

The Committee System and Administration of Public Universities in North-East, Nigeria. “An Emperical Overview”

Ahaotu Godwin Ndubuisi

Email: godwinahaotu@gmail.com

Federal University Of Agriculture Makurdi, Nigeria.

Department Of Educational Foundations And General Studies

Ogunode Niyi Jacob

Post-graduate Student, University of Abuja, Nigeria.

Email: ogunodejacob@gmail.com

Ayisa Cyprain Terfa

Federal University Of Agriculture Makurdi, Nigeria.

Department Of Educational Foundations And General Studies.

Email: ayiscyp@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: This study examined the relevance of committee system in public universities in North-East, Nigeria and the associated challenges facing committee system in the Universities. This is with a view to understanding the operations and effectiveness of the committee system in public universities in Nigeria. The primary data used in this study were generated through the administration of questionnaire. The study used stratified random sampling to select 832 academic and non-academic staff of Federal University Wukari. The findings of the study show that Committee system is very effective and has enhanced the decision making process in the universities. The study identified the following challenges confronting the committee system to include: the Vice-Chancellors chairing too many committees; unfair representation of non-academic staff; frequency of meetings and large financial expenditure. Others include loyalty of members to their constituencies and the inability to form a quorum. The study posited that despite the challenges, committee system is a veritable tool for university administration and a necessity to the survival of the universities.

Keywords: Concept of Committee and forms, Challenges, University

INTRODUCTION

University is a community governed by superior ideas borne out of structures and well thought organization to perform three essential functions which include; Teaching, Research and Community Services. Any university that cannot perform these three essential roles is yet to emerge. That is why

university programmes; academic contents and the quality of academic staff are different from other tertiary institutions. The Senate of any university is the supreme academic body on matters or issues that relate to academics with the Vice-Chancellor as its Chairman. It is within the purview of the University Senate to initiate academic ideas, supervise programmes of studies, organizing as well as controlling teaching, the admission and discipline of students and the promotion of teaching and research. The Professors and the Heads of various academic departments form the membership of the senate in any university. The Senate by virtue of its formal authority as recognized by the university charter and status has the mandate to make academic policies towards achieving its vision, mission and philosophy. In view of the above, purposeful and conscious decisions require it to create certain committees. The relevance of committee system in university administration has legal backing in the laws and Acts of Parliament establishing Nigerian Universities as indicated in the University of Ibadan Act of 1962 which states that “ anybody or persons appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of a University established by the Act shall without prejudice of the generality, have power to appoint committees consisting of members of that body and subject to the provisions of sub-section (7) of section 4 of this Act to authorize committee established by it to exercise on its behalf, such of its functions as it may determine”. To accomplish these divergent functions and activities which administrators alone cannot handle, informs the need for committees. To this effect, universities establish different committees to assist in arriving at valuable decisions that can aid effective administration and governance of the universities. Like other contemporary universities all over the world, the use of committees is always entrenched in the Laws establishing each University.

1.1 CONCEPT OF COMMITTEE AND FORMS

Committee could be defined as a group of people appointed or chosen to perform a function or do a particular job on behalf of a large group. Oyebade, Ajayi and Oyeyipo (2007) contend that a committee is a sub-group of people in an organization identified and thought together to perform certain duties either on a temporary, permanent or semi-permanent basis. They further contend that the term is used in the context of selecting a smaller group of persons to perform the functions of a larger body that meets at intervals. Every committee is responsible to its source of authority. For example, the Appointments and Promotions Committee operates on behalf of the University Council and therefore reports to the Council accordingly.

The committee system plays prominent roles in the decision making process in the administration of the university education. The university administrators have the understanding that, university is a democratic institution; decisions on governance should have human face by respecting and recognizing the opinions of the generality of the staff before decisions are arrived at. The beauty of committee system in the administration of the university education is to help administrators arrive at relevant and purposeful decisions that will position the university on the paths of honour, integrity, growth, advancement of knowledge for quality of human lives and survival of the institution. According to Mgbekem (2004), the universities in Nigeria are administered through committee systems which are either responsible to the Council or the Senate, among these committees are: finance and general purpose committee, development committee, appointments and promotion committee, admissions committee, academic Planning committee, committee of Deans and Directors, research grants committee, ceremonies committee, among others.

University education is the training provided by universities in order to prepare people to work in various sectors of the economy or area of culture. The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd Edition (1970-1979) revised in 2010, defined the term University Education as “totality of general and specialized

knowledge and skills that enable a university graduate to solve problems that he encounters in industry or to perform scientific research or pedagogical work within the area of specialized knowledge that he has acquired.” This definition clarifies that, one who received university education is a knowledge bank, should be able to add value to his immediate environment and should have the capacity to manipulate situations for positive results. According to Ochai in Tyokyaa (2014), administration is the coordination of activities that has to do with decision making, planning, organizing, communicating, coordinating and evaluating. They further stated that administration has to do with maximizing the output of workers in an organization. The opinion of Peretomode (2003) is that, administration is a discipline that is concerned with facilitating accomplishment of the school organization through systematic utilization of available human and material resources. The Eric Ashby Commission of 1959 led to the establishment of the first generation universities in Nigeria, essentially for highly trained and skilled manpower for the promotion of national development as well as effecting desirable social change (NPE 2004).

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the inception of universities in Nigeria, committees are constituted and re-constituted by the university administrators. But in all, most university communities never felt the impact of some of the committees as such; committee system seems not to be a good approach to effective university administrative system. Some members of the university community tenaciously hold the view that the accompanying disadvantages supersedes those of the advantages in many respects. Members of the community are in most cases observed to hold divergent opinions expressing their grievances and dissatisfaction over the constitution of numerous committees without result. Some staff members’ belief is that the committee system in university administration is a strategy the administrators employ in buying time at the detriment of staff interests and welfare. Some staff however rescinds to their faith and trusting in providence that one day a relief may come their way. These premonitions invariably demoralize the staff and highly soft pedal their productivity level thereby hampering effective administration of the university. It has come to be accepted that universities therefore adopt committee system for easy administration and decision making process. It is in view of the above that this study examines the relevance of committee system in public universities and associated challenges facing committee system in public Universities in Nigeria. This is with a view to understanding the operations and effectiveness of the committee system in public universities in Nigeria.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the relevance of committee system in the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Specifically, the study is concerned with the level of staff participation in the various committees and their confidence and trust in these committees and their importance in the management of the university system.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were answered by the study:-

- (i) Does the committee system improve decision making process in the universities?
- (ii) Does the committee system lead to greater participation of members of staff in the university community?
- (iii) Do decisions made by committees instill greater confidence in the university community?
- (iv) Do committees provide effective advisory services to Vice- Chancellors?
- (v) Do committees' recommendations influence opinion of the university council and senate towards proper administration of the institutions?

1.6 HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated for the purpose of this study:

- (i) The committee system will not lead to significant participation of large number of staff in university administration.
- (ii) The committee system will not significantly improve decision making process in university administration.
- (iii) The committee system will not significantly build confidence in the university system
- (iv) The committee system will not significantly influence university management .

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Committee system of administering public universities is a global phenomenon. There is evidence of existence of committee system in English Universities such as Oxford and Cambridge and their Colleges. Literatures are available for perusals and authentication of this claim . In the medieval era, administrative consultants of English universities were referred to as “Courts”. They perform the duty of planning and management of the Universities (Cobban, 1975). Contemporarily, “Courts” have become ephemeral and their duties been replaced by committees in the universities. The importance of the committee system in most universities is enshrined in the act establishing the university where their specific roles are stated. Wehrich et al., (2008) identify different names for committees which include: ‘board’, ‘commission’, ‘task force’, ‘team’, ‘self managing team’, and ‘self managed work group’. One of the most accepted systems of organizational administration is the committee system. Thus, Ahmed (2001) emphasizes the importance of committees in the administration of an organization anywhere in the World. He describes Committees as ‘ubiquitous’ which means that the use of committee is acceptable universally. Corroborating this, Wehrich et al., (2008) assert that, “One of the most ubiquitous devices of organization is the committee”. Adefiwitan (2006) describes Committee as a group of people gathered together to take action on an administrative task, that is, a group of persons to whom some organizational matters are committed. In this regard, the Committee is a group of individuals saddled with the responsibility of performing certain or defined tasks within an organization. Oyeyinka (2010) affirms that Committee are persons elected or appointed and to whom any matter or business is referred to in order to discuss and take decision on it. The Committee is guided by the principle of collective responsibility as they are to work together for a common goal or task given to them. Committee is seen as part and parcel of an organization and is indispensable in the smooth running and aiding of administrative progress of the organization. Badderston (1974) cited in Igwe (2010) observes that committees are sets of institutional devices which are parts of the mechanism for governance and decision making. The committee as an administrative mechanism provides an organizational structure that is additional to horizontal and vertical line administrators and general staff. The headship of an organization is helped or assisted by committees in shedding administrative weight and burden which could lead to inefficiency and under productivity. Nwachukwu (1988) states that a committee is a device for achieving coordination of activities and sharing information among various departments and divisions of organization. In agreement with Nwachukwu’s view, Wehrich et al., (2008) opined that matters given to the Committee is for purposes of information, advice, inter-change of ideas or decisions. Thus the committee keeps the people in an organization informed about the organization’s activities, advice the organization and coordinates the affairs and activities in an organization. A Committee is believed to be efficient and committed in the performance of their duties and particularly in matters concerning details. Forsyth (2006) posits that the committees are “effective decision-makers” which perform better than the individual in the act of decision making. Forsyth

further stresses on the effectiveness of the group (committee) in that groups undeniably have advantages over individual as the collective power of a group is incomparable with individual capability. A group can draw on the collective memory of all its members, that is group have wider memory to work upon while an individual making a decision can only draw on his or her own memory. In essence, solutions to problems or questions can often be more easily solved when different group members recall how things were handled in the past and relate it to the present task.

Okotoni, & Adegami, (2013) did a study that assessed the use and the performance of committees in the decision making process as well as identified the challenges facing committee system in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The study utilized primary data, which were collected through the administration of questionnaire on a random sample of 732 academic and non-academic staff of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The findings revealed that committee system is very effective and has enhanced the decision making process in the university. The challenges facing committee system include: inadequate funding, increased workload for the members, delay in paper circulation, division among committee members and limited time for the committees to work. Others included loyalty of members to their constituencies and the inability to form a quorum. The study thus concluded that the challenges notwithstanding, committees were desirable to university administration and were indeed a necessary part of the institutional life of the university.

Ogbogu (2013) did a research on federal universities in all the six geo-political zones of the country. The Role of Committees on the decision-making process in Nigerian universities". This study was done with a view to assessing the extent to which the committee system affects the effective and efficient management of Nigerian universities. The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study was made up of 2,500 committee members from six federal universities located in the six geo-political zones of Nigeria, using stratified random sampling technique, 600 committee members were selected for the study. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study and were tested using percentages and Pearson product moment correlations statistics at 0.05 level of significant. A questionnaire validated by experts in educational administration and planning with 0.72 reliability index obtained by test-retest method was used to collect data. 474 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved out of the 600 distributed. The study revealed that committees are vital institutional arrangements that facilitate and improve internal decision-making in Nigerian universities. The study further revealed that the use of committees enhance university governance and management as the decisions made guide the judgment of university administrators. The study however found that although the decisions made by the various committees are derived from a democratic process, the committee recommendations do not sometimes influence the final decisions made by the university Council and Senate, particularly if they are in conflict with those of the university administrators. This study is related to the present study in that it is focused on the role or contributions of committees in university administration, but the present study is not only focused on the role or contributions of committees in university administration but also on the problems that hinder effective performance of committee as well as strategies for the improvement of the committee system.

Eno-Ibanga (2005) did a study on the impact of committee system on university management in Benue State of Nigeria. The study was concerned mainly with the level of staff participation in the various committees and their confidence trust in these committees and their importance in the management of the university system. The survey research design was used and the population of the study was made up of 1560 staff members of the two universities in Benue State of Nigeria. The stratified random sampling technique was adopted for the study and a total of 312 participants were involved in the

study. Four research question and four null hypothesis guided this study. A questionnaire with a four-point rating scale and reliability index of 0.74 was used to collect data. A decision point of 2.50 was used to accept or reject any item. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyses data and hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using student t-test. The results showed that the committee system encourages participation of a large number of staff, and that committee system is a vital tool for improving decision-making process in university management and that there will be trust and confidence if the committee decisions are faithfully implemented. Additionally, the researcher found that committees do not provide effective advisory services to Vice-chancellors and that committees' recommendations do not influence opinions of the university Council and Senate.

Alabi, Musapha & Abdulhareem, (2012) did a study on utilization of committee system and Secondary School Principals' Administrative Effectiveness in Ilorin Metropolis Nigeria. The study sought to find out the extent to which the use of committee system influences principals' administrative effectiveness in secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis. It also examined the influence of the committee system on greater participation of staff in the management of secondary schools, as well as the influence of committee system on personal motivation. The researchers adopted a correlation survey research design. The population of the study was 1450, stratified random sampling technique was used to arrive at a sample of 290 participants. A questionnaire was used to collect data and was validated using test-retest method which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.83. The data was analysed using percentages and Pearson Product Moment correlation statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The major finding of this study was that there was significant relationship between utilization of committee system and secondary schools principals' administrative effectiveness in

Ezeigbo, (2016) conducted a study that investigated the utilization of the committee system in the administration of state universities. The study was guided by four research questions and four null hypotheses. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was made of 1691 Heads of Academic Departments and Senior Administrative Staff of five state universities in South-East Nigeria. The sample for the study was made up of 54 Heads of Academic Departments and 282 senior administrative staff, a total of 336 using stratified random sampling technique. The instruments used for the study were a 40-item researcher – developed Questionnaire and structured interview which were validated by experts in Educational Administration and Planning as well as Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability analysis which was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha method yielded a reliability index of 0.75, 0.73, 0.84 and 0.93 respectively for each of the clusters A to D the values thus obtained were considered high enough to regard the instrument as reliable for the study. The data were analyzed using means and standard deviation scores for the various items on the questionnaire while t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the study among others revealed that the two groups of respondents strongly agreed that committee system makes useful suggestions and recommendations as well as provide investigative reports necessary for decision-making to the university administration but does not give its reports on time for quick decision-making. That a greater number of staff are given opportunities to contribute their ideas to the growth and development of the university and that committee system encourages delegation of authority to committee members which increases commitment. That lack of funds constitute a big hindrance, that committee chairmen and members lack skills in group dynamics, group management and democratic leadership style, that committees lack basic infrastructure for effective performance of their functions, that committee decision/recommendations are sometimes not implemented. The result

showed no significant difference ($P>0.05$) in the mean ratings of the respondents on how committee system contributes to decision-making, on how committee system contributes to staff participation, on the problems that hinder effective use of the committee system as well as in the strategies for the improvement of committee system. Based on the findings the researcher made the following recommendations among others: every effort should be made by university administration to provide all that is needed to quicken committee reporting for effective decision-making. The vice chancellor and the senate should strive to implement committee decisions/recommendations that are consistent with university goals and objectives, university administration should ensure the training of both senior academic and senior non-academic staff in group dynamics, group management and democratic leadership style. University authorities should adequately fund committees for effective performance.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The population of the study was made up of the staff members of the two universities in Taraba State of Nigeria. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted for this study because of the large population involved. The population was arranged into five sub-groups or strata to ease data collection and analyses. The study samples consist of 416 non-academic staff, 416 academic staff of both universities totalling to 832 drawn from the study sample. The study used one structured questionnaire for the 832 respondents. The adopted Likert Four Point rating scale of 4, 3, 2, and 1, was used to analyze responses in the questionnaire.

3.1 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The mean, standard deviation and t-test were used to verify results and to arrive at conclusions. A mean of 2.50 was used as cut-off point of decision making for each item on the instrument. Any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was considered adequate and hence enhances level of respondents on the use of committees in university administration. Any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was considered adequate and hence enhances the level of respondents on the use of committees in university administration. Any item with a mean of less than 2.50 was considered inadequate. The four hypotheses formulated for this study were tested at 0.05 level of significance using student t-test for each. Where the calculated value is greater than the table value of t at 0.05 level of significance, the null was rejected. On the other hand, if the calculated value is less than the table value of t at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypotheses was accepted. After subjecting the responses to the above statistical methods and analyses, three out of the four null hypotheses were rejected, and the fourth hypothesis was accepted.

4.0 RESULT ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

HYPOTHESES ONE

The committee system will not lead to significant participation of large number of staff in university administration.

Assumptions

N1	N2	df	Cal-t
X1 15.25	X2 5.99	6	t-cal Value 2.85

Decision: Reject the result.

This result indicates that trust and confidence will exist if the committee decisions are sincerely carried out in the system. All strata of staff opine that committees been creation of university's administrators tend to neglect the feelings and voice of staff when in disagreement with those of the university administration. Mehendiratta (1984), in his study on university administration in India and USA infers that it is advisable for the university system itself to device appropriate machinations to deal with grievances of students, teachers, subordinate staff and administrators and this machination should be so devised that all persons concerned would have confidence in its impartiality and independence.

HYPOTHESIS FOUR

The committee system will not significantly influence university management.

N 18	N 28	df 6 Cal-t14
X124.38	X 216.38	t-cal value=2.65
S 16.75	S 27.41	Table Value = 3.375

Decision: Accept

The finding reveals that the committee system will not influence university management. This is because the respondents agree that committees do not provide effective advisory services to Vice-Chancellors, and that committee recommendations will not influence opinions of the university council and senate. What this result shows is that even though the university community believes that committees are vital tools for university administration, they do not have confidence that university administration will really implement the recommendations of committees. This also shows that there exist lack of trust between the university community and the university administration. It is pertinent to ask why a staff who is found worthy of promotion in the Departmental appointment and promotions committee be denied promotion by the council appraisal and promotions committee. Explanations would also be needed as to why a student who is found guilty of examination malpractice is rusticated by the College/Faculty examination malpractice committee however when the same case gets to senate, such a student is expelled. One wonders therefore why these committees are set up to look into these cases when decisions made by them are not implemented. Suffice it to say that because of administrative interest in these matters, decisions made by these committees are jettisoned. These actions negate the purpose of setting up these committees and also breed distrust in the system. Sifuna (1991), states that the tendency for Vice-Chancellors to monopolize all aspects of decision making has now been perfected in the creation of Vice-Chancellors 'management boards' whose powers are too wide and constantly erode those of the senate. Views or decisions of committees are ignored if they are in conflict with those of administration. He further states

that although universities teach about democracy and are quite vocal about the need for popular participation in decision-making, universities' administrative structures and key policy making bodies are most undemocratic.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Universities the world over are founded essentially for training and capacity building required for societal growth and development. The university system is made up of people with creative and critical ideas anchored on teaching, research and social service, dedicated to intellectual life and hence the need for a democratic system and consequently the introduction of the committee system of administration. The study has identified that staff of Taraba State University (TSU) and Federal University Wukari (FUW) are not as confident as they would like to be in the committee system. This is as a result of low number of non-academic staff in committees and non-implementation of committee recommendations in university administration. There is therefore the need for the university administration to effectively and efficiently implement committee recommendations so as to boost the confidence of staff in the system. University administration and management should further find a way to create conditions for trust to exist within the university community as there is a lot to gain in a trusting environment

Tierney (1999), in his paper on Trust and Academic Governance opines that if individuals are to make far-reaching decisions they need to create the conditions for trust to exist. According to Longing (2002), institutional success at navigating the currents of higher education is dependent on the effectiveness of governance structures and decision making processes. Still, governance and decision making as the subject of empirical research currently receives only moderate attention.

There is the need for researchers to examine more on how best to administer higher institutions to meet their desired goals without distrust. Staff should actively be involved in decision making so as to be fulfilled and effective in following up decisions made. Recommendations made by committees should be accepted and implemented without delay so as to boost confidence in the system. Training and re-training courses/ seminars on the committee system for staff especially for junior staff of the universities should be introduced so as to expose them to what the committee system is all about as most of them are ignorant of the committee system and its operations.

References

1. Adefiwitan, A. (2006). *Essentials of Management in Public and Private Sectors*. Abeokuta: Bright Vision Press.
2. Igwe, T. (2010). *The Tertiary Education Institution System in Perspective: Its Acts, Rules, Regulations, Organization/Management Structure in Comparison with Public Services Rules*. Proceedings of 3-Day National Training Workshop on Understanding the Tertiary Education Institution Administrative Structure & Management of Association of Nigerian University Professional Administrators (ANUPA), Enugu on Monday 15th-Wednesday 17th March 2010 Daudu P. (1986) *Committee versus centralized system of managing Higher institution choice between participation and efficiency*, Unpublished paper

3. Denga D. I. and Ali A. (1998) An introduction to research methods and statistics in education and social sciences, (3rd ed) Calabar, Nigeria, Rapid Educational Publishers Ltd.
4. Ede .S. A. (2000) Educational administration and management, Jos, Nigeria: Ichedum Publication Nigeria, Ibadan, Nigeria, Spectrum Books Ltd.
5. Eno-Ibanga, E.G. (2005). *The impact of committee system on university management in Benue State* M.Ed. Thesis, Benue State University, Makurdi.
6. Ezeigbo, O .G (2016) Utilization of the committee system of administration in state universities in south east nigeria. Ph.D Thesis. University of Nigeria, Nsukka
7. Gwary T. H. (1993) Participative strategies for higher education management: A case study of Federal College of Education, Yola. Education today, 6 (3).
8. Ikenwe E. (1988) The use of committees in Higher institutions in Bendel state. An unpublished thesis of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
9. Jeje .A. (1983) The administration of faculties in University of Ife, An unpublished field attachment report for MPA degree, University of Ife.
10. Longing T.C. (2002) Institutional governance: A call for collaborative decision making in American higher education. Boston, MA Anker Publishing Co.
11. Mehendiratta P.R (1984) University administration in India and USA, New Delhi, Oxford and IBH Co
12. Nwachukwu .C. C. (1988) Management theory and practice, Onitsha, Africana-Feb Publishers Limited.
13. Ogunmodede A. (1981) The community system of the university of Ibadan Management. Unpublished M.ED dissertation, University of Ibadan.
14. Okotoni, O & Adegami, A (2013) The use of committee system and its challenges in obafemi awolowo university, ile-ife. *Journal of administration / Institute of Administration, University of Ife* (3) 4
15. Ogbogu, O.C. (2013). The role of committees in the decision-making process in Nigerian Universities. *Canadian Centre for Science and Education*. 8(16).
16. Sifuna D. N. (1997) The governance of Kenyan public Universities Nairobi, Lyceum ed. Consultants.
17. Tahir G. (1991) Higher education management in Nigeria, Change and pressure for change: unpublished paper.
18. Tierney W. G. (1999) Creating high performance in colleges and universities, Thousand Oaks, Ca. Sage Publications Inc.
19. Weihrich, H., Cannice, M. and Koontz, H. (2008). Management: A Global and Entrepreneurial Perspective (12 th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited