

# REGISTRY BEST PRACTICES AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE AND COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS FROM NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Edho, O. G.<sup>1</sup>, Akpotu<sup>2</sup>, N.E, Asiyai R. I<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Department of Educational Management and Foundations, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The university Registry serves as the central administrative hub of higher education institutions, ensuring integrity in records, governance, and communication. In Nigeria, however, confidentiality breaches, weak problem-solving, inconsistent ICT adoption, and communication lapses have raised questions about its effectiveness. This study examined the relationship between four domains of Registry best practices—confidentiality, problem-solving, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) knowledge, and communication—and effective university administration. A correlational survey design was employed, involving a stratified sample of 596 Registry staff drawn from a population of 1,978 in the South-South geopolitical zone. Data were collected using the Registry Personnel’s Best Practices and Effective Administration Questionnaire (RPBPEAUQ), validated by experts and confirmed reliable (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.79). Pearson Product-Moment Correlation at the 0.05 level revealed that confidentiality ( $r = .972, p < .001$ ), problem-solving ( $r = .372, p < .001$ ), and communication ( $r = .624, p < .001$ ) were significant predictors of effective administration, while ICT knowledge ( $r = .839, p = .387$ ) was not independently significant. Confidentiality, though the strongest predictor, was weakly practiced (mean = 2.29), exposing systemic vulnerabilities. These findings support Institutional Theory by illustrating a contradiction between highly visible but low-yield practices and critical yet weakly applied ones. The study recommends enforceable confidentiality protocols, structured communication systems, problem-solving capacity building, and ICT governance frameworks. Strengthening these domains will enhance professionalism, rebuild trust, and secure the Registry’s role as the institutional core of Nigerian universities.

**Keywords:** Confidentiality; Problem-Solving; Communication; Information and Communication Technology (ICT); Higher Education Governance; University Registry; Nigerian Universities.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Universities are universally acknowledged as engines of societal progress, knowledge creation, and innovation. Their success, however, is not determined by academics alone but also by the strength of their administrative backbone. At the centre of this system lies the Registry, often described as the *heart of the university* [6], responsible for admissions, records management, examinations, governance documentation, and communication. A Registry that functions efficiently assures the credibility of academic processes and the integrity of institutional decisions; one that fails risks administrative paralysis, reputational damage, and declining public trust.

Historically, the Nigerian university Registry was characterised by discipline, diligence, and confidentiality, supported by structured career pathways and predictable professional development [1]. Over time, however, pressures from the rapid expansion of student enrolments, increased political interference in appointments, technological disruption, and inadequate investment in professional development have eroded these strengths. Contemporary Registries now face challenges of frequent confidentiality breaches, tampering with official records, delayed communication, and weak problem-solving capacity. Instead of serving as a guarantor of integrity, the Registry in many institutions is increasingly vulnerable to inefficiencies and reputational risks.

Institutional Theory provides a useful lens for understanding these developments. Universities, in pursuit of legitimacy, often adopt symbolic practices such as punctuality and ceremonial compliance—that are highly visible yet contribute little to genuine administrative effectiveness [4]. Meanwhile, critical but less visible practices, including confidentiality, problem-solving, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) governance, and effective communication, are neglected. This paradox produces a system where Registries appear compliant externally but are hollow internally.

This study therefore investigates the relationship between four core domains of Registry best practices, confidentiality, problem-solving, ICT knowledge, and communication and effective university administration. By combining empirical evidence from a doctoral study in Nigeria's South-South zone [1] with comparative analysis of Registry structures across federal, state, and private institutions, the article identifies both the predictors of effectiveness and the systemic weaknesses that undermine them. In doing so, it aims to provide a roadmap for strengthening Registry professionalism, restoring trust, and repositioning the Registry as the true heartbeat of Nigerian universities.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nigerian universities depend on the Registry as the hub of administrative effectiveness, ensuring reliable record-keeping, secure information flows, and procedural integrity. Yet mounting evidence points to systemic weaknesses. Breaches of confidentiality have become frequent, with leaks of Council and Senate decisions, transcript tampering, and premature disclosures undermining institutional trust [1][5]. Problem-solving capacity within Registries has weakened; staff often rely on outdated manual procedures, escalating disputes rather than resolving them promptly [12]. Although ICT was introduced to enhance efficiency, uneven adoption, poor governance, and reliance on insecure platforms such as personal email and messaging apps have exposed institutions to risks rather than strengthened administration [7][8]. Communication lapses further compromise service delivery, creating delays in student support, transcript production, and decision implementation [9].

The cumulative effect is declining professional authority of Registries, loss of institutional memory, and diminished confidence in university administration. Without urgent reforms that strengthen confidentiality, communication, problem-solving, and ICT governance, Registries risk becoming ceremonial rather than functional. This study therefore investigates these four domains empirically, while also situating them within comparative institutional practices across federal, state, and private universities.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on best practices in university administration consistently emphasizes confidentiality, problem-solving, ICT knowledge, and communication as cornerstones of effective Registry functions. Confidentiality is vital for safeguarding sensitive student and staff records, with breaches threatening trust, institutional reputation, and legal compliance [5]. Nigerian studies highlight persistent challenges, including leaks of Council decisions and transcript tampering, signalling systemic weaknesses [1].

Problem-solving emerges as a critical competency in managing the dynamic challenges of academic administration. [12] stress that administrators must adapt swiftly to new conditions, resolve disputes, and design innovative solutions. Within the Registry, problem-solving ensures operational resilience in the face of policy shifts and technological disruptions.

ICT knowledge has transformed administrative practice globally, enabling efficiency through automation, e-portals, and integrated databases [3]. Yet ICT without governance exposes vulnerabilities; staff may use unsecured channels such as personal emails or WhatsApp, undermining data integrity [7]. Studies in Nigeria report limited access to ICT resources and weak institutional investment in secure systems [8].

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Effective communication is repeatedly identified as a foundation of administrative success. Clear, timely communication fosters collaboration, reduces delays, and ensures compliance with institutional policies. Poor communication leads to misinformation and undermines service delivery [9]. In the Registry, it is crucial for transcript services, Senate reporting, and student engagement.

Theoretical perspectives also illuminate the problem. Institutional Theory ([4]) suggests universities may adopt symbolic practices for legitimacy while neglecting critical but less visible competencies. In the Nigerian Registry, punctuality and regularity are often emphasized, yet findings show they are not significantly related to effectiveness [1]. Instead, confidentiality, problem-solving, and communication are the true predictors of effective administration.

Comparative international research aligns with these findings. [10] advocate for specialization of Registry roles, while [3] highlight ICT-enabled governance. [11] emphasizes secrecy and accountability as dual imperatives. Collectively, these studies confirm that the Registry’s integrity depends on disciplined confidentiality, adaptive problem-solving, governed ICT, and effective communication.

Observations across South-South Nigerian universities show registry staff often struggle to maintain confidentiality, leading to leaks of sensitive data. Problem-solving capacities are weak, with staff relying on outdated memos rather than creative solutions. Registry personnel face limited ICT access and administrative support, undermining technological integration. Communication lapses contribute to misunderstandings and delays. These deficiencies compromise service delivery, trust, and institutional integrity, underscoring the urgency to empirically evaluate these best practices and their relationship with effective university administration.

**IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the relationship between confidentiality and effective university administration?
2. What is the relationship between problem-solving and effective university administration?
3. What is the relationship between ICT knowledge and effective university administration?
4. What is the relationship between effective communication and effective university administration?

**V. METHODS**

This study adopted a descriptive and correlational survey method of the *ex post facto* research design. The population comprised 1,978 registry personnel across state universities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Using a stratified sampling technique, a sample of 596 senior and junior registry staff (representing 30% of the population) was drawn.

The instrument used was the *Registry Personnel’s Best Practices and Effective Administration of Universities Questionnaire (RPBPEAUQ)*, a self-developed tool designed to assess confidentiality, communication, problem-solving, ICT proficiency, policy awareness, human relations, record-keeping, punctuality, and regularity. The instrument was validated through face and content validity by experts in educational management. Reliability was established with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.79, confirming its internal consistency.

Data were analysed using mean ratings, standard deviation, coefficient of determination, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics, all tested at a significance level of 0.05

**VI. RESULTS**

**Research Question 1: *What is the relationship between confidentiality and effective university administration?***

**Table 1: Correlation between Confidentiality and Effective Administration**

| Variable        | N   | Mean | r    | p    | Interpretation                                       |
|-----------------|-----|------|------|------|--|
| Confidentiality | 493 | 2.29 | .972 | .000 | Very strong, significant predictor; weakly practised |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

*Source: Edho (2025) field work*

Interpretation: Confidentiality showed a very strong and significant positive relationship with effective administration ( $r = .972, p = .000$ ). However, its mean score (2.29) was below the benchmark (2.50), revealing that confidentiality is not consistently practised despite being the strongest predictor.

**Research Question 2: What is the relationship between problem-solving and effective university administration?**

**Table 2: Correlation between Problem-Solving and Effective Administration**

| Variable        | N   | Mean | r    | p    | Interpretation                  |
|-----------------|-----|------|------|------|---------------------------------|
| Problem-Solving | 493 | 2.87 | .372 | .000 | Moderate, significant predictor |

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Edho (2025) field work

Interpretation: Problem-solving showed a moderate but statistically significant positive relationship with effective administration ( $r = .372, p = .000$ ). With a mean score of 2.87 (above the benchmark), this indicates that problem-solving is actively practised, though less influential than confidentiality.

**Research Question 3: What is the relationship between ICT knowledge and effective university administration?**

**Table 3: Correlation between ICT Knowledge and Effective Administration**

| Variable      | N   | Mean | r    | p    | Interpretation                    |
|---------------|-----|------|------|------|-----------------------------------|
| ICT Knowledge | 493 | 2.65 | .839 | .387 | High correlation, not significant |

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Edho (2025) field work

Interpretation: ICT knowledge returned a high correlation coefficient ( $r = .839$ ) but was not statistically significant ( $p = .387$ ). Although the mean score (2.65) exceeded the benchmark, ICT knowledge alone does not independently predict effective administration without governance safeguards.

**Research Question 4: What is the relationship between communication and effective university administration?**

**Table 4: Correlation between Communication and Effective Administration**

| Variable      | N   | Mean | r    | p    | Interpretation                           |
|---------------|-----|------|------|------|--|
| Communication | 493 | 2.71 | .624 | .000 | Moderately strong, significant predictor |

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Edho (2025) field work

Interpretation: Communication showed a moderately strong and significant relationship with effective administration ( $r = .624, p = .000$ ). With a mean score of 2.71, communication is relatively well practised and contributes meaningfully to reducing bottlenecks and improving Registry service delivery.

The analysis tested the relationship between four domains of Registry personnel best practices—confidentiality, problem-solving, ICT knowledge, and effective communication—and effective university administration.

Findings revealed that:

- I. Confidentiality showed a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship with effective administration ( $r = .972, p = .000$ ). Although it emerged as the most influential predictor, mean scores fell below the benchmark, indicating it is weakly practised despite its importance.

- II. Problem-Solving exhibited a moderate but significant relationship with effective administration ( $r = .372, p = .000$ ). This suggests that improved problem-solving capacity contributes to smoother service delivery and institutional resilience.
- III. ICT Knowledge returned a high correlation coefficient but was not statistically significant ( $r = .839, p = .387$ ). This indicates that ICT competence alone does not independently predict administrative effectiveness unless embedded within governance frameworks.
- IV. Effective Communication recorded a moderately strong and significant relationship with effective administration ( $r = .624, p = .000$ ). Clear, timely communication was associated with fewer delays, reduced process errors, and greater staff and student confidence.

Overall, the results demonstrate that confidentiality, problem-solving, and communication are significant predictors of effective administration, while ICT knowledge, although important, requires governance alignment to yield meaningful outcomes.

## VII. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide clear evidence that confidentiality, problem-solving, and communication are vital predictors of effective university administration, while ICT knowledge, though important, does not independently guarantee effectiveness.

The prominence of confidentiality aligns with earlier arguments that the Registry is the “*heart of the university system*” [6]. When confidentiality is compromised—through transcript tampering, premature release of Council or Senate decisions, or information leaks—the entire institutional framework suffers reputational damage. Although confidentiality emerged as the most powerful predictor, it was found to be weakly practised among Registry staff. This inconsistency between its predictive value and its limited application highlights a serious institutional vulnerability, echoing concerns raised in both local and international governance reports [1], [5].

Problem-solving also emerged as a significant, though moderate, predictor. This confirms the Registry’s role as the unit that absorbs routine breakdowns and provides administrative resilience. Universities in contexts of resource scarcity and political pressure particularly rely on adaptive problem-solving to maintain credibility in decision-making processes [12].

Effective communication was also strongly related to administrative effectiveness, reinforcing the importance of clarity, transparency, and timeliness in interactions with students, staff, and governing councils. Communication failures, by contrast, create administrative bottlenecks, fuel disputes, and delay the implementation of policy decisions [9].

ICT knowledge, while widely celebrated in higher education reform discourse, was not statistically significant on its own. This finding supports comparative international studies [3], [10] showing that ICT must be embedded within secure governance frameworks to deliver value. Without policies governing data access, security, and accountability, ICT risks amplifying vulnerabilities rather than mitigating them.

The results further illustrate the institutional contradiction described by Institutional Theory [4]. Universities often ritualise highly visible but low-yield practices—such as punctuality, ceremonial reporting, or paper-based compliance—while neglecting less visible but high-yield practices like confidentiality and structured problem-solving. Such institutional isomorphism sustains legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders but undermines actual effectiveness.

Comparative insights from federal, state, and private universities reinforce these findings. Across contexts, Registries with stronger confidentiality safeguards, clear communication systems, and a culture of problem-solving consistently achieve better outcomes, regardless of their ICT investments. International evidence also points in the same direction: specialization of Registry roles [10], ICT-enabled governance [3], and accountability frameworks [11] converge on the conclusion that Registry integrity depends on disciplined confidentiality, adaptive problem-solving, and effective communication.

In summary, the study confirms that while technology is valuable, it cannot substitute for governance. Instead, the core drivers of administrative effectiveness remain human-centred practices confidentiality, problem-solving, and communication supported by ICT as an enabler within a secure and accountable framework.

## VIII. EXTENDED COMPARATIVE CONTEXT AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Building on the empirical results, a broader comparative analysis across federal, state, and private universities clarifies both divergences in structure and shared challenges in practice.

Federal universities typically maintain specialised Registry divisions (Academic, Establishments, Student Affairs, Administration), with the Registrar serving as chief administrative officer and statutory secretary to Council and Senate. State universities mirror this structure, albeit with fewer divisions and limited resources, while private universities often streamline Registry functions and combine statutory roles with Board or Trust secretariat duties. Across all ownership types, the Registrar's advisory role to the Vice-Chancellor and governing bodies remains central. However, increasing dispersion of functions to committees and external consultants has weakened the operational authority of Registries over time [1].

Appointments to the office of Registrar have also shifted. While federal institutions historically required deep Registry experience, state and private institutions increasingly emphasise general leadership credentials. Although this broadens the talent pool, it risks eroding institutional memory, heightening multitasking errors, and deepening reliance on deputies. A best practice balance requires leadership skills complemented by structured induction and mentoring, particularly for appointees entering from outside the Registry cadre [1].

Confidentiality continues to stand out as the keystone of Registry integrity. Comparative interviews and desk reviews consistently reveal premature announcements, informal channel leaks, and weak access controls as system-wide vulnerabilities. The post-2000 ICT environment simultaneously enhanced efficiency and amplified risks: without governed platforms, audit trails, and sanctions, ICT has become a frequent conduit for breaches rather than a safeguard [5][7].

Career development patterns have also changed. Past models emphasised rotation, structured mentoring, and merit-based progression, which sustained institutional memory and morale. In contrast, contemporary Registries rely heavily on ad hoc workshops, contributing to fragmentation, declining motivation, and higher attrition. While professional associations such as Association of Nigerian University Professional Administrators (ANUPA) / Association of Registrars of Nigerian Universities (ARNU) provide advocacy, they lack statutory enforcement powers. Comparative analysis with professional bodies like Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) and Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN) suggests that regulatory evolution with accreditation, certification, and discipline is needed to strengthen professionalism system-wide.

Overall, the comparative analysis reinforces the empirical evidence: confidentiality, problem-solving, and communication remain decisive for effectiveness, but their impact depends on supportive ICT governance, professional regulation, and sustainable career pathways.

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The empirical results and comparative analysis underscore the urgent need for reforms that strengthen Registry professionalism and restore its centrality in university governance. While confidentiality, problem-solving, and communication emerged as significant predictors of effectiveness, their weak or inconsistent practice highlights systemic gaps. ICT, although widely adopted, proved insufficient when not embedded in robust governance frameworks. Addressing these weaknesses requires a holistic approach that combines policy, technology, professionalisation, and cultural change. Against this backdrop, the following recommendations are proposed:

### A. Confidentiality & Information Governance

- I. Codify document classification (public, internal, confidential, highly confidential) and access rights; apply least-privilege by default [2][5].
- II. Enforce Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA) aligned breach response protocols (logging, notification, remediation) with annual audits led by a Data Protection Officer [2].
- III. Require annual confidentiality oaths and scenario-based training, link breaches to clear sanctions.

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### B. ICT as a Governed Enabler

- I. Deploy an encrypted document management system with multi-factor authentication, tamper-evident logs, and automated retention schedules; prohibit WhatsApp/personal email for official records [3][5][7].
- II. Mandate role-based permissions and quarterly access reviews; phase out parallel manual–digital systems.

### C. Communication & Problem-Solving Capacity

- I. Publish service standards and templates (e.g., Senate papers, Council minutes, student notices) with peer review for sensitive outputs [9].
- II. Introduce case-based learning clinics and post-incident reviews, track resolution quality and turnaround time as key performance indicators.

### D. Professionalisation & Regulation

- I. Strengthen ANUPA/ARNU by mandating accreditation of CPD, practitioner certification, and disciplinary frameworks aligned with ICAN/NMCN norms.
- II. Establish structured Registry career ladders, including rotation, mentoring, and CPD credits tied to promotion.

### E. Future-Work Preparedness

- I. Institutionalise hybrid operations, crisis simulations, and duty-of-care protocols.
- II. Evaluate performance on resilience and service delivery, not just presenteeism [1].

## X. PRACTICE FRAMEWORK (CHECKLIST)

### 1. Confidentiality

- I. Policy: Classification, access rules, and sanctions documented and approved by Council.
- II. Process: DPO-led audits; annual breach drills [2].
- III. Platform: Encrypted DMS with MFA and audit trails; no informal channels [3][5].

### 2. ICT Governance

- I. Role-based access in all systems; quarterly recertification.
- II. Secure backups with tested restoration; automated retention/disposal [3].

### 3. Communication

- I. Standard templates and version control; cross-unit review for sensitive notices [9].
- II. Turnaround standards tracked and published.

### 4. Problem-Solving

- I. Scenario exercises; lessons from incidents embedded in SOPs [12].

### 5. Professionalisation

- I. CPD credits required for progression; mentoring recorded in personnel files.
- II. External appointees complete structured induction within 90 days.

## XI. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that confidentiality, communication, and problem-solving are the most significant predictors of effective university administration in Nigerian universities, while ICT knowledge alone does not independently drive effectiveness. Confidentiality emerged as the strongest predictor but remains the least practised, exposing universities to reputational and operational risks. Communication and problem-solving reinforce administrative effectiveness by enabling clarity, transparency, and resilience. ICT, though indispensable, only adds value when embedded within robust governance frameworks.

The comparative analysis across federal, state, and private universities further revealed systemic challenges: dispersed Registry authority, inconsistent appointment practices, weakened career pathways, and limited regulatory oversight. These weaknesses converge on a common point—the erosion of professional standards within Registries—which threatens the institutional integrity of Nigerian higher education.

Restoring the Registry's central role in university administration requires strengthening confidentiality protocols, embedding ICT within secure governance systems, and institutionalising communication and problem-solving practices as core competencies. Professionalisation through structured training, accreditation, and regulatory frameworks will ensure continuity of standards, while renewed investment in mentoring and career development will rebuild morale and institutional memory.

Ultimately, the pathway to sustainable university administration lies not in technology alone, but in a renewed commitment to human-centred best practices, governed by accountability, and supported by ICT as an enabler. By addressing these issues, Nigerian universities can restore professionalism, rebuild trust, and safeguard the Registry as the guarantor of academic integrity and institutional legitimacy.

## XII. EXTENDED COMPARATIVE CONTEXT AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Building on the empirical results, a broader comparative analysis across federal, state, and private universities clarifies where Registry work diverges in structure and expectations, yet converges on the primacy of confidentiality and records integrity. Federal universities typically maintain specialised divisions (Academic, Establishments, Student Affairs, Administration) with the Registrar as chief administrative officer and secretary to Council and Senate; state universities mirror this structure with fewer specialised units, while private universities streamline functions and often combine statutory and Board secretariat roles. Across all ownership types, the Registrar's advisory role to the Vice-Chancellor and statutory bodies is pivotal, yet the dispersion of Registry functions to committees and external consultants has weakened operational authority over time [1].

Appointments have increasingly privileged general leadership credentials over Registry experience, especially in state and private institutions. While this broadens the talent pool, it can erode institutional memory, elevate multitasking errors, and increase dependency on deputies. Best practice is to blend leadership with deep Registry experience, or—where appointees come from outside the Registry—mandate structured induction, supported by experienced Deputy Registrars [1].

Confidentiality remains the keystone: interviews and comparative desk reviews identify premature announcements, informal-channel sharing, and ad hoc access control as system-wide issues. The post-2000 ICT environment accelerated both efficiency and exposure. Without governed platforms and sanctions, ICT becomes a conduit for breaches rather than a safeguard [5][7].

Career development has shifted from structured mentoring and rotation to ad hoc workshops. Predictable, merit-based progression previously sustained institutional memory; its erosion now correlates with lower morale and higher attrition. Professional associations (ANUPA/ARNU) provide advocacy but lack enforcement power, unlike statutory bodies such as ICAN or NMCN. A regulatory evolution that includes accreditation, certification, and discipline would raise the floor of practice system-wide.

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