

Reimagining POSDCORB for Higher Education Governance: Introducing the POSDCOROB Framework for Contemporary University Administration

Olalekan Ayobami King

Senior Assistant Secretary, College of Medicine, University of Lagos, Idi-Araba Surulere, Lagos, Nigeria

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5081-7165>

Email: oking@unilag.edu.ng

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ABSTRACT

University administration is increasingly shaped by complex workforce, governance and service-delivery demands that expose limitations in applying classical administrative principles without contextual adaptation. This conceptual paper re-examines Gulick's POSDCORB framework in the context of contemporary higher education and proposes POSDCOROB—Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Onboarding, Reporting and Budgeting—as an extended framework for university administration. Drawing on literature on public administration, organisational theory, higher education governance, human resource management and organisational socialisation, the paper develops a conceptual distinction between Staffing and Onboarding. While Staffing is concerned primarily with acquiring, appointing and positioning personnel, Onboarding is conceptualised as the structured process through which employees become integrated into institutional roles, systems, procedures and organisational relationships. The paper argues that this distinction is particularly relevant to university registries, where administrative effectiveness depends not only on having appropriately qualified personnel but also on their effective integration into institutional processes and expectations. The proposed framework retains the core functions of POSDCORB while adding Onboarding as a distinct function that connects personnel acquisition with effective organisational participation. The paper contributes a contemporary conceptual lens for understanding university administration and provides an analytical basis for future empirical research. Future studies are encouraged to operationalise POSDCOROB and examine its applicability across higher education institutions and organisational contexts.

Keywords: POSDCOROB; POSDCORB; university administration; higher education governance; onboarding; staffing; university registry; administrative effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

Universities operate in increasingly complex environments characterised by growing student populations, technological transformation, quality assurance demands, changing regulatory requirements, workforce mobility, and heightened expectations from students, staff, governments, professional bodies, and other stakeholders. These developments have increased the need for effective administrative systems capable of supporting institutional objectives while maintaining accountability, efficiency, responsiveness, and institutional continuity (Altbach et al., 2019; Perna, 2022). Although universities are commonly viewed primarily as academic institutions, their capacity to fulfil teaching, research, and community-engagement functions depends substantially on the effectiveness of the administrative structures that support these activities. Administrative units such as registries, human resource departments, quality assurance offices, academic planning units, and finance departments therefore perform essential functions in sustaining institutional operations and governance.

The governance of higher education institutions requires a continuing balance between academic autonomy, accountability, quality assurance, institutional effectiveness, and administrative coordination (Birnbaum, 1988;

Hénard & Mitterle, 2010; Kezar, 2018). As universities expand and diversify, the professionalisation of university administration has become increasingly important because administrative processes must respond to changing organisational structures, workforce requirements, technological systems, and institutional expectations (Bush, 2020; Scott, 2014). This changing environment raises an important question concerning the adequacy of established administrative frameworks for explaining contemporary university administration, particularly the processes through which professional staff are recruited, positioned, integrated, and supported to perform effectively within complex institutional settings.

One of the most influential frameworks in public administration is Luther Gulick's POSDCORB model, which identifies seven major administrative functions: Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting (Gulick, 1937; Urwick, 1937). The framework provides a useful conceptual basis for understanding how administrative responsibilities can be organised and coordinated in complex institutions. Its relevance to higher education derives from the fact that universities, like other complex organisations, require systematic planning, organisational structuring, personnel administration, direction, coordination, reporting, and resource allocation. However, while POSDCORB has been extensively associated with public administration, its application as a framework for analysing contemporary university administration, particularly the transition from staffing to effective employee participation, remains relatively underexplored.

A particular conceptual issue arises in the relationship between Staffing and Directing. Within the traditional POSDCORB framework, Staffing concerns securing and placing the human resources required for organisational operations, while Directing concerns guiding employees towards organisational objectives (Gulick, 1937). Between these two functions, however, lies an important organisational process: the integration of employees into the structures, procedures, culture, relationships, technologies, and performance expectations of the institution. Recruitment, appointment, or deployment does not necessarily mean that an employee has acquired the organisational knowledge, role clarity, institutional understanding, professional relationships, and behavioural orientation required for effective performance. In higher education, this issue can be particularly significant because employees may enter complex administrative environments involving specialised procedures, governance structures, regulatory requirements, professional expectations, and technology-supported systems.

Human Resource Management and organisational socialisation scholarship has long recognised the importance of onboarding, orientation, induction, mentoring, and employee adjustment in helping employees become effective organisational members. However, these processes have generally been treated as Human Resource Management or personnel practices rather than being explicitly conceptualised as a distinct component of the broader administrative process (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Saks et al., 2007; Saks & Gruman, 2018). This distinction is important because onboarding, as conceptualised in this study, is not limited to the initial orientation of newly recruited employees. It encompasses the structured integration of employees into organisational roles and environments following recruitment, appointment, promotion, transfer, redeployment, or other significant changes in work responsibilities. The argument, therefore, is not that onboarding replaces Staffing or duplicates existing Human Resource Management activities, but that it represents a distinct transitional administrative process connecting workforce acquisition and placement with effective organisational participation and subsequent direction.

Against this background, this paper proposes an adaptation of Gulick's POSDCORB framework through the introduction of Onboarding as an additional administrative function, resulting in the POSDCOROB framework. The proposed framework positions Onboarding between Staffing and Directing to make explicit the organisational processes through which personnel acquired or repositioned through staffing are integrated into their institutional roles before and during the process of performance direction. The proposed addition is intended as a conceptual refinement rather than a rejection of POSDCORB. It preserves the original administrative functions while making visible a process that contemporary organisations increasingly recognise as important to employee integration, organisational socialisation, performance support, and administrative effectiveness.

The study consequently addresses a conceptual gap in the application of classical administrative theory to contemporary university administration. It examines whether onboarding can reasonably be distinguished from staffing and other existing administrative functions and considers how the proposed function interacts with the remaining POSDCORB functions within the university environment. The paper uses university administration,

with particular relevance to the university registry and other professional administrative units, as its primary context for illustrating the practical significance of the framework. The analysis is conceptual and does not claim empirical validation of POSDCORB. Rather, it develops the framework from relevant literature and identifies the need for future empirical research to examine its applicability across different types of higher education institutions.

The contribution of the paper is therefore twofold. First, it extends the conceptual scope of POSDCORB by proposing Onboarding as a distinct administrative function concerned with the integration of personnel into institutional structures and expectations. Second, it provides a basis for examining how onboarding relates to Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, Budgeting, Planning, and Organising within contemporary university administration. By making the transition between workforce acquisition and effective organisational participation more explicit, the POSDCORB framework seeks to strengthen the explanatory and practical relevance of classical administrative theory for higher education governance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Classical Foundations of POSDCORB

POSDCORB emerged from the classical administrative tradition and was introduced by Gulick (1937) as a framework for describing major executive and administrative functions within complex organisations. The acronym represents Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting. The framework reflects the classical concern with functional differentiation, specialisation, coordination, authority, and the systematic organisation of administrative responsibilities (Gulick, 1937; Urwick, 1937). Although the organisational environments for which classical administrative theory was developed differ considerably from contemporary universities, POSDCORB continues to provide a useful functional vocabulary for examining how administrative responsibilities are organised and coordinated.

The continuing relevance of POSDCORB should not, however, be interpreted as an argument that its seven functions constitute an exhaustive description of contemporary organisational life. Subsequent management scholarship has demonstrated that managerial and organisational activities are interconnected, dynamic, and influenced by institutional environments, organisational structures, human behaviour, and changing stakeholder expectations (Mintzberg, 1979; Shafritz et al., 2017). From this perspective, POSDCORB can be treated as a foundational administrative framework whose functional categories may be examined and refined in response to changing organisational realities.

This distinction is important to the present study. The proposal to extend POSDCORB does not imply that the classical framework is obsolete or that its original functions are no longer relevant. Rather, the argument is that contemporary administrative environments may contain important processes that are not sufficiently visible when personnel administration is considered primarily through the traditional Staffing function. The present study therefore approaches POSDCORB as an adaptable conceptual framework and examines whether the process of integrating personnel into an organisation following recruitment, appointment, transfer, promotion, or other forms of role transition warrants explicit recognition as an administrative function.

POSDCORB, Alternative Administrative Perspectives, and Higher Education Governance

The application of classical administrative models to higher education must take account of the distinctive organisational characteristics of universities. Universities are complex institutions in which academic, administrative, professional, technical, regulatory, and support functions interact. Their governance requires the simultaneous consideration of academic autonomy, institutional accountability, quality assurance, strategic leadership, resource management, stakeholder expectations, and organisational effectiveness (Birnbaum, 1988; Hénard & Mitterle, 2010; Kezar, 2018).

The complexity of higher education organisations has encouraged the development of perspectives that move beyond strictly classical conceptions of administration. Mintzberg (1979), for example, emphasises the interconnected nature of managerial roles, while institutional and organisational perspectives draw attention to

the influence of structures, norms, environments, and organisational relationships on institutional behaviour (Scott, 2014). Educational leadership and management scholarship similarly recognises that universities require approaches capable of accommodating multiple organisational interests, professional autonomy, distributed responsibilities, and changing institutional environments (Bush, 2020; Kezar, 2018).

These perspectives do not render POSDCORB irrelevant. Instead, they suggest that functional administrative frameworks should be applied critically and contextually. POSDCORB offers a structured means of identifying core administrative functions, whereas contemporary organisational and higher-education perspectives provide a broader understanding of the institutional environment within which those functions operate. The present study therefore does not position POSDCORB as a comprehensive theory of university governance. Rather, it uses the framework as a functional foundation for examining whether a particular contemporary administrative process—employee onboarding—requires more explicit conceptual recognition.

This distinction also establishes the basis for the proposed extension. If university administration involves not only planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting but also the systematic integration of personnel into complex institutional environments, then the administrative framework should be capable of making that process analytically visible.

Higher Education Administrative Professionalisation

Contemporary universities depend substantially on professional administrative capacity to translate institutional policies, academic regulations, strategic objectives, and governance decisions into operational practice. Administrative professionals contribute to institutional continuity, records management, student administration, regulatory compliance, policy implementation, communication, quality assurance, and coordination across organisational units (Scott, 2014; Perna, 2022).

The professionalisation of university administration has become increasingly important as higher education institutions operate within environments characterised by technological change, increasing accountability requirements, quality assurance expectations, expanding student populations, and growing stakeholder demands (Altbach et al., 2019; Bush, 2020). Administrative personnel must therefore possess not only general professional competencies but also institution-specific knowledge concerning policies, procedures, systems, reporting relationships, governance arrangements, and organisational expectations.

This institutional specificity is particularly relevant when personnel enter new positions. An employee may possess the qualifications and technical competence required for appointment but still require substantial organisational knowledge before becoming fully effective within a particular university environment. The process through which that employee becomes familiar with the institution, understands the requirements of the role, develops appropriate organisational relationships, and becomes integrated into institutional processes is therefore an important administrative concern.

The literature on higher education administration thus provides the contextual basis for examining onboarding as more than an isolated human resource activity. It raises the question of whether employee integration should be conceptually recognised within the broader architecture through which university administrative functions are understood.

University Registries and Administrative Effectiveness

The university registry provides an especially relevant context for examining the relationship between administrative functions and employee integration. Registries commonly perform responsibilities relating to admissions, student records, examinations, graduation, academic documentation, institutional reporting, committee and Senate processes, and other core administrative activities. Their effectiveness therefore has implications for institutional accountability, coordination, service delivery, and continuity.

Research on Nigerian university registries has highlighted the importance of records management, administrative practices, coordination, and institutional effectiveness (Dada & Ogunwemimo, 2024; Edho et al., 2025). These

functions depend not only on formal structures and documented procedures but also on the ability of professional administrative personnel to understand and implement institutional processes effectively.

The registry environment illustrates why personnel integration can be administratively significant. Professional administrators may need to understand university statutes and regulations, academic processes, committee structures, records systems, information technologies, reporting procedures, institutional protocols, and relationships with academic and administrative units. These requirements cannot always be assumed to follow automatically from recruitment or appointment.

Consequently, staffing and onboarding perform related but distinguishable functions. Staffing ensures that the institution acquires and positions the personnel required to perform its work. Onboarding addresses the subsequent process through which those personnel become familiar with the institutional environment and prepared to perform effectively within it.

The significance of this distinction extends beyond the registry. The same issue may arise in human resource departments, academic planning units, quality assurance offices, finance departments, libraries, student affairs units, and other professional administrative structures. The registry is therefore used in this paper as an illustrative higher-education context rather than as the exclusive domain of application.

Organisational Socialisation and Onboarding

The conceptual foundation for onboarding is closely related to organisational socialisation. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) explain organisational socialisation in terms of the processes through which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, values, behavioural expectations, and role understanding necessary to function as members of an organisation. This perspective demonstrates that organisational entry is not completed merely when an individual has been recruited or formally appointed. Employees must also learn how the organisation functions and how their roles relate to institutional expectations and relationships. Contemporary human resource management literature similarly recognises onboarding as an important process for facilitating employee integration, role understanding, organisational adjustment, and performance (Dessler, 2020; Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). Research on organisational socialisation and newcomer adjustment further indicates that structured socialisation processes can contribute to role clarity, organisational commitment, adjustment, and employee outcomes (Saks et al., 2007; Saks & Gruman, 2018).

The significance of this literature for the present study is that it establishes a scholarly basis for treating onboarding as more than an informal orientation activity. Onboarding involves processes through which employees acquire institutional knowledge, understand role expectations, develop organisational relationships, become familiar with procedures and systems, and transition into effective organisational membership.

However, onboarding should not be equated with staffing. Staffing is concerned primarily with securing and positioning the human resources required by the organisation. Onboarding is concerned with what happens after personnel enter, or move into, an organisational role: the process of integrating those personnel into the institutional environment and enabling them to function effectively within it.

Conceptual Boundary Between Staffing and Onboarding

The distinction between Staffing and Onboarding is central to the proposed POSDCOROB framework. If onboarding merely duplicates staffing, its inclusion as an additional administrative function would have limited conceptual justification. The literature therefore needs to establish the different purposes served by the two processes.

Staffing generally concerns workforce acquisition and deployment. It addresses organisational personnel requirements through processes such as workforce planning, recruitment, selection, appointment, and placement. Onboarding, by contrast, concerns organisational integration following entry into a role or institutional environment. It may involve institutional orientation, role clarification, procedural familiarisation, socialisation, mentoring, compliance orientation, access to organisational resources, and early performance support (Dessler, 2020; Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

The distinction can be summarised as follows.

Table 1. Conceptual Distinction Between Staffing, Onboarding, Directing, and Staff Development

Function	Primary question	Typical activities	Immediate organisational outcome
Staffing	Who is required and how should personnel be acquired or positioned?	Workforce planning, recruitment, selection, appointment, placement	Required personnel are acquired and positioned
Onboarding	How does the employee become integrated into the institutional environment?	Orientation, role clarification, institutional socialisation, procedural familiarisation, mentoring, compliance orientation	Employee becomes organisationally integrated and role-ready
Directing	How should personnel be guided towards organisational objectives?	Leadership, supervision, communication, motivation, performance direction	Employee effort is aligned with organisational objectives
Staff Development	How can employee capability be strengthened over time?	Training, professional development, mentoring, learning and competency enhancement	Continuing employee capability and professional growth

The table demonstrates that the functions are related but not synonymous. Staffing establishes the personnel base; onboarding facilitates integration; directing provides leadership and guidance; and staff development supports continuing capability. The processes may overlap operationally, but their primary purposes are sufficiently different to permit conceptual differentiation.

The distinction is particularly relevant in higher education because the employee's effectiveness may depend on knowledge that is specific to the institution rather than merely to the employee's professional discipline. A qualified administrator may understand general administrative principles yet require additional knowledge of a university's governance structures, regulations, information systems, committee processes, service standards, and organisational culture. Onboarding provides the mechanism through which this institutional knowledge and role integration can be developed.

Onboarding and Its Relationship with Other Administrative Functions

Although the central distinction in this study is between Staffing and Onboarding, onboarding also interacts with the other POSDCORB functions. Its proposed inclusion therefore should not be interpreted as suggesting that onboarding operates independently of Planning, Organising, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, or Budgeting.

Planning determines institutional and workforce requirements and can therefore establish the need for effective onboarding processes. Organising determines structures, reporting relationships, roles, and workflows within which newly appointed or repositioned personnel must operate. Staffing supplies the personnel. Onboarding integrates those personnel into the organisational environment. Directing subsequently provides leadership, supervision, and guidance. Coordinating connects personnel and units across institutional boundaries, while Reporting and Budgeting provide mechanisms for accountability and resource support.

The relationship can be represented as follows:

Table 2. Functional Extension from POSDCORB to POSDCOROB in Higher Education Administration

POSDCORB function	POSDCOROB formulation	Illustrative university-administration application
Planning	Planning	Institutional and workforce planning
Organising	Organising	Administrative structures, roles, workflows and reporting relationships
Staffing	Staffing	Recruitment, selection, appointment and placement

—	Onboarding	Institutional orientation, role integration, socialisation, procedural familiarisation and transition support
Directing	Directing	Leadership, supervision, communication and performance guidance
Coordinating	Coordinating	Coordination among registry, faculties, departments, management and other units
Reporting	Reporting	Institutional records, administrative reports, accountability and documentation
Budgeting	Budgeting	Allocation of resources for administrative operations and institutional priorities

The proposed extension therefore does not remove or redefine the original POSDCORB functions. Instead, it makes explicit a transitional function positioned between the acquisition or placement of personnel and their effective participation under organisational direction.

This functional relationship is important because onboarding can contribute to the effectiveness of subsequent administrative activities. Personnel who understand institutional procedures, reporting relationships, systems, role expectations, and organisational norms are better positioned to participate in coordination, reporting, service delivery, and other administrative activities. In this sense, onboarding is not an isolated HR activity but a process that supports the effective operation of other administrative functions.

Onboarding Beyond Initial Recruitment

A further conceptual consideration is the scope of onboarding. A narrow interpretation may restrict onboarding to newly recruited employees. Such a definition would limit its relevance to contemporary university administration because personnel frequently experience organisational transitions after their initial appointment.

Employees may be promoted, transferred, redeployed, assigned new responsibilities, moved between administrative units, required to use new information systems, or affected by institutional restructuring. Each transition can require the acquisition of new role knowledge, relationships, procedures, and expectations. From this broader perspective, onboarding can be understood as a process of organisational and role integration rather than simply an initial recruitment activity.

This broader understanding strengthens the distinction between Staffing and Onboarding. Staffing may occur when personnel are recruited or appointed, whereas onboarding may recur when personnel enter a substantially different organisational role or environment. The distinction therefore concerns the function being performed, not merely the point at which the employee first joins the institution.

Synthesis of the Literature and Conceptual Gap

The literature reviewed establishes several interconnected points. First, POSDCORB remains a useful functional framework for identifying major administrative responsibilities, although contemporary organisational scholarship indicates that administrative processes are more dynamic and interdependent than classical formulations may suggest (Mintzberg, 1979; Shafritz et al., 2017). Second, higher education institutions require sophisticated administrative systems because of their organisational complexity, accountability requirements, professional structures, and multiple stakeholder expectations (Birnbaum, 1988; Bush, 2020; Kezar, 2018). Third, professional administrative units such as university registries depend on personnel who possess not only general professional qualifications but also institution-specific knowledge and role understanding (Dada & Ogunwemimo, 2024; Edho et al., 2025). Fourth, organisational socialisation and human resource management scholarship establishes the importance of structured employee integration following organisational entry (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Saks et al., 2007; Saks & Gruman, 2018).

Taken together, these strands identify a conceptual space between Staffing and Directing. Staffing explains the acquisition and placement of personnel; Directing explains leadership and guidance; and Staff Development explains continuing enhancement of employee capabilities. The process through which personnel become

integrated into the institutional environment, acquire role clarity, understand organisational procedures, and develop the relationships necessary for effective participation is increasingly recognised in organisational and human resource scholarship as onboarding.

The conceptual gap addressed by this study is therefore not that onboarding has been completely neglected in existing scholarship. Rather, it is that onboarding has not been sufficiently articulated as a distinct administrative function within the POSDCORB framework for contemporary university administration. Existing literature establishes its relevance as an organisational and human resource process, but the present study brings that process into direct conversation with classical administrative functional theory.

This provides the basis for proposing POSDCOROB as an extension of POSDCORB. The proposed framework retains the original seven functions while explicitly recognising Onboarding as an additional function concerned with organisational integration and role transition. The framework is therefore intended as a conceptual refinement of classical administrative theory rather than a replacement for existing theories of higher education governance, organisational behaviour, or human resource management.

The next section explains the conceptual and analytical approach adopted to develop and examine this proposed extension.

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Research Design

This study adopts a conceptual and analytical research design. It does not seek to empirically test hypotheses or estimate the effects of onboarding on organisational outcomes. Rather, it examines the continuing relevance of Gulick's POSDCORB framework to contemporary university administration and evaluates the conceptual justification for introducing Onboarding as an additional administrative function.

A conceptual research design is appropriate because the principal contribution of the study is the development and refinement of an administrative framework rather than the measurement of a predetermined set of variables. The analysis therefore focuses on the meaning, boundaries, relationships, and functional logic of the administrative processes represented in POSDCORB and the proposed POSDCOROB extension.

The study draws on four interconnected bodies of scholarship: classical and contemporary public administration; higher education governance and administration; organisational and management theory; and human resource management and organisational socialisation. These bodies of literature provide complementary perspectives for examining the proposed extension. Public administration literature establishes the conceptual foundation of POSDCORB; higher education scholarship provides the institutional context; organisational theory provides perspectives on administrative complexity and organisational functioning; and human resource management and organisational socialisation literature provides the conceptual basis for examining onboarding and employee integration.

The study therefore uses literature not simply to describe existing knowledge but to undertake a structured conceptual analysis of the proposed administrative function. The central analytical question is whether Onboarding can be sufficiently distinguished from Staffing and other POSDCORB functions to justify its explicit recognition within an extended framework.

Analytical Approach

The analysis proceeds through four related stages.

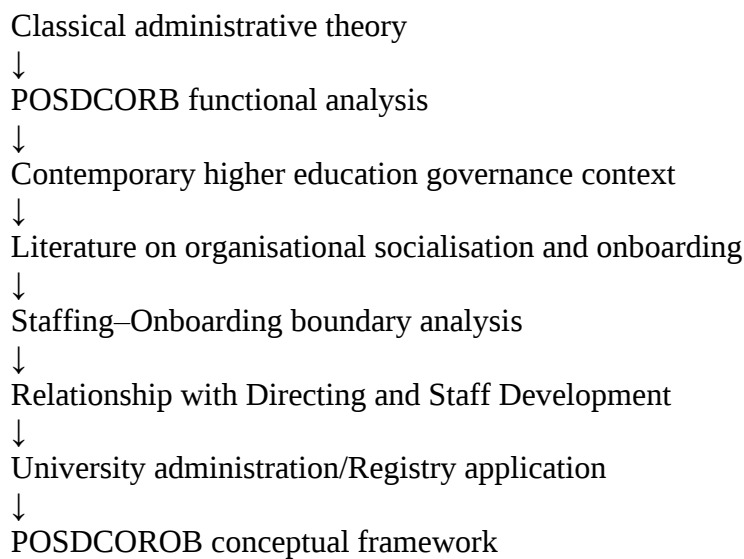
First, the study establishes the functional meaning of the original POSDCORB components, particularly Staffing and Directing. This provides a conceptual baseline against which the proposed additional function can be examined.

Second, the study synthesises scholarship on organisational socialisation, onboarding, employee integration, role adjustment, and staff development to identify the activities and outcomes generally associated with onboarding. This allows the study to determine whether onboarding represents a function with a sufficiently distinct purpose rather than a simple repetition of staffing activities.

Third, the study undertakes a boundary analysis by comparing Onboarding with Staffing, Directing, and continuing Staff Development. The purpose of this analysis is to identify areas of overlap while also determining whether the primary objectives, timing, activities, and expected organisational outcomes of these processes are sufficiently differentiated.

Fourth, the study examines the practical relevance of the proposed distinction within contemporary university administration, using the university registry as an illustrative institutional context. The registry is appropriate for this purpose because its professional administrative activities involve personnel, institutional procedures, records, governance processes, coordination, reporting, and service delivery.

The analytical process can therefore be represented as:



This approach ensures that the proposed extension is derived from the interaction between established administrative theory and contemporary organisational scholarship rather than from an arbitrary addition to the POSDCORB acronym.

Conceptual Criteria for Evaluating Onboarding as a Distinct Function

For Onboarding to warrant recognition as a distinct administrative function, it should demonstrate conceptual characteristics that distinguish it from existing POSDCORB components. The analysis therefore considers five criteria: purpose, timing, principal activities, immediate organisational outcome, and relationship with other administrative functions.

Table 3. Analytical Criteria for Distinguishing Onboarding from Existing Administrative Functions

Analytical criterion	Staffing	Onboarding	Directing	Staff Development
Primary purpose	Acquire and position required personnel	Integrate personnel into the organisational environment	Guide and mobilise personnel	Develop continuing capability
Typical point of emphasis	Before and at appointment/placement	Entry into or transition within a role/environment	During ongoing performance and supervision	Throughout the employee lifecycle

Principal activities	Recruitment, selection, appointment, deployment	Orientation, role clarification, institutional socialisation, procedural familiarisation, mentoring and transition support	Leadership, supervision, communication and motivation	Training, professional development, learning and competency enhancement
Immediate outcome	Personnel are available and positioned	Personnel understand their role and institutional environment	Personnel are guided towards organisational objectives	Personnel capabilities are enhanced
Relationship to organisational membership	Establishes personnel complement	Facilitates effective organisational membership	Mobilises established organisational members	Strengthens longer-term capability

The table is not intended to suggest that these functions occur in completely separate organisational compartments. In practice, activities may overlap and may be undertaken by the same administrative units or personnel. The analytical distinction concerns the principal purpose and organisational function of each process.

This is particularly important to the conceptual argument of the paper. An organisation may recruit and appoint a highly qualified employee without ensuring that the employee understands the institution's procedures, reporting relationships, systems, culture, role expectations, or professional norms. Conversely, an employee may have been successfully onboarded but still require continuing staff development and effective direction. The existence of relationships among the processes therefore does not eliminate their functional distinctions.

Conceptual Boundary Analysis

The central boundary examined in this study is the relationship between Staffing and Onboarding. Staffing answers the organisational question of how personnel requirements are identified and how appropriate personnel are acquired or positioned. Onboarding addresses the subsequent question of how those personnel become integrated into the organisational environment.

This distinction is supported by organisational socialisation scholarship, which demonstrates that organisational entry involves processes through which individuals acquire knowledge, values, role expectations, relationships, and behavioural understanding necessary for effective participation (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Contemporary human resource management literature similarly recognises onboarding as involving activities that support employee adjustment and integration beyond the formal act of recruitment or appointment (Dessler, 2020; Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

The second boundary concerns Onboarding and Directing. Directing involves leadership, supervision, communication, and guidance towards organisational objectives. Onboarding, by contrast, establishes the conditions under which personnel can understand and participate effectively in the organisational environment. It therefore precedes, supports, and interacts with directing without being equivalent to it.

The third boundary concerns Onboarding and Staff Development. Staff development is primarily concerned with continuing enhancement of professional knowledge, skills, competencies, and career capabilities. Onboarding is more specifically concerned with organisational and role transition. It may include some learning and training activities, but its distinctive purpose is integration into a particular institutional environment rather than general long-term capability development.

These distinctions provide the conceptual basis for treating Onboarding as a function rather than simply as another activity within Staffing.

Relationship Between Onboarding and the POSDCORB Functions

The proposed extension does not conceptualise Onboarding as an isolated process. Rather, it is embedded within the interdependence of administrative functions.

Planning identifies institutional and workforce requirements that may generate the need for onboarding. Organising establishes the structures, roles, reporting relationships, and workflows into which personnel must be integrated. Staffing supplies and positions personnel. Onboarding facilitates their transition into the institutional environment. Directing subsequently guides personnel in performing their responsibilities, while Coordinating connects activities across units and organisational boundaries. Reporting supports documentation, accountability, and institutional knowledge, while Budgeting provides the resources required to sustain administrative operations.

The proposed relationship can therefore be represented conceptually as:

Planning → Organising → Staffing → Onboarding → Directing → Coordinating → Reporting → Budgeting

However, this representation should not be interpreted as a rigid chronological sequence. University administrative processes are iterative and frequently occur simultaneously. For example, onboarding may involve coordination with several units, reporting requirements may arise during onboarding, and budgeting may influence the resources available for onboarding activities.

Accordingly, the position of Onboarding in the POSDCOROB model is primarily functional and analytical rather than strictly chronological. This distinction is important because the proposed extension seeks to preserve the recognisable structure of Gulick's framework while making employee integration explicitly visible within the administrative architecture.

Conceptual Model of the POSDCOROB Extension

Based on the foregoing analysis, the study proposes POSDCOROB as an extension of POSDCORB through the explicit inclusion of Onboarding.

Figure 1. Conceptual Architecture and Administrative Logic of POSDCOROB



The figure illustrates the principal conceptual argument of the study: personnel acquisition alone does not necessarily result in effective organisational participation. Onboarding provides an explicit conceptual bridge

through which personnel become integrated into the institutional environment before and alongside the continuing processes of direction, coordination, reporting, and resource management.

The model should not be interpreted as proposing that each function operates independently. Rather, the functions are mutually reinforcing. The addition of Onboarding makes visible an organisational process that is increasingly recognised in human resource management and organisational socialisation literature but is not explicitly represented in the original POSDCORB formulation.

Scope and Status of the Analytical Framework

The POSDCOROB framework proposed in this study should be understood as a conceptual extension requiring further empirical examination. The analysis provides a theoretical and contextual justification for recognising Onboarding as a distinct administrative function, but it does not establish causal relationships between onboarding and organisational effectiveness.

The framework consequently generates propositions for future empirical research rather than presenting empirical findings. Future studies may examine whether institutions that implement structured onboarding demonstrate differences in employee adjustment, role clarity, organisational commitment, administrative performance, service quality, or institutional continuity. Such research could compare public and private universities, institutions across different national systems, or administrative units with different levels of organisational complexity.

This positioning addresses an important limitation of the present study while also establishing a clear research agenda. The absence of empirical testing does not invalidate the conceptual contribution; rather, it defines the boundary of the claims that can appropriately be made from the present analysis.

INTRODUCING THE POSDCOROB FRAMEWORK

A major contribution of this paper is the proposal of POSDCOROB as a conceptual extension of Gulick's (1937) POSDCORB framework. The proposal does not seek to replace the classical administrative model or diminish the continuing relevance of its seven functions. Rather, it seeks to refine the framework by explicitly recognising Onboarding as an additional administrative function required to explain an important process within contemporary organisational administration.

The proposed POSDCOROB framework comprises eight interrelated administrative functions: Planning, Organising, Staffing, Onboarding, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting. The additional function is derived from the conceptual distinction established in the preceding sections between the acquisition or placement of personnel and their effective integration into the organisational environment.

Within the traditional POSDCORB framework, Staffing concerns the acquisition, appointment, and placement of personnel required by an organisation, while Directing concerns leadership, supervision, communication, and the mobilisation of personnel towards organisational objectives (Gulick, 1937; Urwick, 1937). The proposed framework identifies an important transitional process between these functions. Personnel who have been recruited, appointed, transferred, promoted, or redeployed do not necessarily become fully effective organisational members immediately upon assuming their positions. They may require structured processes through which they acquire institutional knowledge, understand role expectations, become familiar with procedures and systems, establish professional relationships, and adjust to organisational norms and governance arrangements.

Onboarding is therefore conceptualised in this study as the structured administrative process through which personnel are integrated or re-integrated into an organisational role and environment. It extends beyond simple orientation or induction. It may include institutional orientation, role clarification, procedural familiarisation, organisational socialisation, mentoring, compliance orientation, access to organisational systems, relationship building, and early-stage performance support (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Saks et al., 2007; Saks & Gruman, 2018; Dessler, 2020; Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

The conceptual distinction is important because onboarding is not proposed as a substitute for Staffing. Staffing answers the question of who the organisation requires and how appropriate personnel are acquired or positioned. Onboarding addresses the subsequent question of how those personnel become integrated and capable of functioning effectively within the institutional environment. Directing then concerns the leadership and guidance through which personnel contribute to organisational objectives.

The Eight Functions of POSDCOROB

The eight functions of the proposed framework are interrelated but analytically distinguishable.

Planning establishes organisational objectives, priorities, workforce requirements, programmes, and strategies. Within higher education, planning may encompass institutional development, academic programmes, workforce requirements, quality assurance activities, student services, and administrative priorities.

Organising establishes structures, responsibilities, reporting relationships, workflows, and resource configurations required to implement institutional objectives. In universities, organising determines how administrative responsibilities are distributed among central administration, registries, faculties, departments, colleges, and other units.

Staffing concerns the acquisition, appointment, deployment, promotion, transfer, or repositioning of personnel required to perform organisational functions. It establishes the human-resource base upon which institutional activities depend.

Onboarding concerns the integration or re-integration of personnel into their organisational roles and environments. It facilitates the acquisition of institutional knowledge, role clarity, procedural understanding, organisational relationships, and familiarity with relevant systems and expectations.

Directing concerns leadership, supervision, communication, motivation, and guidance towards institutional objectives. Effective directing assumes that employees possess sufficient understanding of their roles and organisational environment to respond meaningfully to managerial direction.

Coordinating aligns activities among individuals, units, faculties, departments, and institutional structures. It reduces fragmentation and facilitates the collective pursuit of organisational objectives.

Reporting supports documentation, accountability, communication, monitoring, institutional memory, and decision-making. In universities, reporting is particularly important for governance, quality assurance, accreditation, records management, and regulatory compliance.

Budgeting concerns financial planning, resource allocation, expenditure control, and the provision of resources required to sustain institutional operations and strategic priorities.

These functions should not be interpreted as isolated activities. Rather, they constitute an interconnected administrative system in which each function supports and is influenced by the others.

Onboarding as the Transitional Administrative Function

The principal theoretical innovation of POSDCOROB is the explicit recognition of Onboarding as the transitional function between Staffing and Directing.

The distinction can be expressed as follows:

Staffing → Who joins or moves into the organisation/role?

Onboarding → How does the employee become an effective organisational member?

Directing → How is the employee subsequently guided towards organisational objectives?

This sequence identifies a conceptual discontinuity that is insufficiently visible in the traditional POSDCORB formulation. Staffing may successfully provide an institution with qualified personnel, but qualification and appointment alone do not guarantee institutional effectiveness. Employees must understand the specific environment in which their professional responsibilities are performed.

This is especially significant in higher education. University administrators operate within institutional environments shaped by statutes, regulations, academic governance structures, committee systems, information technologies, quality assurance requirements, professional norms, and multiple reporting relationships. A professional administrator may possess appropriate academic and professional qualifications but still require institution-specific knowledge before becoming fully effective.

Onboarding therefore functions as an administrative bridge. It converts the outcome of Staffing—personnel acquisition or placement—into the conditions necessary for effective participation under Directing and subsequent coordination.

Why Onboarding Is Not Simply Staffing

The inclusion of Onboarding as an eighth function requires more than demonstrating that onboarding is useful. It requires demonstrating that it is sufficiently distinct from Staffing.

The distinction is based on differences in purpose, activities, immediate outcomes, and organisational emphasis.

Table 4. Distinguishing Staffing from Onboarding

Dimension	Staffing	Onboarding
Primary concern	Acquisition and positioning of personnel	Integration and adjustment of personnel
Central question	Who is required and how should they be recruited or positioned?	How does the employee become effective within the institutional environment?
Major activities	Workforce planning, recruitment, selection, appointment, deployment	Orientation, role clarification, institutional socialisation, procedural familiarisation, mentoring, transition support
Primary focus	Personnel supply and placement	Organisational membership and role integration
Immediate outcome	Appropriate personnel are available and positioned	Personnel understand their role and institutional environment
Relationship with Directing	Provides personnel for organisational direction	Prepares and supports personnel for effective participation under direction
Employee lifecycle	Primarily acquisition and placement	Entry, transition, re-entry, transfer, promotion, redeployment and other significant role changes

The table demonstrates that overlap between the functions does not eliminate their conceptual distinction. Some organisations may assign onboarding responsibilities to Human Resource departments, staff-development units, supervisors, or administrative managers. The fact that responsibility is distributed does not mean that the underlying administrative function is identical to Staffing. Accordingly, POSDCOROB does not require universities to establish a separate “Onboarding Department.” It recognises onboarding as a distinct administrative function, which may be implemented collaboratively through existing organisational structures.

Onboarding Beyond New Employee Orientation

A further contribution of the proposed framework is its broader understanding of onboarding. Conventional approaches frequently associate onboarding with the initial entry of newly recruited employees. While this remains an important application, contemporary university administration involves repeated workforce transitions.

Professional administrators may be promoted to positions of greater responsibility, transferred between faculties and central administrative units, redeployed following organisational restructuring, assigned new technologies or systems, or appointed to new leadership responsibilities. In each situation, the employee may require renewed understanding of institutional procedures, responsibilities, relationships, systems, and expectations.

Onboarding is therefore conceptualised as a process of workforce integration and re-integration rather than a one-time induction event.

This broader interpretation strengthens the framework's relevance to university administration. For example, an administrator moving from a faculty administrative office to a central registry may already possess considerable professional experience but nevertheless require substantial institutional and procedural adjustment. Similarly, an experienced administrative officer promoted to a senior leadership position may require role-transition support even though the individual is not a new employee.

Thus, onboarding is linked to the employee lifecycle without being synonymous with continuing staff development.

Relationship Between Onboarding and Staff Development

Onboarding and Staff Development are complementary but distinct. Onboarding concentrates on the employee's integration into a particular organisational environment and role, whereas staff development focuses on the continuing enhancement of knowledge, skills, competencies, and professional capabilities.

The distinction can be expressed as:

Staffing → Acquisition and placement

Onboarding → Integration and role transition

Staff Development → Continuing capability enhancement

Directing → Leadership and performance guidance

The processes may overlap. For example, an onboarding programme may include training on institutional systems or procedures. However, such training serves the immediate purpose of organisational integration. Continuing professional development, by contrast, extends beyond the transition period and seeks to enhance capability over the longer term.

This distinction prevents the proposed framework from simply renaming existing staff-development activities as onboarding.

Functional Relationships Within POSDCOROB

The addition of Onboarding does not disrupt the interdependence of the original POSDCOROB functions. Instead, it makes an important relationship more explicit.

Planning identifies institutional and workforce requirements. Organising establishes the structures within which personnel operate. Staffing provides the required personnel. Onboarding integrates those personnel into the organisational environment. Directing provides leadership and guidance. Coordinating aligns activities across organisational units. Reporting supports accountability, communication, institutional memory, and decision-making. Budgeting provides resources necessary to sustain the entire administrative system.

The figure illustrates the principal conceptual argument of POSDCOROB: workforce acquisition does not automatically produce workforce effectiveness. Onboarding represents the administrative process through which the organisation facilitates the transition from personnel acquisition to effective organisational participation.

The sequence is conceptual rather than strictly chronological. In practice, university administrative functions operate simultaneously and recursively. Reporting may influence planning; budgeting may influence staffing; coordination may occur during onboarding; and employee experience may generate information that informs subsequent organisational decisions. The position of Onboarding between Staffing and Directing therefore reflects its functional role, not a claim that all administrative activities occur in a rigid linear order.

Theoretical Contribution of the POSDCOROB Framework

The principal theoretical contribution of POSDCOROB lies in making workforce integration explicitly visible within a classical functional theory of administration.

Existing literature has established the importance of onboarding, organisational socialisation, employee adjustment, and staff integration from Human Resource Management and organisational behaviour perspectives (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Saks et al., 2007; Saks & Gruman, 2018). POSDCOROB extends this insight into the domain of administrative theory by asking a different question: should the integration of personnel into organisational systems be recognised as an administrative function in its own right?

The framework answers this question affirmatively at the conceptual level because onboarding has a distinct organisational purpose, involves deliberate administrative activities, requires coordination among multiple organisational actors, and affects the capacity of personnel to contribute to institutional objectives.

This does not establish empirical causality. Rather, it establishes a theoretically defensible basis for recognising onboarding as an eighth function and provides a framework that future empirical research can test.

APPLICATION OF POSDCOROB TO CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

The practical relevance of the POSDCOROB framework becomes clearer when its eight administrative functions are considered within the operational environment of contemporary universities. Universities are complex organisations in which academic and administrative activities depend on coordinated systems of people, structures, information, resources, policies, and procedures. Consequently, the effectiveness of university administration cannot be understood solely in terms of the presence of formal structures or qualified personnel. It also depends on the extent to which personnel understand institutional expectations, are appropriately integrated into organisational systems, and are able to work across administrative and academic boundaries.

The application presented in this section is conceptual and illustrative. It does not constitute an empirical case study of a particular university. Rather, it demonstrates how POSDCOROB can be used to interpret administrative processes within higher education and, particularly, within professional administrative units such as the university registry.

Onboarding as an Administrative Integration Mechanism

Onboarding represents the principal addition to the traditional administrative framework. In the university context, it can be understood as the structured process through which personnel acquire the institutional and role-specific knowledge necessary to function effectively within their assigned environment.

An effective onboarding process may include:

- institutional orientation and familiarisation;
- clarification of role responsibilities and performance expectations;
- introduction to university policies, regulations, and procedures;
- familiarisation with administrative systems and information technologies;

- explanation of reporting relationships and communication channels;
- introduction to relevant academic and administrative stakeholders;
- understanding of institutional values and professional standards;
- compliance and governance orientation;
- mentoring or supervisory support;
- early-stage feedback and adjustment.

These activities are particularly important where employees move between units or assume substantially different responsibilities. In such circumstances, onboarding should be understood as a process of role transition and organisational integration, not merely as an introductory programme for newly recruited employees.

This broader conceptualisation is consistent with organisational socialisation scholarship, which recognises that employees acquire organisational knowledge, role understanding, behavioural expectations, and relationships through processes of organisational entry and adjustment (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Saks et al., 2007; Saks & Gruman, 2018).

POSDCOROB and the University Registry

The university registry provides a particularly useful context for illustrating the integrated operation of POSDCOROB because it combines professional personnel, institutional records, academic administration, governance processes, coordination, reporting, and service delivery.

The following table illustrates how the eight functions may operate within registry administration.

Table 5. POSDCOROB Applied to University Registry Administration

POSDCOROB function	Registry application	Illustrative administrative outcome
Planning	Workforce, records, admissions, examinations and administrative service planning	Clear priorities and resource requirements
Organising	Allocation of responsibilities among registry units and personnel	Defined roles and workflows
Staffing	Recruitment, appointment, promotion, transfer and deployment of professional administrators	Appropriate personnel in appropriate roles
Onboarding	Orientation, role clarification, regulatory familiarisation, systems access, mentoring and transition support	Integrated and role-ready personnel
Directing	Supervision, leadership, communication and performance guidance	Aligned employee performance
Coordinating	Interaction among registry units, faculties, departments, management and other stakeholders	Integrated administrative processes
Reporting	Student records, committee documentation, institutional reports and accountability records	Reliable institutional information
Budgeting	Resource allocation for registry operations, systems and administrative activities	Sustainable administrative capacity

The table illustrates an important feature of POSDCOROB: Onboarding does not operate independently of the other functions. Rather, it strengthens the connection between personnel administration and the wider administrative system.

A professional administrator who has been appropriately onboarded is better positioned to understand the purpose of registry procedures, interact with relevant units, maintain appropriate records, comply with institutional requirements, and respond to supervisory direction. The framework therefore conceptualises onboarding as a contributor to the effective functioning of the broader administrative system.

Application to Professional University Administrators

The relevance of POSDCOROB extends beyond the registry to professional administrators working across university administrative structures. Such personnel may possess qualifications in administration, management, business, labour studies, public administration, information management, or related fields. Their professional knowledge provides a foundation for their work, but institutional effectiveness also requires familiarity with the particular university in which they operate.

This distinction between professional competence and institutional competence is important. Professional competence concerns what an administrator knows and can do based on education, training, and experience. Institutional competence involves understanding how those capabilities should be applied within a specific organisational environment.

Onboarding contributes to the development of this institutional competence. It enables professional administrators to translate general professional knowledge into context-specific administrative practice.

This is particularly significant in higher education because university administrative processes are shaped by institutional statutes, academic governance, regulatory requirements, committee structures, information systems, and established administrative practices.

POSDCOROB and Organisational Effectiveness

The proposed framework conceptualises Onboarding as an important administrative mechanism through which personnel capacity can be translated into effective organisational participation and, ultimately, organisational effectiveness. The argument is not that onboarding is the sole determinant of organisational effectiveness, but that the quality of personnel integration can influence how effectively employees understand and perform their roles within the institutional environment.

Effective onboarding can contribute to organisational effectiveness by facilitating role clarity, institutional knowledge, procedural familiarity, organisational relationships, and understanding of performance expectations. These factors can enable employees to apply their professional competencies more effectively within the specific organisational context in which they work. In higher education, where administrative processes are often governed by institutional statutes, regulations, committee structures, information systems, reporting requirements, and interdependent workflows, such institutional understanding is particularly important.

The conceptual relationship proposed by POSDCOROB may therefore be represented as:

Qualified Personnel → Onboarding and Integration → Role Clarity and Institutional Knowledge → Effective Employee Participation → Coordinated Administrative Performance → Organisational Effectiveness

The relationship suggests that Staffing provides the organisation with personnel possessing relevant qualifications and capabilities, while Onboarding facilitates the integration of those personnel into the institutional environment. Through this integration, employees can develop a clearer understanding of their responsibilities, organisational procedures, reporting relationships, institutional expectations, and the ways in which their work connects with the activities of other organisational units. These conditions can support more effective participation and coordination, thereby contributing to organisational effectiveness.

The contribution of Onboarding should, however, be understood within the wider POSDCOROB system. Organisational effectiveness is also influenced by Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, Budgeting, leadership, organisational culture, resources, technology, employee competence, and external institutional conditions. Onboarding therefore functions as one important component of an

interconnected administrative system, rather than as an independent or sufficient explanation of organisational effectiveness.

This distinction is particularly important to the conceptual status of the present study. The paper proposes a theoretically grounded relationship between onboarding and organisational effectiveness; it does not claim to have empirically established the magnitude or causal effect of onboarding on organisational outcomes. Empirical research is therefore required to test whether, and to what extent, stronger onboarding practices are associated with improved employee adjustment, role performance, administrative coordination, service quality, workforce stability, and broader organisational effectiveness in higher education institutions.

The central proposition of POSDCOROB is consequently that effective administration requires more than acquiring competent personnel; it also requires deliberate processes through which those personnel are integrated into the organisational environment and enabled to contribute effectively to institutional objectives. By making this integration process explicit, the framework provides a stronger conceptual explanation of how workforce administration can contribute to organisational effectiveness in contemporary university settings.

Practical Implications for University Management

The application of POSDCOROB suggests several practical implications for university management.

First, universities may benefit from treating onboarding as a structured institutional process rather than leaving employee integration entirely to informal workplace adjustment.

Second, onboarding responsibilities can be distributed across Human Resource departments, registry management, supervisors, professional development units, information technology services, and relevant administrative offices.

Third, onboarding programmes should be adapted to the specific requirements of different administrative roles. A professional administrator entering a registry unit may require different institutional knowledge from an employee joining a finance, library, information technology, or quality assurance unit.

Fourth, onboarding should extend beyond initial recruitment where significant role transitions occur. Promotion, transfer, redeployment, restructuring, and major technological changes may create similar integration requirements.

Fifth, universities should consider onboarding within workforce and administrative planning because effective integration requires organisational time, information, supervisory attention, systems access, and other resources.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE POSDCOROB FRAMEWORK

The proposed POSDCOROB framework has implications for administrative theory, higher education management, human resource management, and the practice of university administration. Its principal contribution is not simply the addition of another activity to the POSDCOROB acronym, but the conceptual recognition that the transition from personnel acquisition to effective organisational participation represents an important administrative process in its own right.

Classical administrative theory provided a functional framework for understanding executive responsibility through Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting (Gulick, 1937). The continuing relevance of these functions is evident in contemporary organisations, including universities, where administrative effectiveness still requires systematic planning, organisational structuring, workforce management, leadership, coordination, reporting, and resource allocation. However, contemporary organisations have also developed more complex workforce environments in which employees are required to navigate institutional systems, professional relationships, technological platforms, governance structures, and changing role expectations.

Within this environment, the study argues that the process through which personnel become integrated into organisational systems deserves greater visibility within administrative theory. POSDCOROB provides such visibility through the explicit recognition of Onboarding.

Implications for Administrative Theory

The first theoretical implication concerns the continuing development of classical administrative theory. The proposed framework demonstrates that classical models need not be discarded simply because organisational environments have changed. Instead, established frameworks can be conceptually refined to incorporate functions that have become increasingly significant in contemporary organisations.

POSDCOROB therefore retains the foundational logic of POSDCORB while extending its explanatory scope. The proposed addition of Onboarding is based on the observation that Staffing and Directing do not fully explain the process through which employees acquire institution-specific knowledge, understand organisational expectations, develop relevant relationships, and become integrated into organisational systems.

The contribution is consequently one of ****conceptual extension rather than theoretical replacement****. The framework preserves the seven original functions while making workforce integration explicitly visible.

A second theoretical implication concerns the relationship between administrative theory and organisational socialisation. Organisational socialisation scholarship has long examined how individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, behavioural expectations, and relationships necessary for effective organisational participation (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Similarly, research on onboarding has demonstrated the importance of structured organisational entry and adjustment processes (Saks et al., 2007; Saks & Gruman, 2018).

POSDCOROB brings this body of thinking into direct conversation with administrative theory. It proposes that organisational integration should not be understood exclusively as an HRM or employee-adjustment issue but also as an administrative responsibility with implications for organisational functioning.

Implications for Higher Education Governance

The framework has particular relevance for higher education because universities combine professional, academic, administrative, regulatory, and governance structures. Administrative personnel often operate at the intersection of several institutional processes and must understand formal rules as well as informal patterns of organisational interaction.

Effective governance therefore depends partly on the ability of personnel to understand institutional procedures, responsibilities, reporting relationships, decision-making structures, and accountability mechanisms.

The explicit recognition of Onboarding within POSDCOROB draws management attention to this integration process. It suggests that university governance should consider employee integration as part of institutional capacity-building rather than treating it solely as an individual employee responsibility.

This is particularly relevant where universities experience staff mobility, organisational restructuring, technological transformation, changes in administrative procedures, or the introduction of new governance requirements. In such circumstances, onboarding and re-onboarding may help personnel adjust to changing institutional conditions.

Implications for Human Resource Management

The proposed framework also creates an important connection between administrative theory and Human Resource Management. Traditional HRM practice often assigns onboarding responsibilities to the HR function. POSDCOROB does not challenge this institutional arrangement. Instead, it places onboarding within a broader administrative architecture.

This distinction is important because successful onboarding frequently requires cooperation among multiple organisational actors. HR personnel may coordinate the process, but supervisors provide role-specific guidance,

administrative units provide procedural knowledge, information technology personnel facilitate systems access, professional development units may provide training, and colleagues may provide social and operational support.

Consequently, onboarding is best understood as a shared organisational responsibility coordinated through administrative systems.

This broader perspective may encourage universities to move beyond narrow administrative orientation programmes towards more integrated approaches that connect recruitment, institutional induction, role transition, supervision, professional development, and organisational learning.

Implications for Administrative Continuity and Workforce Transitions

A further implication concerns organisational continuity. Universities regularly experience workforce transitions resulting from recruitment, retirement, promotion, transfer, redeployment, restructuring, technological change, and changes in institutional leadership.

These transitions can create risks of knowledge loss, role ambiguity, disruption of workflows, and reduced coordination. A structured onboarding approach can help mitigate some of these risks by facilitating the transfer of institutional knowledge and clarifying new responsibilities.

This is particularly important in professional administrative units where institutional memory and procedural knowledge may be critical to maintaining continuity.

Onboarding should therefore not be restricted to newly recruited employees. POSDCOROB supports a broader concept of ****onboarding and re-onboarding****, encompassing significant changes in organisational role or context.

Implications for University Management Practice

For university management, the framework suggests that onboarding should be incorporated into broader workforce and administrative planning.

Rather than treating onboarding as a short orientation event, institutions may consider developing structured processes covering the employee's transition into the organisation or new role. Such processes may include pre-entry information, institutional orientation, role clarification, systems access, policy and regulatory familiarisation, mentoring, supervisory engagement, and early-stage feedback.

The process should also be adapted to the employee's level and function. A senior professional administrator assuming a leadership position may require a different onboarding approach from a newly appointed administrative officer. Similarly, an experienced employee transferring from one university unit to another may require targeted re-onboarding rather than a generic induction programme.

This approach would make onboarding more responsive to the diversity and complexity of university work.

Implications for Policy and Institutional Governance

At the policy level, POSDCOROB suggests that university workforce policies should recognise employee integration as an institutional capacity issue.

Human resource policies, administrative manuals, staff development frameworks, and induction guidelines may therefore benefit from explicitly defining onboarding responsibilities, minimum institutional information requirements, role-transition processes, mentoring arrangements, and mechanisms for evaluating employee adjustment.

Such policies can contribute to consistency and reduce excessive reliance on informal knowledge transfer.

The framework also has potential relevance to institutional quality assurance. Where administrative personnel are responsible for records, admissions, examinations, accreditation documentation, governance processes, and other institutional functions, their understanding of procedures can affect the reliability and continuity of administrative operations.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although POSDCOROB provides a theoretically grounded extension of POSDCORB, the present study is conceptual and analytical. It does not employ primary quantitative or qualitative data and therefore does not establish causal effects of onboarding on organisational effectiveness. Its contribution is the theoretical identification and articulation of onboarding as a potentially distinct administrative function within the POSDCORB architecture.

Empirical Validation and Operationalisation

Future research should empirically test whether onboarding is sufficiently distinct from Staffing, Directing and Staff Development and whether its quality is associated with role clarity, institutional knowledge, employee integration, administrative performance and organisational effectiveness. Quantitative research could operationalise the eight POSDCOROB functions and test relationships among them, while qualitative studies could examine how professional administrators, managers, supervisors and newly appointed or transferred employees experience institutional integration. Particular attention should be given to measurable dimensions such as orientation, role clarification, procedural familiarisation, systems access, relationship building, mentoring, governance orientation and early-stage feedback.

Comparative and Longitudinal Research

Comparative studies could examine POSDCOROB across public and private universities, institutions of different sizes and missions, and higher education systems operating under different governance and regulatory conditions. Longitudinal research could examine onboarding and organisational integration at entry and subsequent transition points to determine whether effects on role clarity, commitment, performance, retention and administrative continuity are sustained over time.

Workforce Transitions and Framework Refinement

Future research should distinguish among entry onboarding, transition onboarding following promotion or transfer, re-onboarding following substantial organisational or technological change, and leadership onboarding. Such studies may clarify whether the administrative requirements of onboarding vary by transition type. Empirical evidence may also reveal overlap between Onboarding and existing functions or identify additional dimensions requiring refinement. POSDCOROB should therefore be treated as an open conceptual framework rather than a closed administrative doctrine.

CONCLUSION

The paper proposed POSDCOROB as a conceptual extension of Gulick's (1937) POSDCORB framework through the explicit inclusion of Onboarding. The resulting framework retains Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting while positioning Onboarding between Staffing and Directing as the administrative process through which personnel are integrated or re-integrated into organisational roles and environments.

The analysis established a conceptual distinction between Staffing and Onboarding. Staffing concerns the acquisition, appointment, placement, and deployment of personnel, whereas Onboarding concerns institutional and role integration through activities such as orientation, role clarification, procedural familiarisation, socialisation, systems access, mentoring, and transition support. Onboarding is therefore not presented as a replacement for Staffing, Directing, or Staff Development, but as a function with a different primary purpose within the wider administrative system.

The university administration and registry context demonstrates the practical relevance of this distinction. Professional administrators may possess appropriate qualifications and experience while still requiring institution-specific knowledge of regulations, procedures, governance structures, information systems, reporting relationships, and organisational expectations. POSDCOROB makes this integration process analytically visible and links it to the effective operation of the other administrative functions.

The contribution of the paper is conceptual rather than empirical. The framework does not establish that onboarding causes organisational effectiveness; instead, it provides a theoretically grounded proposition that workforce integration may strengthen role clarity, institutional knowledge, coordination, continuity, and effective participation. Empirical research is therefore required to operationalise and test the eight functions, examine the proposed boundaries among Staffing, Onboarding, Directing, and Staff Development, and determine whether the framework holds across different higher education contexts.

Overall, POSDCOROB extends rather than replaces the classical administrative logic of POSDCORB. Its central proposition is that effective university administration requires not only acquiring and positioning qualified personnel but also deliberately integrating them into the institutional environments in which their professional capabilities are applied.

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