

# Fostering Cordial Working Relationship between Governing Council and Management for Efficient Administration of a Federal Polytechnic

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## Summary

The paper decried the current general scenario in most Federal Polytechnics that depicts a preponderance of negative tendencies. The precarious state of the polytechnics, in some instances, had degenerated into crisis and tension leading to the suspension of Principal Officers and/or dissolution of Governing Councils. Besides, the situation is inimical to the delivery of the institution's core mandates of teaching, research, knowledge creation, and community service. Indeed, the polytechnics could not achieve academic excellence and could not compete for top position in Ranking Table of World Higher Education institutions. The paper posited that good leadership capable of providing the right direction, and spearheaded by the Governing Council will remedy the maladministration of the Polytechnic. However, the Governing Council must work harmoniously with the Management to make possible the transformation. Also, a key to cordial Council-Management working relationship is the stakeholders' understanding of the: extant laws and regulations; the Polytechnic's administrative structure, problems, and challenges; and the character of the host community.

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**Key words:** Polytechnic, Governing Council, Polytechnic Management, Working relationship.

## 1. Introduction

I am highly delighted to be in your midst to share my experience with you on this important issue of fostering healthy working relationship among members of the top Management of the Polytechnic. This is coming at a time when the Polytechnic really needed good leadership to be able to deliver on its core mandates of teaching, research and community service. Also, it is trendy and fashionable nowadays to provide leadership that ensures the Polytechnic achieves academic excellence. Then, the Polytechnic can compete for top position in the Ranking Table of World Higher Education institutions. Undoubtedly, a key to achieving academic excellence is correct leadership direction and a cordial working relationship between Governing Council and Management. Therefore, the idea of having a retreat of this nature to discuss the issue of working relationship between the Council and the Management is apt and commendable. Therefore, I congratulate the Council for this laudable initiative.

I worked with three different Councils when I was the Rector of Federal Polytechnic Ilaro between 2006 and 2014. It was my habit to call on the Council, usually at its inaugural meeting, to get familiarized with the Federal Polytechnics Principal Decree and its Amendments, the Polytechnic (i.e. its administrative structures, current state of affairs, and in particular the problems and challenges), and its host Community before setting agenda for itself. That had caused all the successive Councils of the Polytechnic to make a significant contribution to the progress and general wellbeing of the institution. Today, the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro is a reference point for all other polytechnics in the country. The school is peaceful, beautiful, and its academic calendar has been running smoothly without any interruption of any kind in the last 13 sessions. The school is in the fifth week of the second semester of 2017/2018 academic session.

This paper highlights:

- a. The picture of current general scenario in most Federal Polytechnics, which is of a preponderance of negative campus tendencies, and the need for a concerted effort by the Council with the Management to remedy the precarious situation;
- b. The management strata in the administrative structure of the Federal Polytechnic, roles, and their interrelationship in the management of the affairs of the Polytechnic;
- c. Key academic and administrative activities managed in the Polytechnic; and then
- d. Highlights, with practical illustrations, some critical areas of interaction between Council and Management in the general administration of the Polytechnic.

Finally, the paper provides hints on the objectives and the essence of visitation of the Polytechnic by the Minister of Education to serve as a reminder that the Governing Council's tenure will be appraised at a point in time. Therefore, the latter will account for its stewardship.

## **2. The picture of the current general scenario in most Federal Polytechnics**

The picture of the general scenario in most of the Polytechnics nowadays depicts the following common features:

- a. Irregular academic calendar;
- b. Frequent industrial strike actions embarked upon by the staff unions due to non-payment of earned allowances and/or poor welfare schemes for staff and students;
- c. Poor leadership of the Polytechnic and degenerated Governing Council-Management relationship;
- d. Cultism, campus violence, and student unrest;
- e. Corruption and academic fraud;
- f. Improper management of examinations and related matters including students' records;
- g. Poor or lack of infrastructure maintenance culture;
- h. Overpopulation of students due to non-observance of the NBTE's regulations on carrying capacity and running of unaccredited academic programmes;
- i. An unplanned campus where physical structures are not well laid out with the functional internal road network, walkways, and beautifully landscaped lawns;
- j. Bushy and dirty Polytechnic surroundings adorned with dilapidated buildings;
- k. Poor funding cum improper application of subventions and low internally generated revenue drive;
- l. Inadequate infrastructural facilities for teaching and research;
- m. Nonexistence of academic culture; and
- n. Discriminatory campus climate or environment

In some instances, some of those negative tendencies highlighted had degenerated into crisis and tension leading to the suspension of Principal Officers and/or dissolution of Governing Councils in the affected polytechnics.

In my opinion, the good leadership provided by the Governing Councils of the respective polytechnics would remedy all of the aforementioned negative tendencies. Also, a pleasant working relationship between the Governing Councils and the Management of the polytechnics is a key to success in this situation.

Other Benefits of a cordial Governing Council-Management working relationship in the overall management of the Polytechnic include:

- a. It promotes peace and tranquility in the academic community.

- b. Peace, in itself, is a necessity for making the community conducive to academic activities i.e. teaching, learning, research, and knowledge creation.
- c. It minimizes or removes completely crisis and tension in the polytechnic. This, in turn, is necessary for smooth running of the academic calendar.
- d. It enables proper planning, and appropriate and efficient deployment of Polytechnic resources for the delivery of its core mandate of teaching, research, and community service.

Therefore, all stakeholders in this advocated relationship must be committed to having a cordial one so that collectively they can work towards the achievement of the Polytechnic's core mandate in a peaceful atmosphere. However, all stakeholders must understand and appreciate:

- a. The administrative and management structure of the Federal Polytechnic as established by the instruments of the establishment;
- b. Key administrative and academic activities taking place in the Polytechnic for which the Governing Council and Management have responsibility;
- c. That the Federal Polytechnic is managed by committee system; and
- d. Duties and limits of management components within the Polytechnic's administrative structure and their interactions.

Therefore, this paper expatiates on all of the aforementioned.

### **3. The administrative and management structure of the Federal Polytechnic**

- a. On the management and administrative structure of the Polytechnic, Section 6 of the Decree No. 33 of 1979 provides that:

"The Minister may give to the Council directions of a general character or relating generally to particular matters (but not to any individual person or case) with regard to the exercise by the Council of its functions and it shall be the duty of the Council to comply with the directions."

The Minister has the authority to give direction to each of the Council by the above provision.

The amendment to the Principal Decree or Act (No. 5 1993) in Section 2 provides that:

"The Minister of Education shall be the Visitor of each Polytechnic; and that the Visitor shall, not less than once in every five years, conduct a visitation of the college or appoint a visitation panel, consisting of not less than five experts, to conduct the visitation:

- i. for the purpose of evaluating the academic and administrative performance of the Polytechnic;
- ii. for such other purpose or in respect of any other affairs of the Polytechnic as the Visitor may deem fit"

**b.** Section 5(1) of the Principal Decree states as follows:

“Subject to the provisions of this Decree, each Council shall be the governing body of the Polytechnic concerned and shall have the general management of the affairs of the Polytechnic, and in particular, the control of the property and finances of the Polytechnic; and shall also have power to do anything which in its opinion is calculated to facilitate the carrying out of the activities of the Polytechnic and promote its best interests.”

**c.** Sections 10(2a-c) of the Principal Decree provide that:

“The Academic Board shall be responsible for –

- i. the direction and management of academic matters of the polytechnic including regulation of admission of students, the award of certificates and diplomas, scholarships, prizes and other academic distinctions;
- ii. the making to the Council of such periodic reports on such academic matter as the Academic Board may think fit or as the Council may from time to time direct; and
- iii. the discharge of any other functions, which the Council may delegate to it.

**d.** On the appointment of Rector, Sections 7(1) and 7(2) of the Principal Decree and Section 7(1) of the Amendment Decree 5 (1993) state as follows:

“there shall be as the chief academic and administrative officer of each polytechnic, a Rector who shall be appointed by the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces ...”

“The Rector shall have power to exercise general authority over the staff and shall be responsible for the discipline in the polytechnic.”

Furthermore, Section 4(5) of the Amendment Decree 5 (1993) states as follows:

“Subject to this Decree and the general control of the Council, the Rector shall be the Chief Executive of the Polytechnic and shall be charged with general responsibility for matters relating to the day-to-day management operations of the polytechnic.”

**e.** The committee of the Principal Officers headed by the Rector, as Chairman constitutes the Polytechnic Management. Sections 7B (2) and 7C of the Amendment Decree 5 (1993) define the Rector, the Deputy Rector, the Registrar, the Bursar, and the Polytechnic Librarian as principal officers of the Polytechnic.

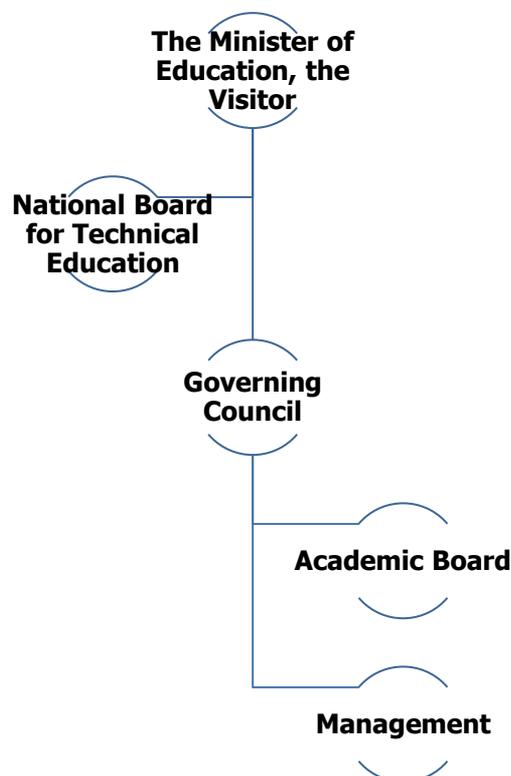
**f.** Connected with the administration and management of the Federal Polytechnic is the National Board for Technical Education as provided in the National Board for Technical Education Decree No. 9 of 1977.

Section 5 defines the functions of the Board. They include among others the following:

To determine, after consultation with the National Manpower Board, the Industrial Training Fund and such other bodies as it considers appropriate, the skilled and middle-level manpower needs of the Country in the industrial, commercial and other relevant fields for the purpose of planning training facilities and in particular to prepare periodic master plans for the balanced

and coordinated development of polytechnics and colleges of technology and such plans shall include:

- i. The general programmes to be pursued by polytechnics and colleges of technology in order to maximize the use of available facilities and avoid unnecessary duplication while ensuring that they are adequate to the manpower needs of the country; and
- ii. Recommendations for the establishment and location of new polytechnics and colleges of technology as and when considered necessary.
- iii. To inquire into and advise the Federal Government on the financial needs, both recurrent and capital, of polytechnics and colleges of technology and other technical institutions to enable them meet the objective of producing the trained manpower needs of the country.
- iv. To receive block grants from the Federal Government and allocate them to polytechnics and colleges of technology in accordance with such formula as may be laid down by the Federal Executive Council.
- v. To act as the agency for channeling all external aid to polytechnics and colleges of technology in Nigeria.
- vi. To advise on, and take steps to harmonize entry requirements and duration of courses at technical institutions.
- vii. To lay down standards of skill to be attained and to continually review such standards as necessitated by technological and national needs.
- viii. To undertake periodic reviews of the terms and conditions of service of personnel in polytechnics and colleges of technology and to make recommendations thereon to the Federal Government.



**Figure 1 Administrative & Management Structure of the Federal Polytechnic**

**g. The Federal Polytechnic is managed by committee system**

- i. The Principal Decree provides that the Polytechnic is managed by committee system. This is supported by the fact that all the key elements/strata in the administrative structure (i.e. Governing Council, Academic Board, and Polytechnic Management) have the characteristic features of a committee.
- ii. The idea is here, is to involve as many people (stakeholders) as possible in the administration and management of the Polytechnic. Indeed, the Council, the Academic Board, and the Polytechnic Management operate through committees.
- iii. Consequently, the Principal Decree and its Amendments specify certain statutory standing committees for the smooth functioning of the Council. In addition, the composition and functions of the committees are specified.

The under-listed committees are of the Council:

- Senior Staff Appointments and Promotion Committee
- Junior Staff Appointments and Promotion Committee
- Committee on Students' Affairs
- Finance and General Purpose Committee
- Staff Disciplinary Committee
- Planning and Development Committee

Furthermore, the Decree permits the Council to use ad-hoc committees were necessary for the discharge of its functions.

A cursory look at the composition of the statutory committees of the Council supports the working jointly with the Academic Board and the Management.

However, Supplementary Provisions relating the Councils (Schedule, Section 3(4) on Committees 3(3) cautioned that 'No decision of a committee shall have effect unless it is confirmed by the Council'

**g. Key academic and administrative activities managed in the Polytechnic**

1. Staff recruitment exercise
2. Staff development and training
3. Staff appointments and promotion exercises
4. Ethical issues/staff and disciplinary matters
5. Academic matters including admissions, registration, examinations, students record keeping and retrieval, and awards of Diplomas and Fellowships
6. Students' Affairs (i.e. welfare matters)
7. Finances and financial matters (including budgeting, academic and physical planning for the development of the Polytechnic, and financing of procurement of goods, services, and construction).

**4. Critical areas of interaction between Council and Management in the general administration of the Polytechnic**

I will attempt to explain with illustration as far as possible these critical areas of interaction between the Council and the Management, which often constitute the sources of friction between two major elements of the administrative and management structure of the Polytechnic.

#### a. Staff Recruitment

Section 7(3) of the Federal Polytechnics Decree 33 conferred on the Council the authority to appoint Principal Officers (other than the Rector), academic and other senior administrative staff. However, the recommendation of the Appointments and Promotions Committee will be the basis of the Council's action.

Section 7(4) provides that the chairman of the Council shall be the chairman of the Appointments and Promotions Committee when the Committee sits for appointing the Principal Officers.

Section 7(5) vested the power to appoint all other categories of staff to hold or act in the polytechnic including power to make appointments on promotion and transfer and to confirm appointments and to dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding or acting in such offices shall be exercised by the Rector acting on the recommendation of the Junior Staff Appointments and Promotions Committee.

Without prejudice to the provisions of the Principal Decree on the authorities to appoint staff as enumerated above, the Rector must ensure compliance with due diligence as directed by the Government in the Circular Ref. No. 58775/II/T/358 of July 11, 2017, on Streamlining Procedures for Recruitment into Federal Agencies. The Circular was communicated all Rectors of Federal Polytechnics through Executive Secretary (NBTE)'s letter of October 10, 2017, with Ref. No. C/TEB.519/Vol.I/199.

The guidelines for recruitment exercise:

- i. Adherence to Manpower Budget for proposed recruitments, which must be approved by the supervising Ministry or Agency;
- ii. Obtaining waiver to recruit from the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation;
- iii. Appropriate budgetary provisions to accommodate the proposed recruitment;
- iv. Letter of Clearance from the Director-General of the Budget Office of the Federation to confirm budgetary provision for the proposed recruitment;
- v. Approval of the Federal Character Commission for the distribution of the vacancies for the proposed recruitment to ensure equitable distribution of vacancies among states;
- vi. Obtaining Certificate of Compliance from the Federal Character Commission for the recruitment;
- vii. Representations of the Federal Civil Service Commission as observers in the recruitment process in the Federal Ministry;
- viii. Representation of the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation in order to ensure compliance with extant rules and procedures for recruitment;
- ix. In the case of Agencies/Parastatals, appropriate representations of the supervising Ministries and Agencies to provide necessary guidance and give credibility to the exercise; and
- x. Approval of the Honourable Minister for the commencement of the recruitment exercise and its conclusion where there is no Governing Council/Board.

The Circular concluded with a **warning** that the Heads of Agencies would be held personally responsible for non-compliance with the Guideline.

#### b. Ethical Issues and Staff Discipline

- i. Common these days are ethical issues bothering on sexual harassment or sex-for-marks and extortion of money from students by unscrupulous lecturers on the one hand, and on the other is admission racketeering in our higher institutions.
- ii. It has become very necessary to deal with the management of such issues to completely eradicate the negative tendency so that credibility and quality of our Diploma will not be in doubt.
- iii. The Rector, the Academic Board, and the Governing Council have the responsibility of managing such issue requiring disciplinary measure in the Polytechnic. This serves a very good example for illustrating the interplay of roles among major stakeholders in the general management of the Polytechnic.
- iv. Of course, the Principal Decree establishing the Polytechnic is explicit on the management of such issues. The procedure is highlighted as follows:
  - The Rector, in the first instance, must establish a prima facie case of misdemeanor against the presumed culprit lecturer.
  - Thereafter, the Rector places the officer on suspension while he refers the case to the Governing Council for determination.
  - The Council, in turn, refers the matter to its Disciplinary Committee for investigation.
  - The Disciplinary Committee brings the allegation in writing to the notice of presumed offender for his reaction. Subsequently, the committee investigates and reports its findings and recommendations to the Council for consideration and determination of the case.
  - The Council gives its verdict as it deemed appropriate in accordance with the specifications of the Civil Service Rules and Regulations.
- v. The representation of the Academic Board on the membership of Disciplinary Committee is a demonstration of the interplay of roles mention earlier. This is applicable to the management of disciplinary matter involving senior academic staff.
- vi. In the case of administrative and technical staff, a Committee of the Council will investigate the disciplinary matter [Principal Decree Section 12 (1) (c) ii].

**c. Finances and financial matters**

The Principal Decree provides that:

- i. .... each Council shall be the governing body of the polytechnic concerned and shall have the general management of the affairs of the polytechnic, and in particular, the control of the property and finances of the polytechnic...
- ii. The funds of the Council shall include:
  - Fees charged by and payable to the Council in respect of students;
  - Any other amounts due to or recoverable by the Council;
  - Revenue from time to time accruing to the Council from the Federal Government by way of subvention, grant-in-aid, endowment or otherwise howsoever; and
  - Donations and legacies accruing to the Council from any source for the special purposes of the Council.

- iii. Council shall on or before 31<sup>st</sup> December in each year prepare and submit to the Federal Executive Council through the Minister a report of its activities during the preceding financial year and shall include in the report the audited accounts of the polytechnic in respect of that financial year and of the auditors' comments on the account.
- iv. Consequent upon the above provisions of the Decree establishing the Federal Polytechnic, the Council would be interested in the following financial matters of the Polytechnic:
  - Revenue accruing to the Polytechnic through Federal Government subvention, grants, donation, and internally generated revenue;
  - Budgeting and the Government Appropriation and their implementation;
  - Planning for academic and physical development and its implementation; and
  - Annual report of activities including audited accounts and auditors' comments.
- v. Therefore, the Council would expect from the Polytechnic Management detailed information on all of the aforementioned. Some Council members would want Council to be directly involved in the operational activities, and this is one of the causes of misunderstanding and indeed friction between the Council and the Management!
- vi. Other factors that were usually misunderstood, would aggravate friction, and could lead to cold Council-Management relationship are inherent in the implementation modalities for utilization of certain major capital grants. Examples are TETFUND intervention fund, STEP-B World Bank Project grant, etc. Also, due process for procurement of goods & services and works as specified by Procurement Act No. 14 of 2007. The Act removes the Tenders Board from the Committees of the Governing Council. It places procurement schedule in the Procurement Unit of the Polytechnic.
- vii. For guidance on the procurement matter also, is the Federal Government Financial Regulation. Regulation **2917** states as follows:

All ministries, extra-ministerial offices, and other arms of government shall ensure, in any financial year, the establishment of a Procurement Planning Committee. The composition of the committee shall be as follows:

- The Accounting Officer or his representative who shall be the chairman;
  - A representative of the Procuring Unit who shall serve as the secretary;
  - A representative of the unit director in requirement of the procurement;
  - Head/Director of the Finance and Accounts Department or his representative;
  - The Head/Director, Planning Research and Statistics or his representative;
  - A Technical Personnel of the Procuring entity with expertise in the subject matter; and
  - Head of the Legal Unit or his representative.
- viii. Regulation 2918 states as follows:

Subject to regulations, which may from time to time be prescribed by the Bureau for Public Procurement, the Procurement Planning Committee shall perform the following duties, viz:

- Preparing the needs assessment and evaluation;
- Identifying the goods, works and service required;
- Carrying out appropriate market and statistical surveys and on that basis, prepare analyses of the cost implications of procurement;
- Aggregating the requirements of its procurement entity both within and between other procurement entities to obtain economy of scale and reduced cost of procurements;
- Integrating procurement expenditure into the annual budgets of the procurement entity; and
- Prescribe methods of obtaining procurements within the provisions of the Procurement Act.

ix. In the Approved Revised Thresholds for Service-Wide Applications and Special Thresholds for Procurement in Oil Sector, the BPP specified the Composition of Tenders Boards as follows:

|                  | <b>Ministry</b>      | <b>Parastatals</b>      |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Chairman</b>  | Permanent Secretary  | Chief Executive Officer |
| <b>Members</b>   | Heads of Departments | Heads of Departments    |
| <b>Secretary</b> | Head of Procurement  | Head of Procurement     |

x. At this juncture, I need to emphasize that both the Council and the Management would have to understand the provisions of the Federal Polytechnic Decree, the Guidelines for accessing TETFUND intervention funds and project implementation, and the Public procurement Regulations for goods, services and works; and then identify what role each would play so that they would work amicably.

## **5. Visitation of the Polytechnic by the Minister of Education – What is the Visitation all about?**

The amendment to the Principal Decree or Act (No. 5 1993) in Section 2 provides that the Visitor shall, not less than once in every five years, conduct a visitation of the college or appoint a visitation panel, consisting of not less than five experts, to conduct the visitation:

- a. for the purpose of evaluating the academic and administrative performance of the Polytechnic; and
- b. for such other purpose or in respect of any other affairs of the Polytechnic as the Visitor may deem fit.

In more clear and practical terms, the Visitation Panel has the following Terms of Reference:

- a. Determine the relationship between the institution and the various statutory bodies it interacts with according to its law for purposes of supervision, planning, finance, discipline, guidance, etc. Such bodies include the Governing Council, the supervising Agency and the Federal Ministry of Education as well as the Visitor;
- b. Look into the leadership quality of the Institution in terms of the roles of Governing Council, the Head of Institution and other Principal Officers;

- c. Look into the Financial Management of the Institution over the recommended period and determine whether it was in compliance with appropriate regulations;
- d. Investigate the application of funds, particularly the special grants and loans meant for specific projects in order to determine the status of such projects and their relevance for further funding;
- e. Examine the "Law" establishing the institution and see in what ways the law has been observed, in all its ramifications, by the component authorities and also suggest any necessary modification to the law in order to enable the institution to achieve its objectives better;
- f. Study the general atmosphere of the institution over the period in question. In particular, comment on the general conduct and comportment of all the personnel of the institution, especially the students, staff and managers, and advise as to whether the correct training is being given and how necessary corrections may be made. This should include the relationship between the institution and the host community over the period in question;
- g. Examine all academic programmes, policies and practices as well as total academic and physical development, performance and direction of the institution and advise as to whether the desired target has been met and how modifications may be made to achieve maximum academic productivity, excellence, and service to the nation;
- h. Study in detail the management structure and performance of the institution including fiscal and administrative personnel and welfare policies, and advise on ways to cut on costs, reduce waste and continue to develop, if necessary by adaptation, rather than expansion in the face of attenuated resources; and
- i. Advise on any or all other aspects of the institution that you consider should be of interest to both the Visitor and the public and to the attainment of the objectives for which the institution was set up.

## 6. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it may be concluded as follows:

- a. There is no doubt that the Polytechnic needs the right leadership direction that will take it out of the current precarious situation:
  - i. where all sorts of campus negative tendencies are prevalent;
  - ii. where academic calendar cannot run smoothly due to incessant campus violence, student unrest, and staff industrial actions;
  - iii. where peace and tranquility required for conducive learning, research, and knowledge creation are elusive;
  - iv. where the polytechnic-industry linkage is limited to students participating in Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme, only;
  - v. where research and publication culture characteristic of the academic community is virtually absent; and
  - vi. consequently, the polytechnic is unable to achieve academic excellence thus sitting at the bottom of the World Higher Education Institutions Ranking and cannot attract foreign faculty and students.
- b. Good leadership capable of providing the right direction, and spearheaded by the Governing Council will remedy the maladministration of the Polytechnic. However, the Governing Council must work harmoniously with the Management to make possible the transformation.

- c. Also, the key to cordial Council-Management working relationship is the stakeholders' understanding of the: extant laws and regulations; the Polytechnic's administrative structure, problems, and challenges; and the character of the host community.

Thank you for your attention

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