

| CHAPTER THREE |

PROFESSOR EUGENE OKOYE NWADIALOR AND THE QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE IN MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

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INTRODUCTION

The Board of Trustees of Tansian University Umunya, Anambra State, in the month of May, 2019, hired the services of Professor Eugene Okoye Nwadiakor, as the 5th Vice Chancellor of the university. The action of the Board of Trustees is premised on its belief in the principle that quality education delivery is incumbent on quality administrator. After all, the National Policy on Education in Nigeria is a statement of intentions, expectations, goals, prescriptions, standards and requirements for education delivery in Nigeria.¹ It is this that the Board considered in their quest for requirement for standard and quality education delivery; including their desire for social development. It is worthy to note that the Board also recognizes that education plays a key role as it is an investment for economic, social and political development.²

On the strength of the following ground, there is no doubt that hiring a quality Vice Chancellor is a strong policy that one needs in order to arrive at the destination of academic excellence; hence the

¹Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education (6th Edition), I

²Ibid.

idea that a University is a place for teaching and diffusing of universal knowledge is correct.³ Nevertheless, such care should be taken also to policy making. Aremu Fatai Ayinde in Yusuf Garba Manjoe's *Public Policy Making Process in Nigeria: Sub National and Sectorial Analysis*, notes that public policy as a contested domain is “a chain that connects the aspiration of ruling elites and service delivery to the common man”.⁴ The process of making policy is indeed a complex one; hence one has to address and harmonize several powerful constituents, competing and sometimes conflicting interests. According to Aremu Fatai again, such policy and/or decision has stages, namely: Conception, Articulation, Approval stage, Implementation and Evaluation Stage. Thus, as one who participated in the policy initiative that saw Professor Nwadiolor as the Vice Chancellor of this University; as one of his employers but now also being part of his evaluators, it is pertinent to make it clear and as well bold to say that he is a God-sent. Of course it is important to know that there have been other Vice Chancellors of the university before him but his time is marked with such clear difference thus, there is definitely the need to sing such praise of his person.

Professor Adeoye Lambo in Patricia Dede Otuedon, *Hallmark of Labour* notes: “Hallmark of Labour has brought to this society a new orientation to the future generation...” In that direction, Professor Ben Nwabueze asserts:

It brings a national culture of heroship so lamentably lacking in Nigeria. A national culture of heroship helps to inspire youths to aspire to be like their elders whose heroic achievements and noble qualities are recognized and honoured.” Without this, the nation may just become a society in which social values and worthiness are determined by money and other such mundane things.⁵

³Newman J.N, *The Idea of a University*, (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press), xxxvix

⁴Yusuf G. M. *Public Policy Making Process in Nigeria* (Ilorin: Olad Publishers, 2019). VI

⁵Otuedon, P.D. *Hallmark of Labour*, (Lagos: Mahogany Limited, 2003), 1-2

Having said that, there is no hesitation to align myself in the quoted paragraphs given that what we are just doing is the right thing; we are on a right course when we evaluate and praise a performing Vice Chancellor. However, to proceed and make us understand more, I need to note that most people do not know how Vice Chancellors are appointed, and may not know what is at stake. One may ask: how exactly are Vice Chancellors appointed? The answer will be found in the subsection that follows.

APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHANCELLORS

Obviously, how Vice Chancellors are appointed depends on the type of university – federal, state or private – as well as the type of private university – secular, faith-based and hybrid. Generally, the standard in federal and state universities is that pioneer vice-chancellors are appointed by fiat by the Visitor. The Visitor is usually the president of Nigeria or the governor of a state for public universities while it is the Proprietor for private universities that appoints the Vice Chancellors. Subsequently for other appointments the Board of Trustees carries it out. On the procedure, a vacancy is declared – in a newspaper advertisement – six months before the end of the tenure of the incumbent. Conditions are stated in the advertisements which include number of years of post-professorial qualification, academic and administrative qualifications, and experience in various other capacities.

At the close of the deadline for submission, candidates are shortlisted and interviewed. Interviews can take place in different formats, depending on tradition or the preference of the Visitor, Board of Trustees or Governing Council. In Tansian University, for example, the practice is that the Chairman of the Governing Council alongside three other Council Members comes and interviews the applicants and from performance, recommends three best performing ones to the Board, who then makes the final appointment. Note that Board of Trustees is not tied to the recommended three. They may decide to choose any of the interviewed ones.

It is through this process that Prof. Nwadiakor also received such scrutiny and underwent such process. Though in slightly different way, his own case was that larger number of Tansian University staff prompted him to apply for Tansian University Vice Chancellorship, knowing his pedigree and magic wand. And as he was coming, advertently or inadvertently, his fate may be said to have been pre-decided.

PARTICULARITY OF TIME AND PERSON OF PROF. NWADIAKOR

We are aware that unusual times need unusual personalities. Such personality is no other person than the man for whom this work is dedicated. Godwin Obioma (2013) states that the key concerns/challenges in Education are “to effectively coordinate activities and interventions, as well as to strengthen and deepen collaboration through appropriate policy guidelines, monitoring, and quality control.”⁶ We know, for sure what we mean when we say that we have had a great man in our midst. Recounting his achievements, we will notice that we have never had such number of improved staff welfare as it is in his time; that we have never had such cordial staff-students' relationship as it is in his time; that we have never had such academic breakthroughs, the floating of new academic programs, full accreditations and reaccreditations of so many programs of the university. We know for the first time; the university saw itself in the comity of universities doing post-graduate programs. We know he attracted projects worth over three hundred million Naira (N300,000,000.00) to the university. We know all these and many other things. However, one will appreciate the need for such praise of his person if one goes back a bit to know more about Tansian University and the event that happened in the university before his coming and during his stay as Vice Chancellor. It is in this connection then that one will be able to see clearly the reason for this exposition.

⁶ Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education(6th Edition), P. iii

TANSIAN UNIVERSITY

Tansian University is one of the private universities in Nigeria, approved by National Universities Commission and licensed by Federal Government of Nigeria temporarily in May, 2007 and granted definitive or full license in 2015. Tansian University is founded to create a culture of Excellence. Mr. Ukwungu Joe Ndubuisi, in Akam John Bosco (2008), *Path of Hope*, maintains that the Founder, consulted widely in a bid to introduce, continue and/or retain the culture of Excellence.⁷ The truth is that Tansian University has had more crisis than necessary. The crises range from struggle for co-ownership to series of media campaign of calumny against the university and its staff by some people who think they are highly placed. In fact, anyone who is not in Anambra State or Nigeria may have a picture of troubled part of Iraq over this our beautiful and blessed University. This is the ugly or rather negative impact of unhealthy use of social media. It paints a deadly picture of things, thereby scaring people to their bone.

OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR

Indeed, in every university, the vice-Chancellor is the Principal and the Chief Executive Officer of the institution. Naturally to his office, he oversees the day to day activities of the university and of course maintains good relationship with other Principal Officers and various organs of the University. The office of the Vice Chancellor generally is to provide leadership: academic and administrative to the whole University, represents the university externally. He can as well canvas for funds in order to secure a strong capital base sufficient to allow the delivery of the university's mission, aims and objectives.⁸ The Vice Chancellor is also expected to build a collegiality in the university, thereby fostering industrial harmony in the University. It is the duty of the Vice Chancellor to make appointments in the university, though subject to Council confirmation. He maintains Staff and Student Welfares. He is the leader on Academic Matters and Research Activities. He is expected to promote Strategic Partnerships and

⁷Akam J.B. *Path of Hope* (Enugu: Godstak Printing & Publishing Company, 2008), iv-v

⁸Collins Cobuild, Definition of 'vice-chancellor' retrieved online from <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/vice-chancellor> accessed 7/10/2023

Collaboration, entering into Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) with helpful organizations, but subject to Council approval. He is the Hosting authority on any University Games.⁹

TANSIAN UNIVERSITY LAW

According to the provision made in Tansian University law:

There shall be a Vice-Chancellor for the University to be appointed by the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Governing Council... Subject to the provisions of this Clause, the Vice-Chancellor shall be a Professor appointed or removed from office by the Board of Trustees for any reason after considering the recommendation of the Council....

...The Vice-Chancellor shall, in relation to the University, take precedence before all other members of the University subject to **section 5** of this Law, except the Chancellor and the Pro-Chancellor and any other person for the time being, acting as Chairman of the Council.

...The Vice-Chancellor shall have the general function, in addition to any other function conferred on him by this Law of directing the activities of the University, and shall, to the exclusion of any other person or authority, be the chief executive and academic officer of the University and the *ex-officio* chairman of the Senate.... The Vice-Chancellor may, in case of misconduct by a member of the staff, which in the opinion of the Vice-Chancellor is prejudicial to the interests of the University, suspend such member and any such suspension shall forthwith be reported to the Council.

The Vice-Chancellor shall be a person who is morally impeccable and sound in character.....

⁹Professor TankoIshaya, Office of the Vice-Chancellor. Retrieved online from <https://www.unijos.edu.ng/about/office-of-the-vice-chancellor> accessed 7 Oct. 2023

The Vice-chancellor shall exercise general supervision over the University and shall have a general responsibility to the Council for maintaining and promoting the efficiency and good order in the University. The Vice-chancellor shall, by virtue of his office, be a member of the Council, Convocation, Chairman of Senate and Congregation. He shall also be a member of any other body as provided for in this Law. The Vice-chancellor may refuse to admit any person as student of the University.¹⁰

According to the earlier cited source, there are of course reasons people desire the office of the Vice Chancellor. One of the obvious reasons is the concentration of power and access to wealth in the position. Vice-chancellors have the power of patronage as they interface with – and are courted by powerful people such as politicians, traditional rulers and religious leaders. Vice-chancellors are also well remunerated. The consolidated salary, perks and allowances of a public university vice-chancellor is many times that of the highest paid professor. In addition, gifts and patronage flow into the office throughout the tenure of the incumbent, especially during religious and commemorative occasions. Then there's the exercise of power. Vice-chancellors could make – or mar – the careers of friends or foes. They too dispense patronage within the system as they nominate or appoint the chair and members of powerful boards or committees; they chair the appointments and promotions committee, which also entitles them to determine external assessors of professorial candidates. In other words, they determine the career progression of their non-professorial colleagues. Lastly, in many cases they also influence the choice of their successors as they nominate their deputies, who are often groomed to succeed them in office.¹¹

PROFESSOR EUGENE OKOYE NWADIALOR, OUR OWN VICE CHANCELLOR: CHALLENGES; OLD AND NEW

Sound philosophy is at play in whatever Prof. Nwadiakor plans and

¹⁰Tansian University Law: 2022

¹¹Retrieved online from <https://theconversation.com/the-way-nigeria-selects-vice-chancellors-is-deeply-flawed-but-it-can-be-fixed-158156> ACCESSED 7/10/2023

executes. He is systematic and applies philosophical ingenuity in his actions. William F. (1973) states: “Philosophy generally embodies man's striving to engage in a constant search in order to cognise the infinite, the “root” and the cause of things existing and to call into question, everything he has achieved,”.¹² In the same line of thought, Professor Pat Utomi, in Patricia Dede Otuedon's *Hallmark of Labour* (2003) says: “It is gratifying to know that there is a programme that is bringing for the Nigerian people a proper kind of role model, a kind of people whose lives will help us build a better society.”¹³ Truly speaking, it is a thing of joy to talk about Professor Eugene Okoye Nwadiakor, a man with positive difference, a man who can learn and unlearn who can think and unlearn any sectarian and clannish methodology. People call him an old man but he is a man who, in the biblical language (Mathew 10:45) could be described as a wise man and one who can bring from his threshold old and new.

According to Adams Grant, (2021),

When people reflect on what it takes to be mentally fit, the first idea that comes to mind is usually intelligence, the smarter you are the more complex the problem can be solved and faster you can solve them. Intelligence is traditionally viewed as the ability to think and learn, yet in a turbulent world, there's another set of cognitive skills that might matter more: the ability to rethink and unlearn.¹⁴

The above truth applies to the man we know today as our Vice chancellor, Professor Eugene Okoye Nwadiakor. Recall that he was born in ancient town of Ichi, Ekwusigo Local Government Area of Anambra State. The need to celebrate him came principally for the unusual time he displayed unusual virtue and excellence.

¹²William F. “The Concept of Education Today”, J.F. Doyle(ed.) *Educational Judgements*,(London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973),7, quoted in A. F. Uduigweomen, *The Nature Meaning and branches of Metaphysics*, A. F. Uduigweomenetal (ed) “*Metaphysics: A Book of Readings*“ Ultimate Index Book Publishers Ltd: Calabar,2012. . 4.

¹³Otuedon, P.D.*Hallmark of Labour*. 5

¹⁴Adams Grant: *Think Again*, (New York: Viking, 2021), 2

As pointed out above, Tansian University has had a share of its turbulence and troubles since inception. It has had series of times it featured on Newspaper on issues of ownership and land related struggles. The truth and summary of those claims and counter claims is that Msgr. John Bosco Akam, (now before his death became a priest of Catholic Diocese of Ekwulobia, Anambra State) solely founded Tansian University. And as such the University is for him, as is solely founded by him, and is now to be managed by his home Diocese and the Religious Congregation he founded: Missionary Sons of Blessed Iwene Tansi. However, there were things that faced Professor Nwadiakor immediately he took over office. These listed problems reared their ugly heads. They are: Immediate crisis on what to give him as office logistics, NUC baptism of fire: Structural or Governance Structure accreditation, COVID 19 Pandemic and Paucity of funds, Founder's death and Post Founder's Death Crisis.

A. Immediate crisis on what to give him as Office Logistics

Tansian University recently prepared a report cum proposal on condition of Service. Being the Chairman of the Governing Council's Committee that produced such Policy documents, one can attest that before then, every such decisions was carried out by the Founder in conjunction with management and/or through the suggestions or advice of anyone who is close to him. It was a non-legal, non-codified condition to give any Vice Chancellor any this or that. Though we know that none of the previous Vice Chancellors was unattended to in terms of logistic of office but there were not any code existing anywhere which must be fulfilled. So when the Founder decided to hand over one of his Lexus Jeep to the New Vice Chancellor, a deadly crisis erupted among his domestic staff, kitchen cabinet as it is called. There I watched Prof. Nwadiakor from afar, to see how he would handle the terrible revolt from people who should have been happy that the New Vice Chancellor is comfortable and given necessary tool. But he received the apparent crisis with equanimity. He was calm

and always smiles at what he was experiencing. I watched him from afar and knew this man is indeed an elder in word and deed. I however stamped my feet with the intention of the Founder and we had the day.

B. NUC Baptism of Fire, Structural / Governance Structure Accreditation

As Professor Nwadiakor was merely coming out from unwelcoming reaction in the hands of domestic staff, a petition was sent to (NUC) National Universities Commission, that Tansian University was not properly managed by the management. The NUC immediately sent a team of their delegation to come for Governance Structure Accreditation. In their coming, a decidedly antagonistic team were out for a kill. However, as a seasoned Professor, he utilized his wealth of experience in navigating the murky waters. Tansian university came out of such tricky and bumpy trap, thanks to the efforts of a seasoned Vice chancellor, who knows his onions in administration.

C. COVID-19 Pandemic and Paucity of Funds

Everyone in the world knew the nightmare humanity as whole and world over witnessed during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The worst hit establishments were hospitality industry owners and school operators. There were no funds since schools could not function. People were practically dying out of hunger and paucity of funds. As a vice Chancellor, newly appointed and now face to face with such unusual and ugly situation, the first reaction would have been to resign and run away, but Professor Nwadiakor stayed on. He navigated carefully the harsh situation and reality. We know that Tansian University has always been managing gifts from the individual financing and funding every project since its inception. But how much more now that generally, such funds are nowhere to be seen. It was a trying moment for Nwadiakor, yet he navigated

through the ugly situation.

D. Founder's Death

The greatest of the confusions witnessed in his regime was the death of the Founder of the University. Nearly, the unthinkable would have happened but we know what a great pain of difficulty Professor Nwadiakor was subjected to and passed through. Only God knows what he suffered. As the saying goes that you know great people in an unusual situation, he managed all the tumults and dark moments successfully. He was calm and yet sternly administering the university. What a great achiever. Ironically, he achieved an unequalled success since the inception of the university alongside the enormous distraction and turbulence.

E. Post Founder's Death Crisis

Immediately after the founder's death and burial, there were crisis of different kinds; from his biological family, from externals who have no stake in Msgr. Akam's estates; from some opportunistic financial and business institutions. Most of us, Founder's Religious Sons, popularly known and called the MSTs, were also involved in internal disagreements. The turbulence that such internal crisis was bringing was shaking the foundations and the fabrics of the institution, yet, Prof. (or should I call him Rev. Father) Nwadiakor did not relent. He turned into a preacher. He refused to be bought over or to take sides in the internal disagreements. Rather, he encouraged dialogue even amidst insults and provocations.

PROF. EUGENENWADIakor: CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE

The management and administrative style seen in Prof. Nwadiakor's quest for excellence is cultural to him. Culture, they say, is the way of life of a people. Thus I would term this style and culture of his as "management excellence". This is a critical factor in achieving organizational success. It encompasses a set of skills,

practices, and attitudes that empower leaders to effectively guide their teams, making informed decisions, and drive positive outcomes. We know that in today's dynamic and competitive landscape, the pursuit of management excellence has become increasingly important. We note that the fundamental principles and key elements of management excellence, with its significance in fostering a high-performing and sustainable organization are all utilized in the life and era of Prof. Eugene Okoye Nwadiakor. They are: Clear Vision and Strategy, Effective Communication, Talent Development and Empowerment, Decision-Making and Problem-Solving, Ethical Leadership, Continuous Improvement and Adaptability.

Prof. Nwadiakor was clear in what he set out to achieve. He also strategized efficiently and effectively, owing to why he became a goal-getter. He motivates the staff for a common goal of Tansian University, aligning himself with the dream, vision and mission of the Father Founder. Prof. Nwadiakor has been good in effective communication. He throws open whatever he wants to embark upon so that other Principal Officers of the university could have their inputs. In this regard, effective cooperation of the registrar and the other Principal Officers should be noted and praised.

Nwadiakor, just like the Founder of Tansian University, believes in talent harnessing and talent development. He instilled sense of confidence in the ears of the Founder that more Professors are needed in the university and the Founder, before his death, gave approval to groom indigenous Professors and as well hire more external ones. Today, the university could boast of the fact that it has moved from a university of two Professors to a university of over 14 Professors and Associate Professors. His handiwork is visible and consistent. He carried out such feat when he was the Rector of Federal Polytechnic Oko where he also insisted that lecturers should upgrade their CV's, and consequently produced numerous PhD holders.

Professor Nwadiakor believes in urgent decision making and problems-solving. These virtues helped him greatly in all the named achievements he has made; he fights for good of others and believes in common good. This makes him a disciple of, and a believer of “common good”, since such is a common goal of those who promote common justice in a given society.¹⁵ Again, from him we have to take a clue in the fact that “progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their mind cannot change anything.” We learnt that unless we adopt pragmatic and new policies to inject fresh up-rank academics as Nwadiakor did, there may not be significant progress.

The most astonishing thing about Prof. Nwadiakor is the fact that he has advanced in age but adapt fast to new system and more current than most young professors. He is like the biblical wise man who brings from his treasure both old and new items of value. Apart from the fact that he believes in upgrading and constant updating, he is most importantly a true Igbo man who believes in core ethical and societal values that have held Igbo race high. He prioritizes honesty, transparency and integrity and is a positive example of true ethical leader. He has foisted this culture of value among staff and students of Tansian University.

9. CONCLUSION

Feedback and/or evaluation as a necessary part of every good outing is what I use this write up to do on Prof. Eugene Nwadiakor. I see clearly that management excellence is the hallmark of Prof. Nwadiakor's achievement. Having been consistent as an astute administrator in both Federal Polytechnic Oko and Tansian University, he came in an unusual time and has made unusual and

¹⁵Douglas I.O Anele, *Natural Law and Common Good in St. Thomas Aquinas' Political Philosophy* J.T. Ekong (Ed) *Politics and Common Good*. (Ibadan: MF Publishers, 2017), 34
Adam G. Think Again, 15

uncommon achievements. He thus has practically demonstrated Aristotle's belief that virtue; excellence in acts and being is achieved by being consistent in doing what is good. This also rhymes with the philosophy of the Founder of Tansian University, Msgr. Professor John Bosco Akam's **AGE QUOD AGIS** meaning that 'that which is good, that which is noble, that which is opportune, that which in accordance with the will of God, do it in season and out season; whether people give a part on the back or not. This is exactly what qualifies one to be named an excellent or virtuous one; hence his Excellency.

On this note, I am proud to say that professor Eugene Nwadiakor is God-sent; he is a man with enormous and enviable administrative and managerial excellence. He managed the unusual challenges and secured unusual successes and breakthroughs. May God reward him abundantly as he bows out of office at the full expiration of his tenure.