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VICE CHANCELLORS USE OF COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

Endurance Berracks NGEREBO

Department of Educational Management

Faculty of Education

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

endybestery@gmail.com

Berry TAMUNOKEBIOKROMA

Department of Educational Management

Faculty of Education

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

berryokes@gmail.com

Zoryii Princess LEGBORSI

Department of Educational Management

Faculty of Education

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

princesszoryiilegborsi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Every organization and institution have designed structure of administration. Both privately owned or publicly established institution administrative set up system of administration that will enable it to achieve the aims and purposes of their existence. This paper examines committee system in the administration of university education in Nigeria. Universities as a complex institution create room for the delegation of certain job functions temporarily or permanently to some individual members of staff to discharge according to some terms and conditions. The use of committee system in the university enhances adequate participation in decision making, pooling of knowledge and integration of opinions of diverse views on administrative matters. Despite the effectiveness and efficiency of the committee system in university administration, there are some challenges facing use of the committee which include: inadequate funding, excess workload for members of the committee, delay in information passage and dissemination, disagreement and misunderstanding among committee members, limited time frame, mode of appointment and selection of members of the committee etc. The paper further recommended that personals of creditable character should be appointed into various groups.

Keywords: Committee System, University, Administration, Vice Chancellor

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INTRODUCTION

The effective and efficient administration of complex organization like the university system needs extra hands to be deployed within the system to render speedy services that enable the system achieve the purpose of establishing such organization. The law that established university also empowers university authorities to appoint committees which act as consultative and advisory bodies on matters relating to administrative policies and programs. The use of committee is imperative because it enhances adequate participation in decision making, pooling of knowledge and the integration of opinions of diverse views on administrative matters: It encourages team work and improves communication among lecturers by explaining certain university policies and programs. University as an institution is governed by well-conceived ideas and principles to perform three basic functions which include; teaching, research and community services. Any university that cannot perform these mentioned functions is not capable to be called a university. The Nigerian university system has grown astronomically in size and has also undergone deep transformation has taken place since its inception over 60 years ago. Also, Nigerian universities has over the years developed sophisticated administrative mechanisms to ensure effective and handle some administrative challenges as to meet world best practices.

The use of committees was entrenched in the Laws/Acts establishing Nigerian Universities as indicated in the University of Ibadan Act of 1962 which states that: "Anybody or persons established by the Act shall without prejudice of the generality, shall have power to appoint committees consisting of members of that body and subject to the provisions of sub-section(7) of section four of this Act to authorize committee established by it to exercise, on its behalf, such of its functions as it may determine". In the management of higher institutions, committees play very important roles in the decision-making process. This is because as democratic establishments, universities' decisions on governance must reflect the opinion of a cross section of the staff if such decisions are to be accepted. This explains why many institutions in the country have established many committees to assist management in arriving at useful and meaningful decisions that can facilitate the proper management and growth of the university system of education.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Committee Concept and Types

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 Board operates on behalf of the University Council and therefore reports to the Council accordingly.

Types of committees include standing committees, advisory committees, and ad hoc committees. Standing Committees are required where the business to be delegated to the committees is one in which it will be required to perform more or less as a permanent feature. An example of this committee is the Academic Planning Committee. An Advisory Committee on the other hand is a special committee set up to offer advice to the parent body, or management or an individual on specific issues. The parent body is not bound to accept or act on the advice as presented. Such committees go into issues and make recommendations

for consideration. An example of this is the Professional Advisory Committee of the University Council.

Committees could be Ad hoc, or formal/statutory in nature. Ad hoc committees are usually temporary, as they are created for a specific purpose, or to solve short range problems, while formal committees are established as part of the organizational structure, with specific delegated duties and authority (Hagar, 2018). An example is the school/faculty boards which are empowered by the Academic Board, among other things, to determine all matters related to teaching and research in the School/Faculty and also determine all matters relating to students' progress. Ad hoc Committees have precise terms of reference and the life span of such committees depends on the time needed to complete the assignment given.

Concept of Committee System

A committee is defined as a group of people appointed or selected to perform a given function or to do a particular job on behalf of a large group. The law that established every university also empowers the university authorities to setup committees and also appoint members of those committees which act as consultative and advisory bodies on matters relating to administrative policies and programs (Okai & Wordu, 2019). Committee plays a well-defined role in any organization including the university where certain authorities, job functions, commands and duties are delineated, assigned to and delegated to perform on behalf the management of an organization for effective and efficient administration. Ahaotu et al. (2021) states that committee consist of group of people appointed or chosen to perform a function or do a particular job on behalf of a large group.

Oyebade et al. (2007) also contend that a committee is sub-group of people in an organization identified and brought together to perform certain task either on temporary, permanent or semi-permanent basis. They further contend that the term "committee" is used to select a qualified smaller group of persons to perform the functions of the large body that meets at intervals. Okai and Wordu (2019), states that the use of committee is imperative because it enhances adequate participation in decision making, pooling of knowledge and integration of opinions of diverse views on administrative matters. In the general context, committee system assists the University management in arriving at meaningful decisions that facilitates positive change and also enhance the performance of the university system. The use committees by university administrators, has therefore been adopted for effective and efficient. The leadership competency assessment needs to be undertaken to assess the competencies committee members have to carry out their assigned functions as a committee to achieve excellence or near excellence.

The use of committee is imperative because it enhances adequate participation in decision making, pooling of knowledge and the integration of opinions of diverse views on administrative matters: It encourages team work and improves communication among lecturers by explaining certain university policies and programs. The committee system is an effective and efficient tool in achieving university goals. The paper concludes that increase in student's enrolment, conflict in the school system and the pervasiveness of information and communication technology into educational system has made committee system of administration most desirable.

Duties of Committee Members

Activities of members of a committee involve attending meetings having studied the minutes and relevant documents for the meetings ahead of time; being active and participatory in the course of the meetings, and acquainting themselves with the operations of the committee, its

terms of reference, acceptance procedure, conventions and schedule of meetings. It is also essential for members to familiarize themselves with the role of the committee within the broader committee structure in the university.

Deliberating on issues in committees sometimes poses a lot of problems. The choice of members of a committee is of great importance from the point of view of the way in which the committee approaches its tasks and the kind of decisions made. Membership of committees, therefore, as much as possible, should be based on the choice of the best brains to examine a problem in as rational and dispassionate a manner as possible, and to forward reasonable and practical proposals for dealing with it. The right mix of individuals is pivotal and can often influence the outcome of a particular issue. If care is not taken, strong willed persons can change objectives for which a committee has been created (Chance, 2010). It is important that members make their points succinctly with decorum during committee meetings. Contributions should be worthwhile and rights of others should be respected. Equally very importantly, committee members representing any constituency are expected to report back to their constituencies so as to carry them along else the involvement core value as a chain would be broken.

Problems and Challenges of the Committee System

Committee system as a tool for fair governance is not devoid of challenges. On the subject of challenges of the committee system in Ghanaian public universities, the paper identifies four key issues; namely, the Vice-Chancellors chairing too many committees; unfair representation of non-academic staff; frequency of meetings and large financial expenditure. To start with, the Vice-Chancellor chairs too many committees to allow for maximum efficiency and the specialization of his/her abilities. A Vice-Chancellor who is averse to a principle, considerably causes delays and postponement of meetings occur to the detriment of quick decision making and speedy implementation of needed administrative decisions (Baer et al., 2008).

According to them, Committees most cases could suffer such delays includes very important committees like the Development Committee, the Appointments and Promotions Committee to mention a few. This is because the Vice-Chancellor as chairman may be unable to attend the meetings, either giving to conflict of engagements within or outside the University, or deliberate manipulation by a chairman unwilling to discuss certain issues or due to other reasons connected with the chairman. Again, a Vice-Chancellor who chooses incompetent loyalists as members of committees does a lot of harm to effective university management. For instance, when he appoints incompetent loyalists as Deans, Heads of Department/Units and Directors, he inadvertently provides a fertile ground for the constitution of ineffective University committees since these same inexperienced heads may, as members of Academic Board dominate decisions.

Another problem worth noting is the unfair representation of non-academics on university committees. These committees are made up mostly academics; and this is usually attributable to the nature of university business which is mostly academic. Not only this, issues that are administrative in nature become academic in universities because of their impact on teaching and research, and on staff and students. The non-academics are insignificantly represented on important committees of Ghanaian universities. It should, however, be noted that issues at stake may, on the surface, be regarded as academic related matters, but decisions may well involve the practical question of relative urgency, expediency and the level of priority to be accorded the issue within a given period. This supports the inclusion of university administrators and other non-teaching senior members in the composition of committees in the University.

Notwithstanding, the academics who constitute the majority of the membership of Nigerian university boards and committees, do not equally find it funny hopping from one committee to the other in addition to their normal teaching and research workload. Contrary views are always treated contemptuously. However, when such views, which the committee had refused to share, turn out to be right, the secretaries are always blamed for the committee's wrong action while committees are blamed for acting "illegally" (Calareso, 2007). Equally important is the challenge of frequency of meetings. University committees differ in terms of the regularity of their meetings. Some committees have too many meetings, with little or insufficient intervals for follow-up activities and consequent piling up unwritten minutes of previous meetings. On the other hand, there are those committees with irregular or too few numbers of meetings. Also, at times, meetings are summoned only at the pleasure/arbitrary discretion of the chairman.

Last but not the least, committees consume a large expenditure of finances and time in Nigerian universities. For instance, the provision of logistics including snacks and lunch, payment of transportation fares and night allowances for those travelling, for ordinary meetings that could take three-hours in duration may cost a lot of money as numbers of members in the committees (such as the Academic Board) keep on increasing with the University vibrant expansion policy. Also, secretaries spend a lot of time collating and disseminating information on committees.

Roles of Vice Chancellors as Administrators of Universities

Vice Chancellor as the chief administrative officers of universities has certain roles to carry out to ensure effective administration and smooth academic programmes in the institutions. The following are some of the roles performed by the Vice Chancellors in their various universities:

Organizing and effectiveness in public universities: This refers to the formed structure of authority through which sub-division are arranged, defined and co-ordinated for a defined objective. The university administrator should be able to properly organize the staff as well as office activities appropriately. The administrator should be innovative, try to bring in new things into the system. He should decide on the job to be done, the people to do it, and the tool/facilities to be utilized to do the job. Simply put, organizing has to do with the ability of the administrator to create structural work. It involves the process of focusing attention on the structure and process of apportioning tasks to achieve goals and objectives. Nevertheless, the university administrator can only organize and apportion tasks where there is availability of funds.

Staffing and effectiveness in public universities: This refers to the hiring and employing of persons to occupy certain positions and to undertake certain activities and tasks in the organization, training them and maintaining favourable conditions of work. Staffing requires the ability of the administrator to search for the right people and place them on the right job which would reflect their experience and capability for achieving objectives. In the university environment, staffing is a cardinal feature that affects the growth of the system. In view of this, the university administrator should always have up-to-date information on the staff situation of the school. It is therefore important to keep an inventory of school staff and update such inventory when need be.

Directing and effectiveness in public universities: This is the process involved in getting the best out of every employee in the interest of the organization by giving instruction to

ensure that decisions and policies of the establishment are effectively and efficiently carried out. It encompasses the process of giving instructions to workers on what to do and seeing that they do it to the best of their ability. In addition, directing is a process aimed at guiding and instructing people in an organization in order to achieve organizational goals. Nwachukwu (2006) asserted that directing means moving into action or motivating individuals to act in pursuit of the objectives of an organization or institution. In directing, the university administrator establishes rules and regulations to guide human relations within the university and between the school and its external environment. He assigns roles and responsibilities to academic staff, students and non-academic staff. The administrator should possess good communication skill in order to enhance free flow of communication to the receiver.

Co-ordinating and effectiveness in public universities: This is concerned with harmonizing and unifying the operations of the organization in order to achieve goals. Co-ordinating blends all the activities of the entire staff (academic and non-academic) and students in the university so as to ensure that all efforts are geared towards goal attainment. In order to achieve this, the university administrator regularly inspects, supervises the activities of staff and use of facilities. The purpose of co-ordination is to ensure that all sectors of the university system work towards the achievement of the central goal of education.

Funding and effectiveness in public universities: According to Oxford dictionary, funding is the money provided, especially by an organization or government, for a particular purpose. Simply put, the term funding refers simply to money an organization designates (budgets) for specific purposes, such as capital spending or an organization's operating budget. The importance of adequate funding cannot be overemphasized in order for university administrators to carry out their duties effectively. According to Bamisaiye (1992), every school administrator requires sufficient funding for effectively carrying out the following activities in institutions; providing and administering properly adequate welfare services for the students; with astronomical increase in students' enrolment, sufficient money is required for expanding the existing physical structures, putting up additional buildings, maintaining the entire plant and improve its aesthetic value, properly integrating the human, physical and material resources in the school towards accomplishing the goals and objectives of the school etc. One major source of funding for higher institutions especially public universities in Nigeria is the school or tuition fees. The system relies heavily on tuition fees to meet their expenditure.

Although universities receive allocation from the government as well as other agencies like TETFUND, it is not usually enough as the cost of running them is still very high. In order for institutions to be effective, the administrator has to apply specific strategies to generate revenue for the smooth running of the institution. These alternative strategies are as follows:

Creation of Entrepreneurship development programmes: The administrator should have a business- minded strategy to bring in some programs to the university system. These include pig farming, fish farming, planting of diverse crops in mass quantities for sale after harvesting. The administrator can also bring in industries like banks, supermarkets to the school environment, and so much more.

Expansion of the University Programmes: The administrator can also generate money for the institution by expanding programmes in the university. Expanding university programmes simply means creation of new departments, new faculties, other distance learning

programmes, basic and certificate programmes, departments for adult education and other part-time programmes, and so on. This entails that the university management is flexible, and this can simply be achieved by creating more infrastructures, making available facilities that will aid teaching and learning in these structures, and employment of full-time and part-time academic staff in order to aid the smooth running of these programmes. iii. Sourcing for freewill donations both locally and internationally. The administrator in universities should also source for donations from foreign individuals and organizations both within and outside the country. This can be achieved through visitations by delegates, appeal letters bearing the university's seal. In addition, the prominent people that have once attended the institution (also called alumni) can also be reached out to. There should also be a healthy relationship with the host community.

Having a functional Research unit in the institution: The administrator can have a research unit, which basically functions in carrying out research both internally and externally, for individual, companies and other corporate organizations. This can greatly assist in helping the university administrator to raise funds as well, and can also be referred to as academic entrepreneurship. Academic entrepreneurship has to do with the process of commercializing teaching and research in higher institutions with the sole aim of generating revenue streams for higher institutions. Cantaragu (2012) opined that over time, academic entrepreneurship has evolved to include academic publishing, grant seeking and contract research, which are far more acceptable for the academic culture. An inclusive definition of academic entrepreneurship was subsequently offered by Cantaragu. 2012) which states thus; "Academic entrepreneurship is a practice performed with its sole aim of transferring knowledge and it occurs between the university and the external environment in order to produce economic and social value both for external actors and for members of the academia, and in which at least a member of academia maintains a primary role.

Relationship with other staff and effectiveness in Public Universities: One of the major determinants of success in higher institutions is the relationship between the staff. The smooth running of higher education depends on division of labour, the sharing of knowledge or ideas as well as the integration of social roles. A single administrator or group of men cannot possess the entire skills, capabilities, creativity and ingenuity needed to ensure effective resource management, infrastructure transformation as well as human technical and moral development. In addition, some transformation programmes organized solely by the vice chancellor in the university system can be difficult and may yield mixed results. However, if they are efficiently implemented through coordination and cooperation with other staff, it is not uncommon for the institution to realise significant savings, which are often dependent on the maturity of services being shared, the efficiency and effectiveness of processes and also the type of organisational structures involved in the collaboration. Good relationship with other staff requires leadership with suitable governance arrangements in place, specific focus on delivering benefits and managing risk in a sustainable manner, good information on the impacts and opportunities that changes will have on employees, staff development and established career paths, clear, timely and tailored communications with all staff affected by the proposed changes, and continuous improvement and commitment to improving quality to be embedded within organisational culture.

When there is harmonious relationship with other staff, the quality of service and output is raised. This process of transformation in higher institutions requires commitment from administrators in the institution to deliver organisational change, and a crucial part of this leadership will involve proper engagement with the workforce – particularly those who are tasked with managing the targeted functions at the initial stage of the development

process. This will further help to identify probable issues that may arise during transitional phases. This does not mean that they will do everything themselves. Clearly Vice Chancellors as managers and leaders have to delegate (committee) and equip others to get the job done. But this does not absolve them from the job of managing and being accountable for the results.

Vice Chancellors have to be aware of and assess situations both inside and outside institution. This means that their own perceptions have a vital role to play in their management work (a much-neglected dimension in the study of management). In assessing and interpreting situations, the managers cannot risk taking a narrow view. They have to manage their thinking and the way they relate to and communicate with others. They have to be constantly asking themselves questions and making appropriate responses to changing situations:

- What is the university telling me – the students, the staff (Academic and Non-Academic), the host communities, the government, the Unions, the changes in technology?
- What is happening inside the institution – in people, their motivation and competence, in groups and work teams, in communication, in relationships, in the structures, in the culture and climate, and in other managers/leaders?
- What are our goals and how should they be adapted to changing circumstances?
- What are the central issues affecting the institution – now and in the future?
- What is my power base and how can I use it in the most effective manner?
- How do I respond as a leader and manager – deciding

Role of Committee in the University System

The role of the committee system in the effective administration of the university system can never be over emphasized. From the few available literatures reviewed, it is imperative that the committee system played important role in the university administration for smooth and effective academic system. In Nigeria, the use of committees was entrenched in the Laws and Statutes that established the University System and they are very vital instruments in the decision-making process (Erero as cited in Christiana, 2013). Also, committees are vital institutional arrangements that facilitate and improve internal decision-making in Nigerian universities. They serve as an avenue for expressing, communicating and recommending policies and curriculum changes to the Faculty, Dean, Provost, Vice- Chancellor and other Heads of Units of the universities.

The use of committees enhances university governance and management because 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 committees' 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 administration. Committees are vital tools for university administration, although the decisions made by them are sometimes not implemented because of the overbearing structure of university management.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper concluded that the use of committees provides a more solid basis for administrative decisions because it allows the University to benefit from the expertise and experience of faculty and other staff members. The further recommended the followings:

- University authorities to appoint committees which act as consultative and advisory bodies on matters relating to administrative policies and programs.
- Universities should establish many committees to assist management in arriving at useful and meaningful decisions that can facilitate the proper management and growth of the university system of education.
- Appointment of persons into any commitment should be on merit; and
- Recommendations made by committees should be accepted and implemented without delay so as to boost confidence in the system

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