COMMITTEE SYSTEM AS INSTRUMENT OF ADMINISTRATION OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Overtime, committee system has become an inherent administrative ingredient in tertiary institutions all over the world. This is so because the people who make up the committees provide all the answers to a given problem. This study is therefore set to examine committee system as instrument of administration of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The broad aim is to find out the various types of committees present in the tertiary institutions. It also delved into investigating the roles and responsibilities played by the committees towards ensuring effective administration of tertiary institutions. The study looked at the benefits of establishing committees and the conundrums that hinder the effective functioning of the committee system in tertiary institutions. To further understand the topic, the study was anchored on system theory. The study observed that committee system is a vital instrument of administration in tertiary institutions which play a crucial role in facilitating decision-making, policy formulation, and oversight functions. Through their advisory, consultative, and oversight roles, committees enable tertiary institutions to maintain high standards of quality, accountability, and transparency. However, the effectiveness of committee systems is often hindered by challenges such as ineffective communication and coordination, conflicting interests and agendas, and limited resources and capacity. To overcome these challenges, tertiary institutions must prioritize effective communication, provide training and capacity-building programs, and conduct regular evaluations and needs assessments.

Keywords: Administration, Committee System, Tertiary Institutions, Vice Chancellor/Provost.

Introduction

Tertiary education is the highest echelon in the educational system. It is the zenith of academic pursuit. It consists of community of scholars with various skills, knowledge and ability that work together towards the achievement of educational objectives. These groups of individuals' foster resources towards enhancing the frontier of knowledge and in the process exploit the environment. Tertiary education according to the Federal Government of Nigeria [FGN] (2013) is an education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Colleges of Education, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI).

Tertiary education is a factory where other professionals are molded for the sustenance and development of the society. In a bid to enhance development in the society, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (2013) states that the tertiary education shall make optimum contributions to national development by intensifying and diversifying its programs for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the Nation. The distinguishing objectives of tertiary education which is the provision of the manpower needs of the society makes the university administration very complex such that the committee system becomes an effective tool for tertiary administration. The committee system is a creation of the law, the use of committee in the administration of tertiary institutions was entrenched in the law establishing tertiary institutions.

The committee system of administration of tertiary institutions is simply the use of few individuals appointed by school authority for in-depth analysis of issues relating to the academic environment and they are expected to make recommendations to the parent body (Senate or governing council) for consideration and implementation. In collaborating this fact, Ogunode and Mcbrown (2022), opines that committee is a device for achieving coordination of activities and sharing of information among various departments and divisions of an organizations. Similarly, Uche (2020) asserts that committee system is an administrative technique used to facilitate planning and management activities in tertiary institutions. The committee system is capable of promoting teamwork and further helps in dissemination of information. Despite these worthy roles of the committee system of administration, there are a lot of challenges that have hampered the effective performance of committee members in the attainment of tertiary education goals. In the recent times the appointment of members into the committee is not on merit, the committee members are at times the cronies of the Vice Chancellor or Provost, and by implication placing undue influence on members. The committee members are subject to the whims and caprices of the Vice Chancellor or Provost and pay undue loyalty to the Vice Chancellor or Provost at the detriment of the generality of the community of scholars. More sad is when recommendations of committee are set aside without consideration and implementation thereby causing a colossal waste of time and resources that

would have been channeled to a more productive venture. It is premise against this background that this paper seeks to explore the committee system as instrument of administration of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Tertiary Institutions

Tertiary education is the third level of education following the completion and from secondary education. Tertiary education being the frontier of education is considered as the main index of national development and transformation whereby all the skills, knowledge and information acquired through this means are now the vehicle for productivity, wealth creation, prosperity, good health and healthy living, competitiveness, communication expansion, scientific and technological advancements. According to Ekundayo and Ajayi (2019), tertiary education plays a crucial role in the supply of high level manpower for the socio-political and economic development of a nation. Some of the goals of tertiary education according to Federal Government of Nigeria, FGN (2013) include to contribute to national development through high level manpower training; to develop and inculcate proper value for the survival of society; to acquire both physical and intellectual skills, which will enable individuals to be self reliant and useful members of the society; and to promote and encourage scholarship and community services. Tertiary education is also referred to as higher education. It is a part of the educational institution purposely established to meet the educational manpower and development needs of the nation. According to Peretomode (2018), higher education exercise a direct influence on national productivity, which to a very large extent determines the country's standard of living and help in stimulating local economy as an engine of growth. Tertiary or higher education as emphasized by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), in her National policy document on Education, is any education given to an individual after secondary education in formal institution including those running correspondence courses as explained earlier. Tertiary education is an advanced place for the training of people for the work force and other societal engagements. In the submission of Amawulu and Kurokeyi (2018), tertiary education represents a transitional period of a new independence life from their parents and a dependent life at school.

Administration

Administration is a generic term that is used to explain the process of coordinating human and nonhuman resources towards the attainment of the organizational goals. In this regard, administration helps to build a harmonious relationship amongst the work force for the attainment of set goals. Peretomode (1999) asserts that administration is concerned with the performance of executive duties, the carrying out of policies and decisions to fulfill a purpose and the controlling of the day to day running of an organization. Administration is a social process concerned with identifying, maintaining, motivating, controlling and unifying formally and informally organized human and material resources within an integrated system designed specifically to achieve predetermined objectives. Tertiary institution is a complex human organization that needs a well-defined administrative structure in order to effectively achieve its objectives. According to Ndubuisi, Ogunode and Terf (2021), administration of tertiary

institutions is the coordination of human and non-human resources towards attainment of some predetermined goals. Basically, administrative structure differs slightly from tertiary institution to tertiary institution however these institutions have common basic structure. The formation and structure are clearly stated on the enabling laws that establish the tertiary institutions. The enabling law defines the administrative structure as the organ and the responsibilities and its limitations are explicitly clear.

Concept of Committee System

Committee can 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. It 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. For the sake of this study, committee refers to the approach of constituting a group of people for a purpose of carrying out special assignments that are keys to the development of the institutions. The committee system enhances the participation of members of staff in running the affairs of the school. Jaiyeoba and Ojewumi (2022) point out that committee system, when used in secondary school, is expected to enhance administrative effectiveness and maintain democratic procedures for representation of views set out in the school system. Jaiyeoba and Ojewumi added that utilization of committee system may promote communication and acceptance of decision reached in the school. The committee system brings group of individuals to share ideas and work together to effectively perform task assigned to them.

Contextually, committee system is act of constituting a group of people from a larger one to deliberate, investigate, recommend and take actions on a specific task. Committee system is an administrative tactics used to enhance effective and efficient attainment of educational objectives. It is a system of administration in which a sub-group of senate or governing council members is appointed to discuss, deliberate and take decisions on issues referred to them and consequently report to the parent body. According to Owunwanne (2019), committee system refers to a governance structure comprising various committees that facilitate decision-making, policy formulation, and oversight functions. The committee system in tertiary institutions is a framework for organizing and managing academic and administrative activities through a network of committees, sub-committees, and task forces. Committee system is a mechanism for ensuring participatory governance, accountability, and transparency through the establishment of various committees that advise, recommend, and decide on matters affecting the institution. No wonder, Adebayo (2023) contends that the committee system encompasses a range of committees, boards, and councils that provide a structured approach to governance, management, and decision-making, enabling institutions to achieve their strategic objectives. Committee system is used for policy making and implementation. It is used to facilitate teaching, research, scholarship and community services. The laws establishing the tertiary institutions also empower them to set committees for effective administration of tertiary institutions.

Types of Committees in Tertiary Institutions

Basically, all the committees emanate from council or senate. Council committees are those committees instituted by the council with at least a member representing the council. Such committees according to Okai and Wordu (2019:7 – 8) include:

Senate Committee: The Senate Committees are committees emanating from the senate and consequently, members are responsible to the senate for their reports and decisions. Committees are; curriculum and instruction committee; assessment and graduate senate business committee; committee of deans; admission committee; requirement committee; research and development committee; calendar and time table committee; advisory committee on special remedial; programmes library and publication committee; student welfare committee; lecturers committee; development committee; housing committee; and committee of hall wardens.

Joint Committee of Council/Senate: These committees include, staff discipline, appointment and promotions committee, (Academics and Technical); senior staff; junior staff committee and committee of honorary degree. It is imperative to note that despite the above committees mentioned, the management can establish committees for effective school administration. Highlight of some of the major committees;

Finance and General Purpose Committee: This is the committee emanating from council and is chaired by the Pro-chancellor. The Vice Chancellor/Provost and Deputy Chancellor are members while the secretary of the committee is the registrar. This is high power committee whose responsibility is to adopt strategies to achieve objectives of the school under the guidance of the governing council. To ensure the best ways of managing school finances such as prudent financial transactions and as well as effective and efficient allocation of resources to all the area of need to meet relevant needs of the students.

University Tender Board Committee: This is a committee involved in the procurement procedure of the tertiary institutions. The committee receives all the tenders for the purchase of goods and services and makes recommendation to the governing council. The committee is composed of Pro-chancellor as the chairman, Vice Chancellor/Provost and deputy chancellor and deputy provost as members while the registrar is the secretary plus other members.

Appointment and Promotions Committee (Academic): This is a joint committee of council and senate committee. The Vice Chancellor/Provost is the chairman of the committee. Other members of the committee are Deans, Directors and other members while the registrar is the secretary. The committee is responsible for appointment and promotion of academic staff only. There is also appointment and promotions committee for administrative and technical senior staff.

Senate Business Committee: This is a committee emanating from senate whose responsibilities among others are – the preparation of items of business for deliberation in the senate; examine papers submitted to the senate; support effective communications from and to

senate and other matters referred to the committee. The Vice Chancellor/Provost is the chairman; the Registrar is the secretary and other members representing the council and senate.

Curriculum and Instruction Committee: This committee is appointed by the Vice Chancellor/Provost. The responsibility of this committee includes the continuous review of the curriculum in accordance with the guide-line of National University Commission (NUC). It is also the responsibility of the committee to ensure that newly or existing academic programs provides quality learning experiences; to consider and inform senate on academic regulations and guideline for curriculum and instructions, to consider and report to senate the quality and number of teaching staff, class size for lectures and laboratories, workshop and fieldwork, which will ensure a high standard of instruction and learning; to conduct seminars on curriculum and instructions for academic staff of the tertiary institutions.

Roles and Responsibilities of Committees

Committees in tertiary institutions play a crucial role in facilitating decision-making, policy formulation, and oversight functions, ensuring the effective governance and management of academic and administrative activities. Specifically, committees are responsible for advising, recommending, and deciding on matters such as curriculum development, staff appointments, budget allocation, and student affairs, among others. According to Adebayo (2023), the roles and responsibilities of committee system in tertiary institutions include but not limited to policy-making and decision-making; oversight and monitoring; as well as advisory and consultative functions.

Policy-making and decision-making are critical roles of committee systems in tertiary institutions, enabling them to shape the academic and administrative direction of the institution. Adeyemi (2020) asserts that through policy-making, committees establish guidelines and regulations that govern various aspects of institutional life, such as student admissions, staff recruitment, and financial management. Decision-making according to Owunwanne (2019) involves committees making informed choices on matters such as budget allocation, curriculum development, and strategic planning. Effective policy-making and decision-making by committees require careful consideration of relevant data, stakeholder input, and institutional priorities. Through this role, the committees play a vital part in ensuring the overall effectiveness and efficiency of tertiary institutions.

Oversight and monitoring are essential roles of committee systems in tertiary institutions, ensuring that policies are implemented effectively and that institutional activities are aligned with strategic objectives. Through oversight, Adebayo (2023) contends that committees review and evaluate the performance of academic and administrative units, identifying areas for improvement and providing guidance for corrective action. Monitoring involves committees tracking progress, identifying potential risks, and taking proactive measures to mitigate them (Akinola, 2022). According to Ejeh (2022), effective oversight and monitoring by committees enable tertiary institutions to maintain high standards of quality, accountability, and

transparency. Committees also ensure that institutions comply with regulatory requirements, accreditation standards, and internal policies.

The committee system in tertiary institutions provides advisory and consultative functions, enabling stakeholders to seek guidance and expertise on various matters. Owunwanne (2019) opines that through advisory functions, committees offer recommendations on policy development, academic programs, and administrative procedures. Consultative functions on the other hand according to Akinola (2022) involve committees providing expert advice and feedback to stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and students. Committees may also facilitate communication and collaboration among stakeholders, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. Effective advisory and consultative functions enable committees to promote evidence-based decision-making and support the overall well-being of the institution (Igwe, 2021).

Benefits of Committee System in Tertiary Institutions

From the foregoing discussions, committee is inherent in the administration of tertiary institutions. In Nigeria, the committee system is as old as the tertiary institution itself, and it is imperative to use the committee system in order to reflect the diverse interests, and opinions of the staff, and further more to facilitate effective management of tertiary institutions particularly to arrive at meaningful decisions. Bampoh–Addo (2018) asserts that committees are usually a viable instrument in bringing about effectiveness in the tertiary institutions hence it is a tool for helping administrators in the performance of their duties. Therefore, the benefits of committee system of administration are enormous; the committee system according to Arthur (2019) enhances the pooling of knowledge, experiences and skills of the lecturers and it ensure that issues that concerns instructional delivery are critically discussed and quality decisions are reached.

Committee also provides opportunity to enhance cooperation and collaboration among lecturers and it encourages team work. Committee system of administration in the tertiary institutions provides ample opportunity for lecturers to actively participate in decision making and this is the hall mark of democracy. In collaborating this fact, Uche (2020) contends that the university as an international community engages in the daily business of the search for knowledge and truth and therefore its modus operandi must be open and democratic. Furthermore, committee system ensures communication flow among the lecturers. At committee level, the policies and objectives of the tertiary institution are better explained and better disseminated to members. Arthur (2019) opines that committee is a device for achieving coordination of activities and sharing of information among various departments and divisions of organizations. Also, issues that are of scientific and technical in nature are better handled by experts and this makes committee inevitable. Such issues must be handled by professionals or those persons with expert knowledge to make useful and meaningful decisions that can lead to goal attainment.

Committee system has encouraged decentralization of authority from one powerful administrator to group of individuals and in the process enhances checks and balances in the system. The decentralization of authority will in turn enhance greater participation by members and this will further ensure sense of belonging among staff (Ezeigbo, 2016). Lecturers are more comfortable when they are part of the system that makes decisions on how the school is been governed. It gives sense of belonging and credibility to the system. Ahaotu, Ogunode and Ayisa (2019) emphasize that the appointment of committee members can also be used as an administrative tool used to delay decisions on certain issues until nerves and temper are cooled down. Such technique will reduce the pressure on the vice chancellor/provost and consequently will overcome resistance and pressure from affected lecturers/persons. This will give administrators enough time and possibly make better and informed decisions and policies.

Challenges Facing Committee System in Tertiary Institutions

In spite of its amazing benefits, the committee systems of administration of tertiary institutions are not without challenges. One of the major critiques against the committee of governance in Nigeria tertiary institutions is that the committee members are pals of the Vice Chancellor/Provost and they are appointed based on patronage and loyalty. Again, indecisiveness is another short fall of committee system. Since committees consists of people with different experiences and background there are usually conflicting views on various issues and this leads to dragging and it takes long term to arrive at decisions. Committee system may not be appropriate where prompt decisions are needed, hence committee system is not very effective in emergency period, and this is because issue that requires quick decisions may first be referred to the committee. The non-participation of committee members has also not helped matters. Oyebade (2016) asserts that what raised eyebrows and leaves a lot to be desired is the level of participation and contribution by staff, students and stakeholders and the nature and extent of representation in various committees.

Consequently, the committee performs below expectations and their recommendations not accepted. It becomes colossal waste of resources – manpower, time and finance. Again, indecisiveness is another shortfall of committee system. Since committee consists of people with different experience and background, it is difficult to pin point specific responsibility, and a consensus would hardly be reached, and this tendency creates room for passing the buck in decision making. Tella (2015) asserts that committee system of governance in the administration of tertiary institutions is a very expensive form of administration. The resources invested in these committees can be used to invest in other programmes to enhance teaching and learning most especially when the committees are merely acting on advisory capacity. This means that their recommendations or suggestions may not be accepted by the authority that established them. It has also been argued that committees system of administration has not helped in the protection of administrative secrets since committee are made of members who deliberate on certain policies and programs of the school.

Ineffective communication and coordination are significant challenges facing committee systems in tertiary institutions, leading to misunderstandings, delays, and inefficiencies. Poor

communication according to Igwe (2021) can result in committee members being unclear about their roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Inadequate coordination can lead to overlapping or contradictory decisions, causing confusion and undermining the effectiveness of the committee system (Akinola, 2022). Furthermore, ineffective communication and coordination can hinder the ability of committees to respond promptly to emerging issues and challenges. This can ultimately compromise the quality of decision-making and the overall governance of the institution. Furthermore, Adeyemi (2020) noted that conflicting interests and agendas are another challenge facing committee systems in tertiary institutions, potentially undermining the integrity and effectiveness of decision-making processes. When committee members have competing interests or agendas, it can lead to biased decision-making, favoritism, and unfair treatment of certain groups or individuals.

Conflicting interests can also create tensions and conflicts within committees, hindering their ability to function effectively. Moreover, conflicting agendas can lead to a lack of cohesion and direction, causing committees to lose focus and momentum. Lastly, Ejeh (2022) acknowledges that limited resources and capacity are significant challenges facing committee systems in tertiary institutions, constraining their ability to function effectively and efficiently. Insufficient financial resources can limit the ability of committees to undertake research, gather data, and engage stakeholders, ultimately compromising the quality of decision-making. Akinola (2022) views that limited human resources can also hinder the ability of committees to respond promptly to emerging issues and challenges. Furthermore, inadequate infrastructure, technology, and support services can create barriers to effective communication, coordination, and decision-making thereby distorting the roles and responsibilities of the committees which by implication truncate the effective administration of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

System Theory

Systems theory was propounded by a biophysicist Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1920. The system was seen as a series of interrelated and interdependent parts in such a way that the interaction of any part of the system affects the whole system. That is, one part of the system must interact and depend on the other parts around it to function effectively. Bertalanffy proposed that systems share common characteristics, such as wholeness, interdependence, and self-regulation, which can be applied to understand systems in various fields. Bertalanffy's system theory aimed to provide a unified approach to understanding complex phenomena, moving beyond traditional reductionist methods. His work emphasized the importance of considering the relationships and interactions within systems, rather than just focusing on individual components.

The system theory is relevant to the present study because education system (school) is a system and the concept of interaction and interdependence of parts with the education system like all other social systems has identical properties with the other system. The tertiary institutions are looked at in terms of social system as complex interactive examined structurally

and operationally. The theory is of immense help to this project work as the realization of the objectives of institutions depends on all the part and parcel of the system which committees are part of them. The effectiveness of the committees directly and indirectly affects the entire system. So, tertiary institutions administrators and managers are expected to prioritize the needs of the committees and provide all resources needed to carry out their assignment for them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the committee system is a vital instrument of administration in tertiary institutions which play a crucial role in facilitating decision-making, policy formulation, and oversight functions. Through their advisory, consultative, and oversight roles, committees enable tertiary institutions to maintain high standards of quality, accountability, and transparency. However, the effectiveness of committee systems is often hindered by challenges such as ineffective communication and coordination, conflicting interests and agendas, and limited resources and capacity. To overcome these challenges, tertiary institutions must prioritize effective communication, provide training and capacity-building programs, and conduct regular evaluations and needs assessments. With this approach put into play, committee systems can fulfill their potential as a key instrument of administration, supporting the governance, management, and development of tertiary institutions.

Suggestions

Based on the observations from this study, the researchers made the following recommendations:

1.   Vice Chancellor/Provost should democratize the appointment of committee members to ensure greater participation in committee meetings.

2.   Vice Chancellor/Provost should ensure that technological and professional committees should be appointed based on professional expertise and experience. Lecturers with proven knowledge with integrity, honesty and dedication to teaching and scholarship should be appointed.

3.   Develop and implement effective communication strategies to ensure that committee members are informed, engaged, and able to contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes. Also, committees' decisions should be implemented by the school administrators except if it is over ruled by 2/3 of the committee of the house. This will boost the confidence of members and enhance job performance.

4.   The committee should establish clear guidelines, protocols, and conflict-of-interest policies. Also, regular training and orientation programs can also help committee members understand the importance of impartiality and fairness. Administrators of tertiary institutions should invest in capacity-building programs, and exploring innovative solutions and partnerships. Regular needs assessments and evaluations can also help identify areas for improvement and inform strategic planning.

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