

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONS OF COMMITTEE SYSTEMS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The focus of this paper is to appraise the effectiveness of committee system in the management of universities in Nigeria with particular reference to the Universities in Edo State of Nigeria. The study is mainly geared towards how best to govern higher institutions of education to meet their desired goals without distrust. Universities must evolve appropriate leadership styles and practices in effective committee system. It posits that effective committee system should provide specialized advisory services to the management and also be a forum where policies are formulated to regulate the conduct of the affairs of other university committees in line with laid down rules and regulations. In the course of this study, the effective functions of committee in University system in Edo State were brought to the fore while the objectives of the study are well spelt out. Hypotheses were postulated and the Group Theory was used to explicate the works. Data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. From the primary sources, the survey method, that is, the use of questionnaire were designed and adopted. Data obtained from this method were analyzed with the aid of Simple Percentage. Thereafter, the five researchable hypotheses were tested and accepted while the null hypotheses were rejected. The implication is that there was relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Generally, the paper brought to focus that effective functions of committee system is a collective effort in reaching a compromise in the management of universities in Nigeria and it has contributed immensely to the growth and development of universities in Nigeria. Finally, it suggests policy prescription and recommendation which are aimed at repositioning universities not only in Edo State in particular, but also in Nigeria in general for Sustainable Development.

**Keywords:** University, Committee, Management, Policy, Effective, Efficiency

## INTRODUCTION

The question of good and effective governance has captured the attention of university managers. Governing Councils of Universities have also made this issue a critical prerequisite in their quest for excellence and sustainable development.

According to Natufe (2006:1), the issue of effective governance has gained universal currency and acceptance, and universities are seeking appropriate mechanisms to enhance the role of governance by making it more transparent, accountable, responsive, effective and responsible to their constituencies. In this respect, committees have become important and effective tools in the management of universities.

In the words of Koontz (1976:56), committees, boards, commission of inquiry, task force or team can be described as groups of persons, to whom some matters are specifically delegated for deliberations, leading to recommendations, reports or decision-making. Ajayi et al (2007:35) see a committee as a group or body of persons, selected from a more numerous people or body to which some special business or assignment is committed for discussions and decision-making. However, not all committees are involved in decision-making; but some committees that are well conducted can lead to greater motivation, improved problems solving and increased output (Uvah, 2005:46).

The Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1975:10) defines committee "as a body of persons delegated to consider, investigate, take action on or report on some matter, a group of fellow legislators chosen by a legislative body to give consideration to legislative matters; a self constituted organization for the promotion of a common object".

In Nigerian Universities, as in other Government institutions and agencies, the use of committees is not only inevitable but necessary. Effective committees form an important instrument of effective governance of the Universities. In the laws establishing the various universities in Nigeria (Federal, State and Private), committee system is central in their administration. The law itself makes it mandatory to have not only the major Governing Council and Senate, but also Boards and Committees, some standing and some Ad-hoc. Every University according to Perrow, (2007:6) has an elaborate committee structure and these committees are very visible in their administration. The main purpose for setting up committees in Universities' administration is to promote the act of collective decision making and equity in universities' policy execution for which the administration is set up by creating a conducive environment for the persons making up the institution to make inputs into administrative, and specialized decisions as well as encourage participation in the affairs of the Universities (Erinosho, 2008:15). He further stated that this reduces conflict to the barest minimum, and also free the top management for greater responsibilities.

In the University, sub-ordinate committees, some of which are created by the parent committees, report regularly to the principal committees and take instructions, directives and assignments from them. Effective committee system is therefore indispensable in the University setting (Ajayi, 2007:10). This view was confirmed by Morgan (2007:17) who disagreed with Omoike (2007:8) when he stated in his work that there have been frequent cries by some members of the university community that the

committee system may not necessarily be the best method of effectively managing a university system. Also the work of Fischer (2008:40) stated that the primary motive of instituting the committee system has grown out of the mere concern for democratizing decision making in those institutions, and emphasized the need for more broadly based decision making as universities become more complex. In the same token, the work of Sifuna (2007:9) stated that explanations would also be needed as to why a student who is found guilty of examination malpractice is rusticated by the College/Faculty examination malpractice committee. However, when the same case gets to senate, such a student is expelled. One wonders therefore why these committees are set up to look into these cases when decisions made by them are not implemented. Suffice it to say that because of management and administrative interest in these matters, decisions made by these committees may be jettisoned. These actions negate the purpose of setting up these committees and also breed distrust in the system (Sifuna, 2007:9.). Furthermore, Morgan (2007:10) stressed in his work that any committee in higher institutions of learning void of effectiveness, exposure and efficiency to skill orientation was faulty. Hence there is the great need for adequate efficiency and effectiveness of committee system in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. This means that the use of participatory system of governance in the university system cannot be overemphasized. There must be full participation of individuals who are effective and efficient so as to help the growth of the committee system in university governance (Tahir, 2007:7). The University is one of the institutions where the committee system is most highly developed. One may add that the effectiveness of committee system in Universities provides a unique opportunity for the development of team-work and is an important instrument for acquiring and disseminating information.

The reasons for the use and effectiveness of Committees in universities and other organizations are well known. They include the advantage of group deliberation and judgment, the representation of interest groups, the fear of too much concentration of authority in one or a few hands, and the unique opportunity for the development of team-work as an important instrument for disseminating and acquiring information (Alubo, 2008:20). Sometimes, committees are set up as a means of delaying action or even killing an idea through protracted meetings until interest is lost; they may at times be set up for the purpose of retrieving delegated power or shared authority or for the more sinister motive of fault-finding. Moreso, there have been frequent cries by some members of the university community that the committee system may not necessarily be the best method of effectively managing a university system. But there are other more edifying reasons for the use of committees in Nigerian Universities. For example, committee system in any University administration is usually of decentralization, delegation of powers and an administrative technique for breaking administrative and academic matters into smaller components for experts and professional groups to handle in greater details.

## **PROBLEM**

Effective committees are vital and viable instruments for effecting smooth and hitch-free management of Nigerian Universities. They involve high cost in terms of time, money, materials, human resources and it is at times questionable whether their outputs justify the high cost expended on them. In some occasions, the decisions of committees are not the best possible but mere compromises which at times leave everybody either half contented or entirely dissatisfied (Uhunmwangho and Eboimen, 2013).

Often times, a small group (or caucus) or even an individual dominates the committee and always impose its will and which then passes as the collective decision of the committee. At the worst, what is sometimes termed 'minority tyranny' emerges in which a small group or a strong leader of the committee invariably forces his will on the committee (Adesina, 2004:12). This has given rise to some deep seated view about committees in the University administration; namely:

1. A committee is made up of the unfit persons selected by the unwilling to do the unnecessary;
2. A committee is a place where the loneliness of thought is replaced by the togetherness of nothingness;
3. A committee is a group that keeps minutes and wastes hours (Ogunmodede, 2006).

Taking the above into account, Baikie (2007:11) contend that some of the committees are set up to do what individual officers of the universities can do more efficiently and even at a lower cost and with better results. Thus, the question often asked is does the output from the committees justify the resources expended on them?

There is no doubt however that in recent times, the problems of administering the Universities in Nigeria in general and Edo State in particular has grown more complex (Tahir,2007:22). For example, some of the committees are too large that their effectiveness is hampered in attempts to accommodate or reconcile many views. Too many central committees tend to create bottlenecks. Sometimes, some members collect out-of-pocket or traveling allowances, sitting allowances, car maintenance allowances, drivers' tour allowances or advances which take their toll on university budgets, thus adding to the financial burden of the University (Ade-Ajayi, 2011:10).

Ekong (2008:3) characterized effective committee systems in universities as very crucial, but felt that the resultant effect has not yet been felt in the university administration. Committee system, despite its wide acceptance and usage, have exhibited some difficulties in the course of its operations.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The specific objectives are:

- (a) To determine whether committee system has been a viable tool for addressing injustice in the University System..
- (b) To determine to what extent the committee system reduced administrative responsibilities of top University Management.
- (c) To ascertain the extent to which the committee system provides specialized advisory services to management.
- (d) To examine the extent to which the use of committee system has the ability to help management carry out Ad-hoc but sensitive task.
- (e) To find out the extent to which the committee system provides the avenue for the training of young Administrative Officers to take over the management of Universities.

## **HYPOTHESES**

In order to achieve these objectives, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant relationship between Effective committee System and the University's capacity to address injustice in the University System.
2. There is no significant relationship between the administrative capacity of Committee system and the possibility of the University management to free itself for greater administrative responsibility.
3. There is no significant relationship between the provision of specialized services of committees to management and the performance of Management.
4. There is no significant relationship between the use of Committee system and management ability to carry out Ad-hoc but sensitive tasks.
5. There is no significant relationship between the deployment of the Committee system and training of young administrative officers to take over the management of University.

## **THEORETICAL EXPOSITION**

The particular theory that can sufficiently act as guide for the analysis of issues in this paper is group theory. The group theory framework is perhaps the most ambitious methodology in the study of social sciences. The most distinctive characteristic of the group theory to the conduct of political and democratic analysis is the theoretical assumption which sees society, the political process and the entire political process as nothing but a gigantic network of interacting groups. The exponents and principle promoters of the group theory are of the view that every society includes within it a large number of groups which remain engaged in perpetual struggle for power and domination over each other. For instance, to them politics could be understood only in terms of interactions between various groups. They tried to establish the group rather than the individual or the society as the basic unit of analysis in the study of politics. The first explicit and systematic development of the group theory as it relates to analytic study of political systems was provided by A.F. Bentley in his book "The process of Government" which was published in 1908.

However, the work of Bentley was given boost nearly half a century later when David Truman advanced it further in his book governmental process, the analytical impact of group theory in 1951. Other scholars of this theory are Robert Darl, John Starte Mill among others. Bentley was interested in de-emphasizing the institutions and re-emphasizing processes. He conceived the group as a mass of activity and not a collection of individuals. Accordingly, he defined a group as a certain portion of men of society taken not as a physical mass out-off from other masses of men, but as a mass of who participates in its form like in many other group activities (Ojo, 1989).

In a nutshell, this framework is associated with this work because of the characteristic nature of the groups that make up the polity under study. For example, the nature of perpetual struggle for power and admonition over each other by major social groups. However, the authors are of the view that this can only be achieved through sustainable development.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted a descriptive survey method. The survey was based on selected Universities in Nigeria, Edo State as a focal point. The scope of the study is therefore restricted to years 2005 to 2016. The population of the study consist of 250 base on two categories (Senior and Junior) staff of Universities in Edo State (see table one). Out of this number, one hundred and seventy of them met our criteria and therefore form our sample size as can be seen in table one below:

**TABLE 1: POPULATION OF STUDY**

/No	Universities	Category of Respondents	No. of Returned Questionnaires	No. of Not Returned/Invalid Questionnaires	Total No. of Sampled Respondents
1.	University of Benin	Academic	32	12	62
		Non-Academic	10	8	
2.	Ambrose Alli University	Academic	34	16	62
		Non-Academic	8	4	
3.	Benson Idahosa University.	Academic	36	14	64
		Non-Academic	8	6	
4.	Igbinedion University	Academic	30	14	62
		Non-Academic	12	6	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>170</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>250</b>

**Source:** Field Survey 2018.

Both Primary and Secondary sources of data were explored in trying to generate data for this study. The specific information required for the study was effectiveness, function, efficiency, administrative mechanism put in place among others. The questionnaire formed the main instrument used in generating primary data, while documented information on prints that are relevant to this study, constituted the secondary source of generating data. To compliment the information received through the questionnaire, respondents were also interviewed. As the research is based on attitude and opinions, the statistical tools employed in analyzing responses include, tables and simple percentages. All the one hundred and seventy copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents studied were duly completed and returned in a useable form. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the data analysis.

### Data Analysis

Of all the one hundred and seventy respondents, eighty (47%) of them are married; fifty (29%) are single while twenty one (13%) are divorced and the remaining nineteen (11%) are either widow or widowers. Thirty (18%) of them are within the age bracket of 18 – 25, Fifty (29%) are between the age bracket of 26-35; while eighty (47%) are within the age bracket of 36-45 and the remaining forty six years and above are ten (6%).

**TABLE 2: Hypothesis 1**

There is no significant relationship between Effective Committee System and University capacity to address injustice in the University system.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	110	65
No	60	35
Total	170	100

**Source: Statistical Analysis**

Table 2 shows that 110 (65%) of the total respondents agreed that Effective Committee System have more relevance and impacted on the progress of the system, conversely responsible for the lack of developmental stride of the University. Therefore, the hypothesis one which states that there is no significant relationship between Effective Committee System and University capacity to address injustice in the University System is accepted.

**TABLE 3: Hypothesis 2**

There is no significant relationship between the administrative capacity of Committee System and the University management to free itself for greater administrative responsibility.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	105	62
No	65	38
Total	170	100

**Source: Statistical Analysis**

Table 3 shows that 105 (62%) of the respondents agreed that the relationship between the administrative capacity of committee system and the University management to free itself for greater administrative responsibility, while 65 (38%) were not satisfied or disagreed.

**TABLE 4: Hypothesis 3**

There is no significant relationship between the provision of specialized services of committees to management and the performance of Management.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	120	71
No	50	29
Total	170	100

**Source: Statistical Analysis**

Table 4 shows that 120 (71%) of the respondents agreed that inability to provide specialized services of committee to management and the performance of Management hampered significantly on the gigantic progress of the University which led to the inability to meet the yearning of University system while 50 (29%) disagreed with the opinion. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between the provision of specialized services of committees to management and the performance of Management meaningful impact on the University system.

## **FINDINGS BASED ON HYPOTHESES**

Based on the analysis of the hypotheses, all the research hypotheses were positive which implies that (**H<sub>r</sub>**) **1-3** were accepted. More so, the study revealed that Effective Functions of Committee System in the Management of Universities in Nigeria is indispensable and could not be over-looked for sustainable development to be attained. Furthermore, this paper have highlighted several challenges and solutions as per the findings in the hypothesis carried out in the research. However, again, it was found that, Effective Functions of Committee is inevitable. Therefore, this paper also revealed that a committee is made up of the unfit persons selected by the unwillingness to do the unnecessary.

1. It was revealed that a committee is a place where the loneliness of thought is replaced by the togetherness of nothingness;
2. It was also revealed that a committee is a group that keeps minutes and wastes hours (Ogunmodede, 2006).  
Taking the above into account, Baikie (2007:11) contend that some of the committees are set up to do what individual officers of the universities can do more efficiently and even at a lower cost and with better results. Thus, the question often asked is does the output from the committees justify the resources expended on them?

See figure 1 below for more details of Nigeria Political map.



**Figure 1: Political map of Nigeria**

Source: Wikipedia caught 20 March 2018.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the high point of this study, data covering the period 2005 to 2016 were collected from the four Universities in Edo State. Comparatively, this study investigated effective functions of committee system in the management of Universities, four Universities in Edo State as a focal point. Data obtained from this method were analyzed with the aid of Simple Percentage. Thereafter, the five researchable hypotheses were tested and accepted while the null hypotheses were rejected. The implication is that there was relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Generally, the paper brought to focus that effective functions of committee system is a collective effort in reaching a compromise in the management of Nigeria universities and it has contributed immensely to the sustainable development and growth of universities in Nigeria.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From strictly comparative point of view, both efficiency and effectiveness are abstract measures of organizational performance. The two terms evaluate the conditions under, and the degree to which organizations are achieving the various goals for which they are established. These two concepts, therefore, provide good indicators of the institutional ability to survive in its environment (Heady, 1979). In other to ameliorate the menace of ineffective and inefficient of committee system in the management of University in Nigeria, with particular reference to the four Universities in Edo State, the following are therefore recommended:

- There is need for cordial and effective relationship amongst staff and students as they would like to contribute their quota to the growth and sustainable development of effective committee system in 21st century .
- There is therefore the need for the university administration to effectively and efficiently implement committee recommendations so as to boost the confidence of staff in the system. University administration should further find a way to create conditions for trust to exist within the university community as there is a lot to gain in a trust-environment.
- Trust and Academic Governance opines the researcher, can make far-reaching decisions on the University management.
- According to Longing (2002), institutional success at navigating the current postures of higher education is dependent on the effective committee system, effectiveness of governance structures and decision making processes.
- There is also the need for researchers to investigate more on how best to govern higher institutions to meet their desired goals without distrust. Universities must evolve appropriate leadership styles and practices in committee system.

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