveying Committee decisions/Taking Follow-up Actions**

After Committee Meetings, the Secretary is usually expected to communicate the Committee’s decisions appropriately. In paperless Communication, several online tools could be applied including email, Google Docs, Microsoft Office, Google Drive, Dropbox, File Share, GoodNote, etc.

1. **Meeting and Decisions Management System**

Apart from individual or stand-alone tools and applications that are mentioned above, there are software whose main features are provided as bouquet and combine various automated processes in an integrated package. These form a Meeting Management System that support Paperless Meetings. Such software have inbuilt mechanisms that host and transfer data with capacity to automatically download Agendas, Reports, Decisions and Meeting Minutes. They also have Annotation tools, Two-Factor Security, Document Library, ADFs integration to reduce the need for multiple passwords and advanced navigation using bookmarks and free text search. They are available for download on Apple, Android and Windows Applications. Examples of such software are Modern.Gov’s Paperless Meeting App, Azeus Convene App, EventPilot, Easy2Meet, OurMeeting, Diligent Board, etc.

1. **CHALLENGES IN ADOPTING PAPERLESS OFFICES TECHNOLOGY:**
2. **The major challenges are faced by organizations on their journey to paperless operations:**

The major challenges encountered in using ICT for Administrative tasks are: unstable or intermittent internet connection, hacking of account, failure of communication devices, power interruption, weak signal for cell phones, and accidental distribution of confidential information. These can be summarized in this order of ranking:

3. Technology

2. Mindset

1. Skill-set

**b. PAPERLESS OFFICE NOT WITHOUT LIMITATIONS**

One big reason is that, when it comes to eradicating paper, organizations must be realistic. Completely eliminating paper may not be economical or even practical for everyone. While a completely 100% paperless office may be unattainable, a few decisive steps applied over the time can dramatically reduce if not eliminate the vast majority of paper in office.

1. **Conclusion:**

Please note that as of today achieving a paperless office is a utopian objective for many organizations due to many reasons. The easier target to meet is to increase collaboration and reduce waste with the help of technology.

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