

UTILIZATION OF COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

University education is the pinnacle of tertiary educational system where the high level manpower needed to drive every sector of the economy is trained and developed. It is complex in terms of explosive students' population, curricular structure and diversification, pedagogical mechanism, over-bearing staff strength and administrative system. Because of the university's noble and extensive responsibilities, the management organs of which the Vice Chancellor and the Senate are most visible adopt a decentralized and all-participative management approach through committee system in order to maximally achieve its objectives. However, most of the committees in Nigerian Universities are fraught with some challenges which sometimes render their activities counterproductive. It is therefore advocated among others that members of the ivory tower who are committed to the vision and mission of the university education should be elected/appointed/selected into the various committees in the system for a collaborative effort in goals attainment.

Keywords: University education, utilization committee system, Vice Chancellor, Senate and administrative effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

University education is the pinnacle of higher education where human capital skills are trained and developed for a meaningful transformation of the society into a desirable state universities educate future leaders and develop the high level technical capacities that under pin economic growth and development. World bank (2002) added that tertiary education provides not only high level skills necessary for every market but also the training essential for teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants, engineers, humanists, entrepreneurs, scientists and a myriads of personnel.

The National Policy on Education (2012) expects higher education to:

1. Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
2. Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
3. Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
4. Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
5. Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
6. Forge and cement national unity;
7. And promote national and international understanding and interaction.

In the light of the great gains of higher education (University education) to both individuals and the society, millions of Nigerian young senior school leavers struggle for very limited

spaces in the nations' public universities on yearly basis. The unsatisfied demand for university education has therefore given rise to a sudden increase in the establishment of private universities. Between the year 2000 and 2011 over the twenty private universities whose ownership are both private individuals, corporate bodies and religious organizations have been given licenses of operation.

However, university education according to Ajayi and Ayodele (2004) are still faced with multi faceted problems inhibiting the full actualization of its objectives. Some of which include poor funding, population explosion, lack of adequate physical facilities, poor teaching aid and research infrastructures, brain drain, excess workload by academic staff and incessant cases of industrial dispute to mention but a few.

The need for universities administrators (Vice-Chancellors) in Nigerian universities to effectively organize the human resources in the system for effective and efficient management strategies through committee system is the focus of this paper. As this will mitigate the numerous problems in the Nigerian universities so that the goals of higher education can be optimally achieved especially at this period that the government of Nigerian is desirous to be among the great economic in the world by the year 2020.

Birth of Higher Education

What could be akin to University education started about one million years ago in Europe. Though these earliest tertiary institutions were stimulated by the learning and teachings of Arabic scholars and the teachings of Roman Catholic faith. According to McNelly and Inowerton (2008) these medieval universities were not founded, rather they emerged around a group of scholars and students. In the Ancient Greek cities like Athen, these scholars were called *Sophists*.

The first world premier university was a popular medicine school in Salerno, Italy, founded in the 9th century. But the first degree awarding universities were University of Bologna and the University of Paris established in 1088 and 1170 respectively. These earliest universities were purely established by religious institutions and as such were organized, controlled and funded by such religious bodies. Example was the University of Paris, managed by the Roman Catholic Monasteries. The Madrassahs of Islamic Spain equally founded and funded the early Islamic universities.

With the passage of time, universities began to evolve from Church to secular institutions, financed by public money. Teaching, service and research for development and growth of man began to characterize university education in the 20th Century (Goldmen, 1996). The economic, political, social and cultural changes during this century were equally responsible for the radical curricular innovations in the medieval universities.

DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria, the first known higher education was University College, Ibadan (UCI) in 1948. It was an affiliate of the University of London; a fall out of Elliot Commission Recommendation in 1943. But at the eve of Nigeria's Independence (1959) Ashby Commission recommended the establishment of higher institutions for the training of manpower that will replace the expatriates after the nation's independence. This gave birth to the establishment of the first generation universities in the three regions. The University College, Ibadan was however made a fully fledged university in 1962. At present, Nigeria has one hundred and twenty seven (127) universities comprising of forty (40) Federal, thirty seven (37) States and fifty (50) Private with over 1.6million students enrolment (National Universities Commission, 2012).

Despite the growing number of universities in Nigeria, its effective administration and management to realize the vision and mission of these ivory towers has been a major challenge. Nwadiani (2000), Okebukola (2004), Ajayi and Ekundayo (2008), identified population explosion, poor funding, infrastructural decay, low academic achievement, students militancy to be some of the challenges of effective university administration, globalization, the uncertainty of economic benefit of higher education, emphasis on technological education and unabated cases of examination malpractices are among the problems facing university education in Nigeria. It is in this regard that the committee system approach to university education will help many of these problems.

Administrative Structure of Nigeria University

University education is a complex institution that requires highly organized and effective administrative structures in order for it to deliver on its objectives. Its organization is in two folds system – the Governing Council and the Senate. The Governing Council is the highest administrative body in the university saddled with the task of general arrangement, supervision and control of the affairs, policy, assets and liabilities and funding of the university. The Chairman of the Governing Council is usually appointed by the visitor who could be a State Governor or the President depending on the ownership of the institution.

The second administrative system is the Senate. It is the highest academic authority in the university and has direct policy control over all academic matters in the university system. Ibukun (1997) describes it as the main organ regulating the internal activities of the university. It makes and implements academic programme, moderate examinations, direct teaching and research. The Senate approves sessional results. The Chairman of the Senate is the Vice-Chancellor. Other members of the Senate are:

- a. The Deputy Vice-Chancellors
- b. The Registrar
- c. The Deans of Faculty and Provost
- d. Heads of Departments
- e. Directors of Institutes and Centres
- f. The Librarian
- g. All Professors
- h. Nominated members from the Congregation

Organogram of the University System in Nigeria

The Vice-Chancellor is therefore the Chief Executive Officer charged with both administrative and academic functions while the Senate, the formal authority under the university charter and status to make academic policy. However, for the sake of meaningful decision and achievement of special and technical tasks, certain committees are usually created to this effect.

Concept of Committee System

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines committee as a group of people chosen to represent a larger group in order to do a particular job and make decision. Nwachukwu (1988) defines committee as a device for achieving coordination of activities and sharing information among various departments and divisions of an organization. The university; a complex educational system requires strong and virile committee system for effective administration in order to achieve its numerous objectives. This view is also

expressed by Obayam (2002) and Daudu (1986). According to Cotton (2005) committee system is a democratic method of school management.

The University of Ibadan 1962 Act states that “Anybody or persons established by the act shall without prejudice of the generality have power to appoint committees consisting of members of that body.” The University Committees are therefore ad-hoc, standing or constitutional/statutory micro-entities that are created to meet some specific and critical needs of the system in its daily search for knowledge and truth. Panels, Boards and special task force equally constitute kinds of Committees in Nigerian University System. These committees are either responsible to the Council, Senate or the Congregation.

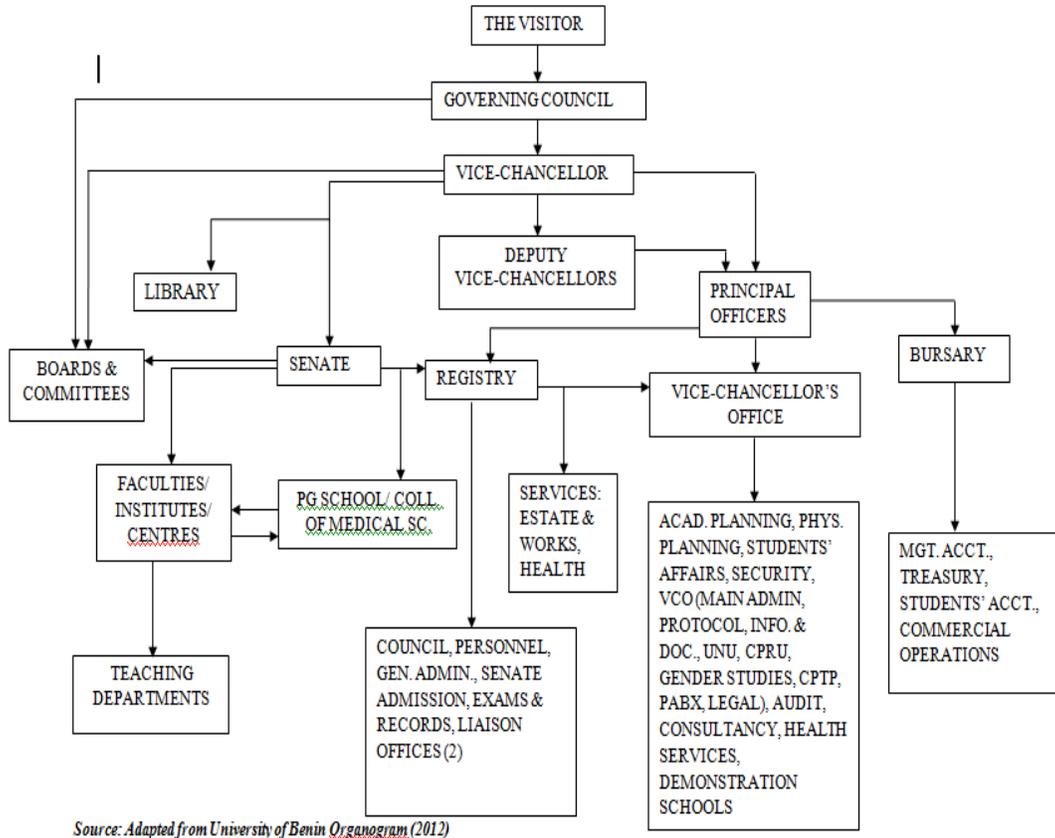


Figure 1. Organization of the University System

Ibukun (1997) identified the basic committees in Nigerian Universities to include:

- I. Finance and General Purpose Committee
- II. Development and Promotion Committee
- III. Admissions Committees
- IV. Academic Planning Committee
- V. Committee of Deans
- VI. Research Grants Committee and
- VII. Ceremony Committee.

Others are:

- I. Consultative Committee on Community Development
- II. Students' Welfare Board

- III. Library Committee
- IV. Sports Council
- V. Students Disciplinary Committee
- VI. Staff Disciplinary Committee
- VII. Development and Physical Planning Committee
- VIII. Staff Housing Committee/Lodging Bureau
- IX. Tender Board
- X. Alumni Relations Committee, amongst others.

Benefits

Fundamentally, committees assist the university management team in arriving at useful and meaningful decisions that can promote the growth and development of university education. Therefore, the committee systems in Nigerian Universities act as catalysts that fast track the physical and intellectual growth of the system in a competitive term with other ivory towers in the world.

Foxworthy (1971) in Ikenwe (1998) asserts that committee system in institutional governance promotes democratization of administrative process. This implies that administration is decentralized in a committee system thereby encouraging individual and collective participation. It equally fosters a sense of belonging and motivates individuals' total commitment to the aspirations and goals of the university. Ogunbamerun (2004) added that members who participate actively in making decisions feel a sense of belonging to the system.

The security challenge in the nation and university campuses has made the committee on security very vital and relevant to the safety of lives and property in Nigerian Universities. The incidences of violence against students by faceless individuals and incessant kidnapping and abduction of both academic and non-academic staff has been reduced through the collaborative efforts of both the school internal security apparatus, government security agencies and the efforts of the committee members on security in providing an enduring peace and tranquility that promotes intellectualism.

University as a complex educational system requires a concerted efforts of all the major stakeholders to constantly exchange ideas and opinions on vital issues that will promote the tone and image of the university through effective and efficient administration. Obayan (2002) consequently posits that committee system is a vital ingredient to achieving effective university administration. The various committees in Nigerian universities are therefore advisory bodies, the think tank that offer relevant and useful advice and suggestions to the Governing Councils in Nigerian Universities.

Managing higher educational system in Nigeria has been quite difficult in the area of finance. Since the inception of University Education in Nigeria, funding has been the main bane to quality education. The 26% minimum allocation to education from the nation's budget as recommend by World Bank has been a mirage in Nigeria. This is partly because of the overdependence on the revenue from Nigerian crude earning and the weak naira value in international market. The negative implication is the inability of Nigerian Universities to attract expatriates into the system, poor infrastructural development and low quality outputs. However, the Committee on finance and general purpose and other Congregational Committee have been very useful in this direction.

They identify other alternative and veritable sources of revenue/income to the University. Today, there are profitable ventures in many universities in Nigeria. Consultancy services,

large scale farming, hospitality, transportation and commercial manufacturing products are among others avenues of sourcing for funds through some of these committees.

The External Relations Committee in most Nigerian Universities has helped to globalize the higher educational system through various exchange programmes between and among other countries in the world. This Committee has facilitated and is still facilitating international exchange programme for both students and staff. Through this committee, the cooperation with other universities of the world has yielded tangible gains in form of supply of textbooks, science and laboratory equipment to some Nigerian universities. Personal training and research grants are among the benefits the external relations Committee has brought to most Nigerian Universities through international networking.

Other benefits of Committee system in administrative governance of Nigerian Universities include:

- Democratization of university system. There is devolution of powers from the Governing Council especially the Vice-Chancellor. Delegation of authority to members of the Committees has increased commitment and collective responsibilities to the promotions of the ideals of the system. This has invariably occasioned the stable academic calendar especially in Federal Universities in Nigeria.
- The principles of checks and balances militating against the abuse of authority by top management officers have been achieved to a large extent. Accountability is now guaranteed in Nigerian higher educational system leading to an increased quality production of students. Cross fertilization of ideas resulting in better decisions that will reposition the university system towards meeting the technological and world economic challenges in the 21st Century is being achieved through Committee System of Nigerian Universities.

Problems

A major challenge to committee system of governance in Nigerian universities is the issue of delay in decision making process. Some committee members are not committed to the vision and mission of the university system. Therefore, they hardly attend meetings while some perpetually go late to such meetings where vital decisions that will move the university forward are taken. The voices of dissension among committee members at meetings also affect efficiency of university administrative decisions. Alabi, Mustapha and AbduKareem (2012), added that the responsibility for a committee's decision is too fluid with no single specific person bearing it.

Added to this is the problem of non-implementation of the decisions or recommendations of committee members. Some university authorities flagrantly reject the decisions of some committees, not minding their importance especially when such decisions/recommendations do not promote the Council or Vice-Chancellor's interest. This explains why the election or appointment of committee members is usually at the whims and caprices of the university authorities. Conversely, poor implementation of committee's recommendation does not motivate active participation of all in university administration.

Besides, appointment of personal friends to the authority robs off the genuineness and sincerity of activities of committee system to university growth and development. Standards, quality of work and high expectations are compromised whenever people who do not possess both technical and special skills and genuine love for the aspiration of the university are

appointed to serve in critical committees like finance and appropriation, security, students' disciplinary committee, sports and tender board.

The committee system is usually threatened by cost in terms of the huge human and material resources used. Time availability for committee members to attend crucial meetings is an added problem. In some universities, committee members decry poor provision of logistics by the university authorities in order for them to effectively carryout their responsibilities.

Non-disciplined members of committee usually revealed highly confidential information to the congregation including the students before they are deliberated upon. This act often renders the activities of such committees ineffective and counter-productive. If cases of examination malpractices and insecurity challenges on campuses must be effectively tackled, the activities of committee members on discipline and security should be conducted in secrecy and strict confidentiality.

CONCLUSION

The administrative complexities of the university system coupled with the increasing high expectations on the administrators to meet the yearnings and needs of both the students and staff has made committee system inevitable. The university academic life is constantly driven by dazzling technological advances, geometric increase in students' enrolment, a mis-match in funding and the challenge of imparting functional and self-sustaining skills on university graduates in the face of global economic uncertainties. Therefore various Council, Senate and Congregation Committee are put in place in Nigeria Universities with the principal aim of collaborating and synergizing with University authorities for effective and efficient administration that will promote goals realization of the system though these committees have their challenges.

RECOMMENDATION

To achieve effective and efficient university governance through committee system, the following recommendations are made.

There should be total democratization of the appointment process of committee members. This will guarantee functional and participative management. High sense of belonging and unalloyed commitment to the ideals and values of the system will be greatly achieved.

Only members of the University community who have proven integrity, valued experiences; possess professional and technical skills should be appointed to various committees in order to achieve maximally the objectives of such committees.

The university authorities should be courageous at implementing some of the recommendations of the committees not minding its adverse implication to individuals and finances of the university. This will boost the confidence of the committee members and will always work assiduously to reposition the system for the good of mankind.

Some committees with overlapping functions should be fused together to achieve efficiency and effectiveness.

University management team should always organize workshops, seminars and retreats for committee members. At such retreats, the vision and mission of the university should be and reechoed to members in order to serve as their guiding principles while discharging their responsibilities. The various committees should work collaboratively while their activities should be periodically reviewed by the university authority.

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