

## COMMITTEE SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE AS A PANACEA FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

Ugbor, Cletus Chibuike; Nweze Ukamaka N.; Omeke Faith Chinwe & Aba, Samuel  
Ifeanyi\*

Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

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### Abstract

*This paper examined committee system of governance as a panacea for the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was all the Administrative Staff of all the Federal Universities in Nigeria numbering 1000 (National Universities Commission, NUC Abuja, 2022). Simple random sampling technique was adopted using 500 Administrative Staff from 30 Federal Universities in Nigeria comprising 6 Geo-political Zones in Nigeria with 5 Universities each namely, North-Central, North-east, North-West, South-East, South-South and South-West Zones with 83, 83, 83, 83, 83 and 85 Administrative staff respectively for adequate representation for the study. The “Committee System of Governance Questionnaire (CSGQ)” was designed by the researchers and used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was validated by experts. The instrument yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.80 using Cronbach Alpha method. The results were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. The findings showed that, the rationales for the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria include: it ensures participatory (democratic) decision making process, use of quality ideas, experience and expertise of employees, adherence to consensus decisions, encourages team work and efficient communication system, among others. Finally, the challenges inhibiting the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria include that, the committee system requires much money and time, delay in decision making process, irregular meetings, among others. The study recommended among others that, huge budgetary allocation should be provided to the Federal Universities by the government, transparent leadership as well as engaging in sensitization programmes to curb the challenges of the committee system of governance in Federal Universities in Nigeria.*

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**Keywords:** Committee, Committee System of Governance, Management, Universities

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### Introduction

Education has remained the pivot upon which all the developmental strides of a nation revolve. This is due to the basic roles it plays in the economic, political and socio-cultural areas of life. Education is the process whereby one acquires the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes among others, which enable them to exist functionally in the society. According to National Economic Empowerment and development strategy (NEEDS, 2014), education enables the goals of wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and value re-orientation of the citizens. This goal is effectively pursued, attained and sustained through an efficient relevant and functional educational system. Okon (2023) observes that, education serves as a progenitor of social change in the society through the generation and dissemination of knowledge, new areas ideas from the present to the future generations for useful living. This position of education was affirmed by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) in her National Policy on Education as it pertains to Universities or tertiary institution. The policy states that, Universities provide not only high level skills management necessary for every market but also the training of essential personnel required in the country or economy like leaders, nurses, teachers, civil servants, engineers, humanists, among others. The attainment of the educational goals and objectives by the Universities are dependent on the ability of the school management team to make rational decisions for the progress of the educational institutions. By so doing, it is pertinent that the management of the Universities in Nigeria be

democratized in making rational decisions through the establishment of the committee system for easy attainment of the educational objectives.

The committee system refers to the process for achieving the coordination of activities in departments and divisions of an organization such as the Universities. Adeleke (2022) states, that committee system is a democratic method of school management. By this, different Universities set up committee with varying scope to sieve out ideas and experiences that would enable the leadership of the respective Universities to implement their policies and programmes. Operationally, the committee system of University governance is the process of management involving the appointment of a group or groups of employees in decision making for the generation of quality ideas and experiences by offering solutions to institutional problems or group challenges. Mark (2022) observes two major forms of committees namely, permanent or temporal committee Mark further asserts that, committee management can also be executive or administrative in nature. The executive committee offers to individuals advise on policies whereas, the advisory committee plays an advisory function to the executive who is the head of the organization or institution. According to Edimark (2023) using the status of individuals as bench mark, two committees can conveniently be identified as standing and Ad-hoc committees. Ad-hoc committee exists in temporal basis to address specific institutional issues where membership terminates at the end of the assignment or task. The standing committees are permanent and a drawn from the top level of the organizational management strata.

Management as used here is the administration of an organization which comprises the activities of setting the strategy of an organization and coordinating the efforts of its employees to accomplish its objectives through the application of available resources. According to Adelabu (2023) the resources available to management include financial, material, technological and human resources for the attainment of the stipulated objectives or goals of the organization. Muo (2021) explains management as the integrating force in all organized activity attain a common objective. Thus, management aims at organization and utilization of the available resources for optimal result. Operationally, management refers to the process whereby the available human, material, and financial resource of an organization or groups are equitably used through proper planning, coordination, controlling, employment of proper staff, among others in order to attain the goals and objectives. Such organization may be business or educational institutions like the Universities. The Universities are higher institutions that specializes in the development of the manpower needs of a nation, among others. The management system of the Universities is hierarchical in nature through the use of committees to achieve the educational objectives. The educational objectives of higher education as contained in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) National Policy on Higher Education hinges on the training of high level manpower for national development, among others. The University management are expected to uphold this policy and make it to bear with any policy or programme initiated or implemented in schools. According to Ajala (2022), the management of Universities can be viewed in two perspectives. The external and the internal bodies; the external body controls the Universities through the National Universities Commission (NUC) which among others, ensures the uniform or orderly development of University education in Nigeria, maintain high quality standard and proper funding of Universities. The internal body or management is organized in the form of organogram or hierarchy of the University management.

The organogram of the Universities in Nigeria comprise the visitor - Head of State; President, the Chancellor-ceremonial head of the University who presides over all meetings of the convocation for conferring degrees to deserving people. Ekvis (2023), states that, the visitor to the University is followed by the Governing Council, headed by the pro-chancellor who functions are mainly administrative in nature. Here, the roles of the Governing Council of the Universities comprise policy formulation, goal setting, staff development, general discipline of staff, budget approval, among others. All these functions are performed in order to achieve the

objectives of University education in Nigeria. The Governing Council is followed by the senate.

The senate is the principal organ of the University that is headed by the vice-chancellor as the executive. The vice-chancellor regulates the internal activities of the University usually in academic sphere and the Registrar of the University as the secretary to the senate. The performance of the University internally is governed by a number of committees. According to Mgbekem (2014), the major activities of the Universities in Nigeria are done through the committee system of governance which are mainly responsible to the University council or the senate. Some of the viable committees found in Universities in Nigeria covers large spectrum of activities and they comprise financial and General purpose committee, development committee, appointments and promotion committee; admission committee, among others. All these committees aid the University management in the attainment of the educational goals and objectives through their rational ideas, experiences geared towards the solution of educational problems or challenges in Nigeria. An important question to ask is: What roles do the committee system of governance play in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. One of the cardinal reasons for the use of committee systems in the University management is that, committees ensure participatory method of decision making as entrenched in the law. By this, it enhances participatory democracy based on law; a situation where by the academics with quality knowledge and expertise participate fully in the decision-making process in the University. According to Cotton (2022), a democratic method of school management that allows employees, particularly teachers, adequate participation in any decision that affect them through committee system contributes significantly to the achievement of the educational goal and objectives.

Secondly, it allows the use of quality ideas, knowledge and expertise from the employees geared towards the attainment of the objectives of the Universities in Nigeria. Adekpo (2023) explains, that the brilliant ideas expressed by the employees through their expert ideas and quality knowledge on any issue that crops up in the Universities in Nigeria plays an important role in solving all the institutional issues that arise within in Nigeria. By so doing, it will enable the University management in Nigeria to achieve the desired goals and objectives of education based on the stipulations of the national education goals. Furthermore, the use of committee system in the University management enhances general or consensus on the decisions taken on issues that arise in the Universities. In this case, Ajala (2022), opines that committee system of decision making in the Universities enhance and broadens large support, acceptance easier, coordination and communication, culminating to improved decisions. Also Mkpoli (2023) observes that, the visible sign of delegation of duties in decision making process manifests in the University management which broadens its capacity to deal with issues as they arise. In all these, the objectives and goals of University education are attained without much crisis cropping up. The use of the committee system in University governance encourages team work and improve communication among lecturers by explaining certain University policies and programmes. Through team work, the use of committee system ensures administrative efficiency and effectiveness of the management team to target mainly the attainment of the goals of the Universities in Nigeria as set by law. Jesse (2022) explains that, the use of team work among employees helps to sustain the internal and external organization of the University system. This brings mutuality in both University and the external environment as they gather as a team to realize the educational goal as stated by the law establishing them. Thus, the role of the committee system was affirmed by Aurgi (2022) who observes that the management of the University governance requires the adoption of committee system due to bureaucracy, collegial and political models that are applicable therein.

Committee system of governance in the University system enhances the equitable coordination of activities and improvement among various departments and decision of the school. Hicks (2023) explains that the use of committees in University management brings to

fore the primary motive of instituting it to ensure a broad-based decision model that takes cognizance of all the segments of the University community without prejudice.

The management and governance of Universities in Nigeria involve the authority to make and take decisive measures about fundamental issues, policies and programmes in several critical areas with a view to achieving its organizational objectives. Mankindo (2023) states that issues that require urgent and maximum attention such as academic requirements, school standards, appointment of staff, internal organizational structure, among others are made available on time to the deserving audience due to the use of the committee system of governance. Additionally, accountability by all organs of the University management is encouraged through the adoption of committee's system for efficient functioning of the University system. By this, committees encourage and promote efficiency, effectiveness and accountability to all organs or segments of the University geared toward the attainment of the educational goals and objectives of the Universities in Nigeria. Finally, the University committees play an important role in supporting strategic planning, quality assurance, policy development, academic programme delivery, the student learning experience or the content of what is taught, among others. According to Kennedy (2023), committee system is very vital to the management of Universities in Nigeria as issues of very importance like academic problems are expressed. All these aids towards the attainment of the educational objectives of the University education in Nigeria. Other notable needs for committee system in University governance include that it blunts the edge of mistrust of professional administrators as well as, tries to avoid their limitations in dealing with professional academics, a means of practicing administrative and executive openness in the University management, among others. Despite the various needs for the committee system in the management of University education in Nigeria, certain challenges tend to hamper the free operation of committee system in University governance. One of the challenges of committee systems in University governance is that it requires large financial expenditure. By this, the use of committee system in the Universities gulps large sum of money in order to provide all the logistics required by each committee's member during session. Okoli (2022) explain that the provision of logistics like snacks, lunch and payment for travelling allowances take a lot of money which should ordinarily be avoided when the committees do not exist. The University management may not have all what it takes to provide all the needed logistics for a sustainable committee in the University management.

Apart from above, it may be a ploy by the University management to delay the passage of quick decisions. In this case, the management sets up committees to look into certain problems or issues in the University without a commensurate need for the speedy decisions. Markia (2023) observes that, the use of committee by the University management may be a ploy to delay decision that are supposed to be undertaken by an individual e.g. the Vice chancellor or the Registrar of the University may take decisions without recourse to the committee members. Sometimes such committees do not come up with a credible decision on the issues at hand. Thus, the use of committee does not permit quick decisions making especially at the top management level where the executive of the University do not want it to work. Another challenge is the frequency at which meetings are attended by the committee members. According to Addo (2018), University committees differ in terms of the regularity of their meetings as some committee have too little interest to follow many meetings activities. This results to pilling up of written minutes of precious meetings. Apart from the above, meetings are only held at the whims and caprices of the chairman of the committee. This situation is unhealthy for the University education in the Nigeria to thrive. Furthermore, the poor representation of the non-academics in University committees may be a challenge to University governance. The committees set up are mostly academic in outlook due to the nature of University business. According to Eric (2023), most issues discussed become academic in nature as it involves or related to teaching, research and community service which the non-academics are not part of. This level of disharmony has created loophole in the relationships that exists in the University as a system.

Delays in decision making by the committee is a challenge to the University system. Edeth (2022) explains that committees cause delay which in turn leads to decisions being taken outside the structure which results in doubts being cast on the rationale for setting up the committee. The committee system decision making creates an environment where decisions can be taken without recourse to the committee. This tends to dampen the morale of efficient committee members to effectively participate fully in decision making process in the University. The after effect is that, the issues concerned with educational advancement will suffer. All these challenges among others, account for the defective nature of the use of committees in University governance in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Effective decision making through the committee system of governance in the University management have generated much interest to the stakeholders in education sector that good governance does not only lead to higher performance index in teaching, research and community service but, it has a great influence on the institutions' reputation. The democratization of University governance becomes imperative as it enhances representative governance using the committee system which is anchored on innovation, creativity, professionalism, integrity and team spirit. But it seems that, the objectives of the use of committee system in the University governance tends to be illusive due to the challenges associated with it. This has been a source of great concern to the government, University management, lecturers, non-academic staff, and other stakeholders in education sector. In the ideal situation, the University system is encouraged to be transparent and prudent in the use of the scarce resources and adequate decision making for optimal operation. This seems to be a farce due to myriads of challenges such a non -democratization of decision making process, poor representation of the non-academic staff, and wastage of funds, among others. It is based on this base line that the researchers embarked on the study that investigated committee system as a panacea for the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the study**

The aim of this study was to investigate committee system of governance as a panacea for the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study include to:

1. find out the rationales for the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria.
2. ascertain the challenges inhibiting the adoption of the committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the rationales for the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges inhibiting the adoption of the committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria?

### **Methods**

Descriptive survey design was adopted by the researchers. According to Nworgu (2015), this design attempts to explain the process of obtaining data on a particular features of a given population in a systematic manner that the findings are generalized to the entire population. The population of the study was all the Administrative Staff of all the Federal Universities in Nigeria numbering 1000 (National Universities Commission, NUC Abuja, 2022). Simple random sampling technique was adopted using 500 Administrative Staff from 30 Federal Universities in Nigeria comprising 6 Geo-political Zones in Nigeria with 5 Universities each namely, North-Central, North-east, North-West, South-East, South-South and South-West Zones with 83,83,83,83,83 and 85 Administrative staff respectively for adequate representation for the study. The "Committee System of Governance Questionnaire (CSGQ)" was designed by

the researchers and used to collect data from the respondents. The items in the questionnaire were weighted as follows: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) with 4, 3, 2, and 1 points respectively. The criterion mean of acceptance was 2.50. The instrument was validated by two experts in Educational Administration and Planning, and one in Science Education Department, all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. It yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.80. A total of 500 copies of the instrument were administered and retrieved. The data was analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. Any item statement with mean rating of 2.50 and above was accepted, while item statement with a rating below 2.50 was disagreed upon.

## Results

**Research Question One:** What are the rationales for the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the responses of Administrative staff on the Rationales for the Adoption of Committee System of Governance in the Management of Federal Universities in Nigeria**  
N=500

| S/N                                  | Rationale for the Adoption of Committee System of Governance in the Management of Federal Universities in Nigeria              | Administrative Staff |      |                 |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------------------|------|-----------------|
|                                      |  | Mean( $\bar{X}$ )    | St.d | Decision        |
| 1                                    | Committee system of governance ensures participatory method of decision making.  | 3.00                 | 0.31 | Accepted        |
| 2                                    | It enhances the use of quality ideas, experiences and expertise of the employees towards attainment of the goals               | 2.50                 | 0.34 | Accepted        |
| 3                                    | Ensures consensus in decision taken in the University  | 3.00                 | 0.31 | Accepted        |
| 4                                    | Encourages team work and efficient communication system.   | 2.65                 | 0.33 | Accepted        |
| 5                                    | Equitable coordination of activities and information within the department and decisions in the University system.             | 2.50                 | 0.34 | Accepted        |
| 6                                    | Appropriate decisions are taken on fundamental issues in the University.   | 2.80                 | 0.32 | Accepted        |
| 7                                    | Ensure accountability in all spheres of the University management  | 2.50                 | 0.34 | Accepted        |
| 8                                    | It supports the strategic planning by the management of the University geared towards the attainment of the educational goals. | 3.05                 | 0.31 | Accepted        |
| <b>Grand mean = 2.8; St.d = 0.33</b> |  |                      |      | <b>Accepted</b> |

Data from research question 1 identified the rationales for the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Table 1 indicates that, items 1-8 had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, which showed that, they are the rationale for the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. This implies that, the rationales for the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria include that, it ensures participatory (democratic) decision making process, use of quality ideas, experience and expertise of employees, ensures the existence of consensus decision in University management issues, encourages team work and efficient communication system, equitable coordination activities and information in different Departments of the University, ensures accountability in all spheres of University management and supporting of the strategic planning by the management of the University geared towards the attainment of the educational goals.

**Research Questions Two:** What are the challenges inhibiting the adoption of the committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the responses of Administrative Staff on the Challenges inhibiting the adoption of the Committee System of Governance in the Management of Federal Universities in Nigeria**  
N=500

| S/N                                  | Challenges Inhibiting the Adoption of the Committee System of Governance in the Management of Federal Universities in Nigeria                            | Administrative Staff |      |                 |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------------------|------|-----------------|
|                                      |  | Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )   | St.d | Decision        |
| 9                                    | The committee system requires large financial outlay from the University management for executive.   | 3.00                 | 0.31 | Accepted        |
| 10                                   | It leads to delay in decision making process.  | 2.50                 | 0.34 | Accepted        |
| 11                                   | The call for meetings by the chairman to meet urgent issues in the University is not regular as required.  | 2.60                 | 0.01 | Accepted        |
| 12                                   | Poor representation of the non-academic staff on most of the vital committees  | 2.80                 | 0.32 | Accepted        |
| 13                                   | Decision taken without recourse to the committee may be futile   | 2.50                 | 0.34 | Accepted        |
| 14                                   | It may be a ploy by the University management to delay decision making   | 3.00                 | 0.31 | Accepted        |
| 15                                   | Political interference in the appointment of members of the committees   | 2.81                 | 0.32 | Accepted        |
| 16                                   | Excessive red-tapes may be rife among the committee members.   | 2.71                 | 0.12 | Accepted        |
| 17                                   | The use of committee leads to time wasting in decision making process.   | 3.00                 | 0.31 | Accepted        |
| 18                                   | Members of the committee may be inexperienced to tackle the pressing issues in the University  | 3.00                 | 0.31 | Accepted        |
| 19                                   | The leadership style may hinder the operations of the committee.   | 2.50                 | 0.34 | Accepted        |
| 20                                   | The use of committee in Universities leads to uncertainty as to when a decision is final.  | 3.00                 | 0.31 | Accepted        |
| 21                                   | The preparation of the committee by the Chairman, Secretaries and other members may become too cumbersome which reduces its efficiency and effectiveness | 2.50                 | 0.34 | Accepted        |
| <b>Grand mean = 2.8; St.d = 0.24</b> |  |                      |      | <b>Accepted</b> |

Data from research question 2 above shows the challenges inhibiting the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Table 2 indicates that, item 9-21 had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, which showed that, they are the major challenges inhibiting the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. This implies that, the challenges inhibiting the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria include that, the committee system requires much money and time to perform their duties, delay in decision making process, irregular meetings of the, poor representation of the non-academic staff in the major committee set up, decisions may be taken without recourse to the committee may be rife, political interference in the appointment of members of the committees, red-taping and excessive officialdom or bottlenecks in decision making, waste of

time, inexperienced persons may be included among the committee members, the leadership style of the Chief Executives which may be Vice Chancellors, Provosts or Directors of the Universities may not support committee system of governance, among others.

### **Discussions**

Discussions are made in accordance with research question 1 and 2 posed for the study. The evidence from research question 1 revealed the rationales for the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Table 1 indicates that, items 1-8 had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, which showed that, they are the rationales for the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. This implies that, the rationales for the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria include that, it ensures the participatory system of decision making in Universities, use of quality ideas and expertise of members while making decisions, ensures consensus decision making, efficient communication system and team work is encouraged, equitable coordination activities of the Departments and Units in the Universities, apt decision making on vital issues concerning the Universities, enthronement of accountability and support for the strategic planning feat of the Universities in Nigeria, among others. The above findings are supported by the studies of Cotton (2022), Adekpo (2023), Mkpokli (2023) and Jesse (2022). Also, Durojo (2022), among others stated the vital roles of committees in University governance. This shows that the use of committees is indispensable in the management of Universities and the need should be upheld tenaciously to enhance the educational objectives and goals of higher education in Nigeria.

The findings from research question 2 showed the challenges inhibiting the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Table 2 indicates that item 9-21 had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, which showed that, they are the major challenges inhibiting the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. This implies that, the challenges inhibiting the adoption of committee system of governance in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria include that, the committee system requires much money and time to operate successfully, use of committee delays quick decision making, irregular contacts or meetings by the committee, inadequate representation of the non-academic staff in the major committee set up, decision are sometimes taken without recourse to the committee, political interference in the appointment of the principal officers of the committee, bottlenecks/ red-taping in the process of decision making, inexperienced officials who lack expert ideas gives room for mediocrity, poor leadership style of the Chief Executive of the Universities, among others. The above findings are supported by the studies of Okoli (2022), Addo (2018), Eric (2023), Edeth (2022), among others who stated in various studies on the basic challenges of the use of committees in the management of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Specifically, Eric (2023) states that, the leadership style of the Chief Executive, among others factors is one of the constraints to the use of committees in the management of Federal Universities for the attainment of educational goals and objectives in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Universities are primarily set up for the purpose of acquiring, transmitting and extension of knowledge through research, teaching and discharge of community service among others. The management of Universities in Nigeria is expected to uphold these roles through the use of committees to ensure efficient and effective democratic governance. By so doing, Universities in Nigeria are expected to set up different committees to help in the seamless governance within the reach of the educational institutions. But it seems that, the aims of setting of these committees have become illusive due to certain institutional challenges. It is based on this premise that the study proffered some recommendations to that effect.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. The management should provide enough funds for the committees to operate with;
2. The appointment of the committee officials should not be politicized
3. The non-academic staff should be made to function effectively among the committees set up by the Universities
4. The principle of accountability should be upheld by committee members
5. The leadership style of the Chief Executives of all the Universities in Nigeria should be democratic in nature.
6. Decision reached by the committee should be used for the purpose it was set up for.

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