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Emerging Professional Bodies in Student Affairs Administration in South African Tertiary Institutions: A Necessity in Nigerian Higher Educational Systems

Dare Ojo, Omonijo

Doctoral Student, Department of Sociology, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria

Michael Chibuzor, Anyaegbunam

Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria

Albert O. Shaibu

Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa, Nigeria

Onyekwere Oliver Chizaram Uche

Associate Professor, Department of Religion and Human Relations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

Chibuikwe Emmanuel Ogunwa

Student, Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria

Abstract:

Several articles have explored the usefulness of professional bodies in all fields of human endeavours globally but scholarly works on student affairs professionalism in developing societies are limited to a few countries. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, such efforts have been hitherto neglected in the literature. It is on this note that this article employs data from secondary source to examine the emerging professional bodies in student affairs administration in South African tertiary institutions with the hope of advocating the same for higher education systems in Nigeria. The paper reviews literature on the existing professional bodies in student affairs in higher education systems in both developed nations and in South Africa with the purpose of identifying gaps in knowledge for scholarly attention. It discusses the attributes of professionalism which can be applied to student affairs administration in Nigerian tertiary institutions and also emphasizes on the need to commence or establish professional bodies in student affairs in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

1. Introduction

The usefulness of professional bodies [1] in all fields of human endeavours cannot be easily ignored among mankind. In the past and in recent times, the services of professionals have rescued humanity from social and natural hazards. More importantly, it is evident in the literature that members of professional bodies protect their fellow associates from victimization, oppression, poor remunerations and conditions of service in work organizations. Also, they avail their members with opportunities to fully develop their professions [2].

Just like other institutions in the society, the role of professionals in higher educational systems is very crucial. This is because higher institutions of learning are mainly established to develop potentials inherent in students for the betterment of their lives and families, and to also ensure societal development. Therefore, it could be reasoned that students are the main reason behind the creation of every higher educational institution. Students need a special attention from the highly-experienced professionals not only in academics but also in diverse areas of student life. This is largely due to their age and their stage of development in life that need to be properly monitored.

As the impact of quality education in many developed nations began to spread across different continents through globalization, the importance of professional bodies in student affairs administration also began to gain prominence in institutions where they were not in existence for several years [3-5]. South African tertiary institutions are in this category. In order to provide quality education, these institutions have begun to develop professional bodies in student affairs administration in the past few decades. The South African Association of Campus Health Services SAACHS [6] and The South African Chapter of the International Association of College and University Housing Officials (ACUHO-I SAC) [7] are notable ones. Unfortunately, such efforts are yet to be advanced in tertiary institutions in West Africa. Thus, many stakeholders in academia are yet to be familiar with such professional bodies for the betterment of their institutions, staff, and students.

In Nigeria, the department of student affairs exists in the public [8] and in private institutions of learning [9], but the impact of this department on student development seems to be greater in the private sector than the public sector. This is because several programmes, such as student work study scheme, student tutorial scheme etc. that are not in existence in the public sector are available

in the private sector and they have greatly influenced students' development [9 & 10] in terms of academic performance and addressing financial needs of some indigent students.

Nevertheless, it has been observed that professional bodies that exist in student affairs administration in higher education systems in developed nations are not known in both the public and private educational institutions in Nigeria. Further to the above, articles on this special area of student matters have been neglected in the literature, since the inception of the first higher institution, Yaba Higher College, in the country in 1932 [11]. Although [12] conducted a study on professionalism, but his work focused mainly on the teaching profession and ignored student affairs professionalism which has gained prominence in academia in developed nations and in South African tertiary institutions. It is on these platforms that this study was conceived.

The study is therefore packaged to: (i) review the existing literature on professional bodies on student affairs career in both developed nations and South African higher education systems separately in order to draw gaps in Knowledge for scholarly attention, (ii) examine the attributes of professionalism which could be applied to student affairs career in Nigeria, (iii) compare professional bodies in student affairs in developed nations with the existing ones in African higher education system with the aim of drawing comparison and gaps in knowledge that may likely provoke future studies in student administration, and (iv) highlight the need for professional associations in student affairs administration in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

The importance of this effort is hinged on the fact that the preparation for student affairs professionals in higher educational systems in contemporary Nigeria is yet to be ascertained in the literature and it may impact negatively on the nation's drive towards global recognition and impact like other world class universities.

Moreover, there is a crucial need for the advancement of student affairs profession in Nigeria for the betterment of stake holders in higher education systems. This article could therefore serve as a food for thought for the management of higher educational systems not only in Nigeria but also in other African tertiary institutions where such professional bodies are yet to be established. Furthermore, it could facilitate the endeavours of the management of some Nigerian private universities in becoming one of the foremost universities in the world.

The study is clearly structured in numerical order as indicated from the introductory section to the concluding remarks.

2. The Concept of Professionalism: Scholastic Perspectives

Several authors have used various terms to describe professionalism without reaching any concrete consensus [12]. Such terms include: selflessness, collegiality, being committed to ones assignments, hard work [13] are considered relevant. Among the workforce, [13] believes that working with the heart of integrity; even in complex circumstances differentiate professionals from non-professionals. This author advances that professionals make sacrifices for their both their organisations and customers. He equally believes that they are accountable for their services at any point in time. Finally, he emphasizes trustworthiness and reliability in the discharge of their duties, including intricate assignments.

Given the above view, [13] shows that certain features single out experts in various fields in work organisation, but other critical qualities of professionalism such as a definite period of training, skills and knowledge etc. are ignored. Thus, Merriam-Webster dictionary states that professionalism is a career that demands special skills and knowledge, acquirable through long years of training in higher educational systems [14]. These attributes seem to enable professionals to perform quality services to the public.

In the light of the above, quality service can also be used to define professionalism. Apart from this, professionals are known for conducting their activities in a decent manner [15] because their actions are strictly guided by the ethics of their professions.

In workplaces, worldwide, different professionals are in existence but they can be grouped into the following categories considering the complexity of their careers:

- **Category A.** Professionals in this category are regarded as experts in the field of science and technology. They include: medical doctors, physicians, pharmacists, chemists, technologists, pilots, engineers, builders, architects and so on. They are grouped in the first category because most of their activities hinge on human lives and complex machinery which are very intricate in nature. Any error made by some of these professions could be costly to mankind and some of these errors may not be easily corrected while a few may be corrected.
- **Category B.** Professionals in the category B are personnel in arts, humanities and social, sciences. They are lawyers, magistrates, justices, accountants, bankers, marketers and so on. They are grouped in this category because the nature of their careers is not as complex as that of professionals in **category A**. While errors made by the professionals in group A may not be corrected, the mistakes of professionals in group B may be easily corrected. Actually, it has been argued in the literature that the nature of mankind is complex due to the fact that his behaviour cannot be predicted but it should be noted that the complexity in handling drugs, food, and substances that mankind consumes as well as machinery may not be compared with the unpredictability of human behaviours.
- **Category C.** Professionals in this category are related to experts in category B, but ethics guiding their operations are not very strict like the former. These professionals include: psychologists, sociologists, administrators, managers, human resource managers, specialists in guidance and counseling, education and so on.
- **Category D.** Professionals in this category are slightly related to their counterparts in category C, but they are basically administrators that tackle social life issues affecting humanity. Professionals in student affairs administration could be grouped into this category while those in categories: A, B and C could develop a career in student affairs administration. Professionals in this group need sound social relationship to function than any other groups.

From the above analysis, student affairs administration falls into category D which deals with social life issues. Therefore, strict terms, which include long years of training, technical skills and machinery used to define professionalism in category A may not be

applicable to professionals in the category D. Although, every professional needs skills and knowledge to function effectively, but it should be noted that the type required in each profession depends on the nature of that career.

3. The Concept of Student Affairs Services

Dwelling on [16] student affairs is also called student support or student services. Moreover, it is considered as either a department or division of services or support for students in tertiary institutions with the aim of enhancing student growth and development in developed nations. Personnel in this career are called student affairs practitioners or student affairs professionals in these countries.

Although, the size and the organization of a student affairs unit may vary based on the size and location of institutions across the globe but the main responsibility of the unit is to cater for students' welfare.

Further to the above, the title of the head of student affairs also varies widely. In the US, it is regarded as the 'dean of students' which is quite different from the dean of academic positions in academia or the dean of individual schools within a university system.

In some institutions in contemporary times in developed nations, student affairs departments are headed by a vice president or a vice chancellor who is largely responsible to the chancellor of the institution. In other institutions, the head of student affairs may report to the academic dean or provost.

The level of development in western countries could be responsible for the growth and the advancement of a career in student services to its present state. Although, the question whether it could be regarded as a profession or not has remained a subject of litigation among scholars [17]. While some have argued that student affairs staff are professionals using the paradigms and tools of a career, others have argued that they are more or less administrators who perform executive functions in tertiary institutions. Our view in this article aligns with the latter anyway, but when the career of student affairs is compared with legal profession, it is convoluted, dissimilar and mutable Canon 1982 cited in [17].

In West African higher education systems, just a few student affairs personnel are trying to develop an interest in student affairs professionalism. Although most of them may not have acquired any degree in student affairs profession, but certainly, a few of them belong to some professional associations in student affairs [18].

In Nigerian universities, the head of student affairs is called 'the Dean of Student Affairs'. He or she is responsible to the vice chancellor who appoints him. A professor is usually appointed to serve in this office for a period of two years, except in some faith based private universities where the chancellor dictates who should be appointed. In that wise, anybody deemed fit by him is appointed to head the unit for as long as it pleases the chancellor.

The department has been in existence for a long time in Nigerian universities, but persons serving in the unit are ignorant of its usefulness as applicable in many higher educational systems in developed nations due to lack of training, motivation, exposure etc. required to serve at optimal level.

4. Attributes of Professionalism Which can be Applied to Student Affairs Administration in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

All attributes of professionalism is not applicable to student affairs administration. This is because the field is quite different from the natural sciences where many of them are strictly applied. However, certain attributes of professionalism which could be considered relevant to student affairs administration in Nigeria are briefly discussed below:

Standards and ethics. *These* simply mean canons, principles, authorization or endorsement that guides the operations of many professionals in their day-to-day activities. Although, it has been argued that the renowned professionals in the west have not been able to reach unanimity on its accreditation [17] in the past, but with the recent development in NASPA, the situation may likely change soonest.

In higher education systems in contemporary Nigeria, both public and private alike, student affairs administration has not been recognized as a profession. Hence, the question of standards, ethics, certification and accreditation does not exist and it is gradually becoming an issue of concern to the selected few who are trying to develop an interest in the profession.

If a standard could be set up for personnel in student affairs, certainly, it could prompt many people to develop an interest in the profession. These standards should include obtaining specific qualifications in student affairs administration, setting commensurable remunerations and conditions of service, robust welfare package and fringe benefits, motivation, constant training at national, continental and international levels. These could enhance the performance of student affairs personnel effectively.

Several articles have explored the importance of competency in all fields of study [19-20]. Competency goes with perquisite requirements which must be met before anybody can function as a professional. Most of these requirements hinge on specific skills and knowledge which must be acquired in tertiary institutions.

In respect of student affairs services, related programmes are evident in the literature emanating from developed countries, from undergraduate to doctoral level [21-23]. This goes to corroborate Keeling (2004), Nuss (2003) and Schuh (2003) cited by [24] who argued that "Student affairs practitioners in the USA today are professionals, typically with masters and doctoral level qualifications in educational leadership, and part of an education faculty of a university" (p. 13).

Apart from the above features, expertise building is another crucial attribute of professionalism and it connotes capacity building. Every professional is known for capacity building. It makes him or her relevant in his or her career. Capacity can be built through trainings organized by organisations and personal efforts on a regular interval. Universities could be regarded as some of the notable institutions for capacity building for professionals. It is on this note that [25] argued "Universities in recent times have been challenged to make themselves relevant to the rapidly changing nature of a globalizing knowledge economy and its associated workplaces" (p. 2). If this view is to be realized in Nigeria, every student affairs personnel should engage in capacity building on a regular basis by attending international conferences, seminal and symposium with their counterparts in developed nations.

Another important attribute of professionalism which could be applied to student affairs administration in Nigeria is honesty and integrity. This means sincerity. It singles out professionals in their careers. Probably, that is why [26] argues that integrity means adhering strictly to moral convictions and doing the right things always. This author argues further that professionals are expected to talk with uprightness; ruminate with sincerity and behave with integrity. Although the question of honesty and integrity in contemporary Nigeria is not limited to one professionals, many professionals such as academics, medical doctors etc. have been indicted [27-31]. But if education is to remain a strong weapon of skill acquisition for the nation's development, honesty and integrity in academia must be strongly drive which is in agreement with [32], who argues that integrity is a vital feature that is essential for members of staff in tertiary institutions. It "is the combination of attributes and actions that make people and organizations coherent, consistent, and potentially ethical" (p.1 of 32) and it can be applied to student affairs personnel.

Another yet feature of professionalism closely related to the above characteristics is accountability. It means to be held accountable for everything in one's custody. In a profession like nursing, accountability is regarded as an essential component of practice [33]. It is also an essential component of patient safety [33]. In accounting, accountability is a strong feature [34]. Thus, all accountants are accountable to the funds in their possession. Accountability with respect to student affairs administration means ability to account for students on campus per time. Through the students affairs personnel affairs parents should be able to know the state of their wards always.

Apart from the above features, another crucial attribute of professionalism which could be applied to student affairs profession is comportment. The concept of comportment is defined as a dignified manner or behaviour [35]. It also means the ability to control one's temper during provocation and embarrassment. Professionals such as medical doctors, pharmacists etc. are very good in accommodation insults from patients because it is an aspect of their professions. Dwelling further on [35], a concept analysis of professional comportment clarifies the power of words and actions required to achieve effective communication and civility. Ethical comportment according to [36] assists professionals to justify what is and what is not correct. These authors also believe that it helps professionals in appropriating their conducts. This attribute could also be of help to student affairs practitioners who deal with all manner of students on campus

Lastly, appearance or image of professionals in every profession speaks for them. An engineer, medical doctor, nurse, lawyer, etc. is identified by his or her dressing. Thus, most professionals have a way of dressing in a unique manner. However, it is evident in the literature that there is a paucity of research examining the impact of standardized uniform style and colour for some professionals [37], student affairs professionals inclusive. This paper therefore regards this gap in knowledge as a food for thought for student affairs professionals across the globe.

5. Some Well-Known Professional Bodies in Student Affairs Administration in Developed Countries Tertiary Institutions

Just like disciplines in other fields of human endeavours, student affairs administration has been fully developed to warrant the establishment of professional bodies to ensure quality service for students in developed nations higher education institutions. Activities of some of these professional bodies are discussed below: It is our belief that this conversation could propel the establishment and growth of the profession in Nigerian higher education systems

The Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) [38]. This is a vibrant association in student services established in 1971 as a professional bilingual organization. It was created basically to serve the interest of student affairs personnel in Canadian higher institutions. Its existence since the inception added value to the student affair services as it enhances the performance of these personnel in their day-to-day activities [38].

The idea of CACUSS in championing the interests of professionals in student affairs administration is highly commendable, but such interests are limited to the Canadian tertiary institutions. Since, our focus in this section is on developed nations, it becomes imperative to consider other professional bodies with global coverage or outlook, hence NASPA which is also known as Student Affairs Managers in tertiary institutions.

The idea that birthed the organization was conceived towards the end of 1918 by Robert Rienow of the University of Wisconsin, USA. Its inaugural meeting was organized in 1919 by Thomas Arkle Clark with six persons- three deans of men and three professors, in attendance, [39]. It is regarded as the oldest professional body in student affairs administration. Initially, it was called National Deans of Men. But its name was later changed to National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) in 1951. Due to the rapid changing nature of higher education and the activities of student affairs personnel which directly impact students' academic life and success, NASPA focuses on the following vital areas:

- a. Mental health of students,
- b. Legal matters concerning students, and
- c. Students' wellness [40].

In respect of health, it is evident in literature that cases of students with mental health problems are on the increase in higher education systems in North America [41]. NASPA has considered it essential to assist such students by given them useful information on campus. NASPA, has also assisted in improving "student learning and create a future with highly educated, engaged citizens" [p. 1 of 40]. NASPA also assists students in legal issues. The aim of the above is to ensure the general wellness of students on campus.

Further to the above, NASPA is committed to student affairs career in granting quality education to students. In ensuring this, it has been playing tremendous roles in integrating student life with academic activities on campus and also ensures that college students embrace the core values of diversity, learning, integrity, collaboration, access, service, fellowship, and the spirit of inquiry.

In order to support student learning and success, NASPA publishes books on a regular basis. The recent textbook on student affairs titled: *Beginning Your Journey: A Guide for New Professionals in Student Affairs* [40] attests to this. The book tackles issues of concern confronting new persons seeking recognition in student affairs profession. Additionally, NASPA engages in periodicals, and other media to adequately sensitize student affairs professionals and to help them in their day to day activities in assisting student learning and success. Some of the NASPA publications carry articles of eminent writers and professionals in tertiary institutions and the directorate of student affairs [40]. These publications are related to current research on vital issues in student affairs administration.

NASPA also encourages, student affairs professionals to develop themselves via events, networking chances, and publications.

In comparing this association with others existing professional bodies in student affairs administration, NASPA is extremely different because it is not limited to only one institution and one state, but one thousand four hundred higher institutions and fifty states in the US as well as twenty-five countries worldwide. Nevertheless, it could be observed that NASPA ignores issues bothering on students residential matters on campus.

Hall of residence is very vital in the ensuring students' academic success. As the saying goes in Yoruba land, Western Nigeria, if the house is in order, mankind will be at ease. Upon the arrival of students on campus, student affairs is the first port of contact for accommodation. Through social relationship within the hall of residence, students can build a lasting relationship with persons from diverse ethnic and religion backgrounds. It could be on this note that this organization places much emphasis on students' effective accommodation system in higher education system. It therefore becomes essential to make provision for this gap in knowledge through The Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) [7]

ACUHO-I is a professional body that is mainly interested in ensuring excellent accommodation system for students of tertiary institutions in the US. It comprises of over one thousand members in different institutions. It makes available sound impactful programmes, research articles, books etc. for their development [42].

Through this organization, it becomes easy for members to contact one another via the use of effective internet. The organization also helps it members (individual and institutions) to make their halls of residence lively for students. Apart from that, it has a journal publishing organization where issues affecting students accommodations are being published at a regular interval [42].

The importance of ACUHO-I also hinges on the issue of social justice as related to race, sex and immigration in America. Since high level of discrimination exists between the black and white, male and female etc., in America, it becomes expedient to have such an organization where the need of every race and sex of people can be properly attended to in the higher education system.

Based on the above discuss, however, it should be noted that activities of ACUHO-I is limited to higher education systems in the US and ignores other tertiary institutions across the globe. Due to this flaw in knowledge, we consider another association which is rooted in ensuring excellent accommodation for students in different institutions of learning. The National Association of College and University Residence Halls (NACURH)[42]is one of such professional associations in higher education systems worldwide.

It was established four years after the creation of ACUHO-I with its headquarters located in the New York City. NACURTH is extended to nine regions of the world-USA, Canada, a section of Australia, Mexico, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates [42]. It provides an opportunity for students who reside in the halls of residence in higher institutions in the above named countries to converge together in order to share ideas, materials and best practices so as to improve their residential communities.

In spite of the positive impacts of ACUHO-I and NACURH on student development, however, the two bodies have hitherto failed to make any significant impact in ensuring job opportunities for students, mostly indigent ones in the course of their studentship. It is on this note that this paper considers the next association- The National Student Employment Association (NSEA) [44] very crucial.

NSEA is a professional body in student affairs created to assist indigent students to get jobs for the purpose of finishing their studies. Such students usually engage in work-study programme while in school. Since education is being perceived as the responsibility of the state in many developed nations, education is properly funded to accommodate access of indigent students to higher education which has greatly increased assess of indigent subtends to higher education [44].

The NSEA comprises of many experts with several initiatives specially packaged to help students who engage in work related activities during their studentship. It has five distinct types of membership (Individual-students and staff, institutional-tertiary institutions, corporate-organisations and retired) [43]. NSEA encourages everybody who has passion in assisting students in areas of employment while is school to enlist as members. Such students are assisted in areas of "research, publications, professional development opportunities, and the open exchange of information" [p.1 of 44]).

NSEA activities are not restricted to only one campus, state and country; it covers the following three regions in Europe [45]:

- a. The Western Association of Student Employment Administrators (WASEA).
- b. Midwest Association of Student Employment Administrators (MASEA).
- c. The Southern Association of Student Employment Administrators (SASEA)

It is highly commendable that NSEA gives adequate support to student employment scheme on campus and also encourages its promotion to the highest level "through research, professional development and the exchange of ideas" [p. 1 of 45]. Nevertheless, activities of NSEA are restricted to students employment on campus. Although, student employment while in school could assist many of them to secure work related experience which could be an advantage to securing jobs after school, but NSEA fails to inculcate other activities which could make the graduates of tertiary institutions secure employment after their studentship. This notable gap in

knowledge, which is equally vital to student development immediately after studentship and their translation to experts in their various disciplines, is addressed by the European University College Association (EuCA), [46]

The EuCA was created nine years ago in order to diversify opportunities for learning in European countries. It sees to the employment need of graduates of tertiary institutions. It equally grants various means that stimulate innovation for the betterment of fifty-three thousand students in five nations-Belgium, Italy, Poland, Spain and Britain [46].

Apart from the above vital contributions to students' life, EuCA shares the same idea with ACUHO-I in term of ensuring a decent accommodation for students in higher institutions of learning in Europe. It also creates a platform where students of different background are opportune to exchange ideas.

However, it should be noted that EuCA and other professionals earlier discussed above focus mainly on students related matters and place a little emphasis on members of staff in the directorate of student affairs. Although, such a focus is highly commendable, but it should be noted that members of staff in student affairs administration are also important. Since they attend to students' needs, their situation should equally be given an adequate priority. Therefore, the organization focuses student affairs administration, policies and practices on staff related matters which The International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS), [47] is considered.

IASAS is another strong and old professional body in student affairs administration. It comprises of personnel working in student affairs globally. Activities of IASAS cover many higher education systems in developed countries and some tertiary institutions in underdeveloped societies. In Africa, such can only be found in Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa (IASAS), [48]

In respect to membership, it has one hundred and twenty individuals from seventy-five nations across five continents. Unlike other professional bodies that have five or six types of membership, IASAS has three types of members-individual, institutional, and organizational, but it should be noted that individual membership registration is free of charge [49]

It was established to ensure the consolidation of the knowledge and professionalism of personnel in the directorate of student affairs. These include persons working in the halls of residence, sport center, welfare units, security section, counseling, and so on, so as to make campus life lively for students in order to fully develop their potentials.

Through the assistance of IASAS, members have the opportunity to share their ideas, information, and other activities among themselves through groups discussion, messages on the internet, and conferences such as NASPA, ACPA, CAUCUSS, and ANZSSA [50].

In respect of group discussion, IASAS provides ample opportunity for members to contact one another in order to find out how they are faring. There are such eleven groups but they are majorly based in developed nations [48].

In respect to publications, this organization has assisted members to produce journal articles and books which could help members, both students and staff, to develop in student affairs career [51].

With regard to professional development in student affairs, IASAS is very useful in helping members to share ideas in order to develop excellent work practice via internet and face to face discussion at seminars, workshops, and conferences. Additionally, it keeps members abreast of available job opportunities and links to important information and materials [49].

Given the above review, professional bodies in student affairs administration are prominent in many higher institutions in developed nations, but most of them were created in the US and later spread to other western nations. This is an indication that the US is the strong base of student affairs professionals in the world. This is not surprising anyway, it only shows that the country is actually leading other countries worldwide, not only in education as evident in Times Higher Education, [52] ranking of universities, but also in other spheres of life.

6. Student Affairs Professional Bodies: The African Experience

Actually, professional bodies in student affairs administration were established in developed nations prior to colonialism that brought education to African countries. Hence, these associations are alien to Africans and that could explain why the continent is seriously lacking professionals in student affairs services till date. Perhaps, this vital area of higher education system was erroneously omitted when education was introduced to Africans at the commencement of Colonialism. And quite unfortunate, African elites who studied in developed nations failed to realize the importance of these associations by finding it difficult to introduce the same to the higher educational institutions in their countries.

Moreover, the management of tertiary institutions in Africa, except South Africa, for a long time has found it difficult to collaborate with their counterparts in developed nations for the purpose of introducing the same in Africa. Consequently, advantages inherent in belonging to such bodies have eluded students and staff of higher institutions in the continent for many years. However, its emergence in Africa in recent times is traceable to the collaboration of some of the universities in South Africa with their counterparts in developed societies. This development and the support of the International Community in 1998 was responsible for the commencement of professional bodies in student affairs administration in the continent [53] and it has greatly led to its development in South Africa to warrant the following functional professional bodies in student affairs.

7. The Southern African Association for Counselling and Development in Higher Education (SAACHDHE)

Like many professional bodies in developed nations, SAACHDHE is a non-profit organization established in 1978 in South Africa to advance the course of higher education. Dwelling on its constitution, the body is defined as a professional society with the aim of meeting yearly via a conference to present academic papers [54]

The membership of SAACHDHE is available for all counselors in higher education systems. Also, various tertiary institutions are allowed to be parts of this professional association. Members are seeing as one family with a strong heart of care and support for one another [55]

Through this association, a number of relevant documents which include Quality Assurance for Student Counseling and Development Centres (QASDC) at tertiary institutions have been developed to ensure quality counseling and development centres in Southern Africa [54].

Certainly, the existence of SAACHDHE is a welcome development in Africa, however, its activities is restricted to counseling and academic presentation in the South African higher institutions alone and ignores the growth of student affairs administration into a special career. Hence, our focus on The South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Professionals (SAASSAP) [56]

The SAASSAP was established at “a Dean’s Forum workshop, held under the auspices of CHET in Port Elizabeth in August 2000” [P. 1 of 56] in South Africa. This association was designed to symbolize “senior student affairs professionals representing all universities and technicians in South Africa” (p. 1 of 56). Since its creation in 2001, SAASSAP has grown and established itself as an important voice and stakeholder within the Higher Education sector to become one of the prominent associations in student affairs administration [56] in South Africa. According to its Constitution, 2010 edition, it intends to ensure adequate provision of strategic leadership and capacity building amongst the experts in student affairs administration, globally. Moreover, the body is concerned with sharing information beneficial to students according to national and global importance [56].

Apart from its interest in promoting research and publication, SAASSAP considers it a priority to encourage the development of student affairs career into a special profession. Further to the above, SAASSAP was created to ensure strict adherence to the traits of professionalism in student affairs profession. Although, these traits are yet to be properly defined in African context but SAASSAP has associated them with the following terms:

- Norms
- Standard values
- Ethics and code of practice, and
- Sustainability [56]

SAASSAP has seven higher institutional members. They are located in the following regions in South Africa:

- a. Free State,
- b. Northern Guatela
- c. Central region
- d. Western Cape
- e. Eastern Cape and
- f. Kwa Zulu Natal [56]

In spite of the above comprehensive ideas, SAASSAP fails to consider health challenges of students in higher educational systems as a priority. The importance of health in the life of students cannot be easily ignored. It is on this ground we consider The South African Association of Campus Health Services (SAACHS) [57] vital to this study.

SAACHS is another professional body in student affairs in South Africa which focuses on health services in order to support academic activities [57]. In an attempt to achieve its focus, SAACHS tries to introduce, advance and enforce a strong relationship among its members with the aim of achieving a virile campus health care for students [57]. Also, it tries to ensure academic contribution via individual and collective research endeavours.

Similar to the above association is the National Association of Student Development Practitioners (NASDEV) [58], which is an association of personnel saddled with the responsibility of attending to students needs in higher education. It is an organized body of student development practitioners in tertiary institutions with the aim of noting and working with the best practice that will promote student affairs profession [58].

NASDEV tries to encourage and facilitate chances for networking not only among its members but also among non-members in tertiary institutions. This idea intends to provide an avenue for members’ to enjoy regular exchange of opinions and methods in their activities [59]. It always examines and acts on issues that are very important to the operations of its members but the body fails to place emphasis on the tertiary institutions hall of residence personnel. Given this, The South African Chapter of the International Association of College and University Housing Officials (ACUHO-I SAC) [60] becomes another focus of this paper.

Like its counterpart in developed nations, ACUHO-I SAC was established to make adequate provision for improving, coordinating and developing different areas of students’ accommodation in higher education. It also focuses on issues relating to food, administrative system, programmes aiming at development and conferences in tertiary institutions locally and internationally [60].

By and large, it is obvious that the existence of the above professional bodies has been of immense benefit to higher institutions, staff and students in South Africa alone. Such professionals are lacking in West African institutions, most especially Nigeria, that has the largest population and the largest number of tertiary institutions in the continent of Africa. It therefore becomes essential for professionals in student affairs administration in South Africa to intensify efforts in championing the establishment of these professional associations in other tertiary institutions in African countries, where their services are very germane.

8. Comparative Analysis of Professional Bodies in Student Affairs between Developed Nations and South African Higher Educational Systems

The popular proverb in Southwest Nigeria says, 'we don't compare death with disease'. In the same manner, the gap between professional bodies in student affairs administration in developed nations and their counterparts in Africa is too wide and difficult to quantify. In the first instance, previous studies in student affairs administration have established that advanced countries are the domain of experts in student affairs career while African countries have maintained a 'non-professional' position within the Third World countries [24] since the inception of higher education. In other words, the history of student affairs evolved mainly from universities in the UK and America [24] and later spread to other continents such as Australia, Europe, Brazil, India, China and Africa [24].

In the light of the above, therefore, it is not surprising to observe that the first and the oldest professional body in student affairs administration in the world was established in the University of Wisconsin, USA, in 1919, when education was at the elementary stage in many African countries while the prominent professional bodies in student affairs in Africa-SAACHDHE and SAASSAP were established in 1978 and 2001 respectively [54]

Moreover, since its creation in 1919, America has been arranging the standard for student affairs globally. Moreover, the country has developed an articulate epistemological community. Also, based on arduous research, America has intellectualized student affairs "as working effectively with faculty in creating a coherent curriculum in which specified learning outcomes are achieved through collaboration" (Schuh 2003: 73 cited in [24] while the managements of higher institutions in many parts of Africa are yet to discover the usefulness of student affairs administration in ensuring student development. That is why professionals in student affairs career are scarce in the continent.

However, the emergence of the few ones in South African higher educational systems is traceable to the efforts made by the student affairs professionals in developed nations. They have contributed immensely to the establishment of professional bodies in student affairs in Africa. For instance, the influence of professional associations such as NASPA & IASAS, has greatly contributed to the establishment and development of professional bodies such as the South African Chapter of the International Association of College and University Housing Officials (ACUHO-I SAC) [59], in the continent.

Moreover, professionals in student affairs career in developed nations have successfully assisted an African University to establish a curriculum in student affairs administration. While this curriculum is still very strange in sub-Saharan African tertiary institutions it has gained prominence in many developed nations higher educational systems. Its emergence in an African university is also traceable to the efforts of student affairs professionals in developed nations. The collaboration between the Management of the University of Western Cape with their counterparts in Fullerton University, USA, resulted in the great feat mentioned above in Africa.

Further to the above, while many professional bodies are in existence in developed nations tertiary institutions making waves in contributing significantly to students development in all ramifications, prominent professional bodies, such as NSEA and EuCA that are needed to address crucial needs of African students are yet to be established in any African institutions of learning, including South Africa.

For the sake of emphasis, NSEA is responsible for the undergraduate employment of students during their studentship in developed nations tertiary institutions while EuCA is another professional body which has greatly contributed to graduate development in the west.

9. Professional Bodies in Student Affairs Administration: It's Importance in Nigerian Higher Education Systems

In Nigeria, students affair or student support is treated with the utmost neglect and unprofessionalism. Its existence in some Nigerian tertiary institutions is just ceremonial. Therefore, members of staff in the unit do not actually engage in the core practices of student affairs administration as it's done in developed countries. This is because priorities have been misplaced and it is seen as a post and not a career, hence, the individuals involved are not trained for it.

Therefore, the need for professionalism in students' affair departments in Nigeria tertiary institutions can never be overemphasized. There are vital areas in the lives of Nigerian students that would be enhanced if the management of the Nigerian higher educational systems could borrow a leaf from their South African counterparts and the rest of the advanced world. This paper anchors its points on two vital areas why Nigeria tertiary institutions need professional students' affair departments.

Firstly, creation of balanced curriculum: In collaboration with the academic departments, the student affairs department would help enrich and enhance the curriculum so as to create a win-win situation for every student. This can only be done by professionals who know the know-how of individual differences in the field of learning, thereby accommodating and carrying every student along. The following findings from the college impact research are unequivocal [60]

- a. The impact of college on desired outcomes is cumulative, the result of many experiences inside and outside of class over a substantial period of time.
- b. Cognitive and affective developments are inextricably intertwined, influencing one another in ways that are not immediately obvious or knowable.
- c. Certain out-of-class activities have the potential to enrich student learning, especially with regard to practical competence. For example, managing the student government budget, writing for the campus newspaper, playing in the concert band or on an intercollegiate athletics team, and working on or off campus provide opportunities for students to practice skills and hone dispositions that employers value, such as teamwork, decision making, and time management. Thus, it follows that documenting what happens to students during college is a complex, multi-faceted process requiring multiple measures and

cooperation by the two groups on campus that spend the most time with students - faculty members and student affairs professionals.

Whatever the mission or emphasis of the institution, its student affairs programme needs to be developed to support and complement it [61].

Secondly, the Association of college and University housing officers-International (ACUHO-I) and National Association of college and university Residence hall (NACURH) in the United States should be extended here in Nigeria. This particular area is highly recommended due to the ills associated with housing and accommodation for Nigerian students.

The issue of living outside the campus has caused many Nigerian students to lose focus and misplace priorities. Also, the dangers associated with living recklessly outside the confines and scrutiny of the authorities is nothing to write home about. It is the job of a professional to handle housing issues as practiced by our foreign counterparts. A case study to this is Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka where 99% of the students' lives off campus and pay heavily even with less security and protection. It is the job of professionals in the field of students' affairs to create enabling ground and soft landing for parents and their wards by ensuring that the right authorities are met enhance accommodation inside the campuses.

Effective campus-wide student learning assessment activities require collaboration among various campus units, but given differences in the values, reward structures, and socialization patterns between academic and student affairs units, collaborative partnerships can be difficult to create and sustain [62-63]. Even more difficult or even impossible when there is no enabling ground for this collaboration- which is living sparsely and haphazardly.

Moreover, the presence of professional bodies in student affairs profession in higher education systems in Nigeria could lead to the establishment of programmes of study on student affairs administration as obtainable in developed nations. These programmes of study are elucidated in [21 & 23]. They are keys to skill and knowledge acquisition in student affairs administration. Members of staff and students could benefit immensely from such programmes. Over the years, no students of student affairs staff have ever obtained any degree in student affairs administration in Nigerian higher education systems. This gap in literature call for scholarly attention in the 21st century

The presence of student affairs professional bodies in Nigeria could facilitate research on student affairs matters, which is currently scanty. Consequently, many social life issues that would have been fully discussed in the literature have been hitherto neglected. Hence, establishing professional bodies in student affairs in Africa could probably lead to an improvement in scholarly works on student related matters in Nigeria. Also, it could lead to the establishment of journals on student affairs administration in the country. If Nigeria is indeed the giant of Africa, South African higher institutions would not have taken the lead in this area.

Considering the level of poverty in Nigeria and its effect on the access of youths to higher education [64-65] the presence of NSEA could go a long way in supporting the emergent work study programme for their benefit. Currently, the programme is in existence in a few private and public universities in Nigeria and it has not been properly developed for the betterment of indigent students. A chapter of NSEA in the nation's tertiary institutions could expand its scope, operations and also extend it to other tertiary institutions in West Africa sub region. This could probably enable the scheme to be fully developed like higher education systems in developed nations.

Lastly, the existence of professional bodies in student affairs administration in higher education systems in Nigeria could go a long way in addressing the endemic level of unemployment among youths [66-68]. A chapter of EuCA which is saddled with assisting graduates to secure employment opportunities in Europe could be of immense benefits to many jobless Nigerian graduates. Probably, that would have reduced several criminal cases associated with unemployment in the country.

10. Concluding Remarks

This study was conducted to examine the professional bodies in student affairs administration, which has been hitherto neglected in academic literature in Nigeria. It reviewed literature on professional bodies in developed nations higher educational systems and South African tertiary institutions and the contributions of these associations to students' development and members of staff welfare. The study suggests to the management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria to consider establishing these associations in their domain as a priority in order to advance student affairs profession in Nigeria. Such efforts could be of immense benefits to students, staff and institutions of higher education in the country.

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