

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE CULTURE AS CORRELATE OF ACADEMIC STAFF EFFECTIVENESS IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

SETKA GOJIM WALBE

B.Ed., M.Ed. Ph.D (Jos)

08037000365

satkawalbe@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study examined University committee culture as correlate of academic staff effectiveness in North-Central Nigeria. The study was precipitated by observed problems of declining University committee culture and the low level of job effectiveness of most lecturers. Most lecturers are uninspired with the conditions of Universities' culture and unconducive working environment. Specific objectives were to determine the influence of university committee system on lecturers' effectiveness. The study adopted correlational and ex-post factor type designs. Sample consisted of 1,633 out of 8,634 lecturers and 2,360 out of 232,434 students as at April, 2019. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using simple percentages, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Findings revealed that there is significant relationship between University culture and academic staff effectiveness. The result further showed that the committee system influenced lecturers' effectiveness in terms of time available for committee meetings and their core functions. It was recommended that the study results should be made available to University management as a guide and be implemented to expose them to the importance of improved University committee culture for academic staff effectiveness and functioning so that lecturers' effectiveness level would be improved and optimized. The study contributed to the body of knowledge in the aspect of lecturers' effectiveness in teaching, research and community service.

Introduction

University education determines to a large extent the level of development in any country. In recognizing its importance, the roles of the University are streamlined in the National Policy on Education to include teaching, research and community service. University culture is the atmosphere that is created by the social and professional interactions of individuals at the University which determines the extent of lecturers' effectiveness. A lecturer's effectiveness in University is the level of quality of work a lecturer performs in terms of teaching, research and community service that could facilitate achievement of set goals of the University. Anecdotal observations have however shown that the quality of University education in the zone seems lower. This could be attributed to the University culture which in turn influenced the lecturers' effectiveness. Lecturers seem not to find suitable environment for work to be motivating which is evident in their declining effectiveness. Apart from the quality of graduates which is allegedly being challenged by students, parents, employers, government, the international labour market and many foreign Universities, most of the Universities seem not to be making desired impact in the socio-economic and political development of the nation perhaps due to education managers' politicization of education and poor University culture (Akinfolarin & Ehinola, 2017).

The practice of committee system has come to be accepted and adopted for easy administration and decision-making process in the University. Despite that, it seems some committee members are not committed to the vision and mission of the University system. There is also the non-implementation of the recommendations of committee members. Conversely, poor implementation of committee's recommendation may not motivate active participation of the lecturers. The poor administration of the committee system appear to negatively affect lecturers' effectiveness, for instance, the interactions between the University committees and their superintending agencies have been poor and unable to yield tangible gains in form of access to funds, research grants, supply of textbooks, personnel training, school equipment and general infrastructural development as a result of which some students stand outside or sit on stairs while others have to listen from outside the classrooms during lectures for lack of sitting space.

Culture of Nigerian Universities

The Nigerian Universities could be classified according to their years of establishment thus: first, second, third and fourth generation Universities and those established in 2000s mainly by private individuals or organizations. Also, the Nigerian Universities conduct training in all kinds of programmes or disciplines. The term culture describes the set of beliefs and values held by people while organizational culture describes common set of values, beliefs and rituals held by employees of organizations.

Administration Structure of Nigerian Universities

Universities in Nigeria are veritable tools for the realization of national development. University education needs effective administrative structures in order for it to deliver on its objectives. Its organization is a twofold system: the Governing Council and the Senate (Ogbogu, 2013). The Governing Council is the highest administrative body in the University that is mandated to handle the task of general arrangement, supervision and control of affairs, policy, assets and liabilities as well as funding of the University. The Chairman of the Governing Council is usually appointed by the visitor who could be a State Governor or the President depending on the ownership of the institution. The second administrative system is the Senate. It is the highest academic authority in the University and has direct policy control over all academic matters in the University system. Ogbomida and Obana (2013) describe it as the main organ responsible for regulating the internal activities of the University. The Senate makes and implements academic programmes, research and approval of results. The Chairman of the Senate is the Vice-Chancellor. Other members are the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Registrar, the Deans of Faculty, Heads of Departments, Directors of Institutes and Centres, the Librarian, all Professors and nominated members from the Congregation.

In addition, the structure and the governance of or the constituent organs are those established by the laws and the status of the Universities Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2003. These include the Governing Council, the Senate/Academic Board, the Congregation and the Convocation, and the Faculty Boards/ Boards of Studies form the basic unit of the academic structure of each University. They report their activities to the Senate at its meetings for approval. The issue of leadership is not limited to the governing councils alone. The senate/academic boards of the Universities have great roles to play. Indeed, for the quality assurance, the senate/academic boards have significant roles to play (Owolabi &

Chukwuma, 2007). A major plague here is the quality of the membership of these bodies and their commitment to the institutions. It appears that many of these committee members lack knowledge of institutional core values and operational motivation, and they are behaving at cross purposes to the institutional objectives.

The Culture of Committee System in the Administration of Nigerian Universities

Population explosion, poor funding, infrastructural decay, low academic achievement, students unrests, examination malpractices and strikes embarked upon by unions are some of the challenges of effective University administration facing the University education in Nigeria. It is in this regard that the committee system approach to University education came about. A committee is a group of people chosen to represent a larger group in order to do a particular job and make decision. Nwachukwu in Ogbomida and Obana (2013) define committee as a device for achieving coordination of activities and sharing information among various departments and divisions of an organization. The University which is a complex educational system requires strong and virile committee system for effective administration in order to achieve its numerous objectives. Panels, Boards and special task force equally constitute kinds of Committees in the University system. These committees are either responsible to the Council, Senate or the Congregation. Ibikun in Ogbomida and Obana (2013) identifies the basic committees in Nigerian Universities to include: Finance and General Purpose, Development and Promotion, Admission, Academic Planning, Committee of Deans, Research Grants and Ceremony Committees. Others are Consultative Committee on Community Development, Students' Welfare Board, Library, Sports Council, Students Disciplinary, Development and Physical Planning, Staff Housing Committee/Lodging Bureau, Tenders' Board Alumni Relations Committees, amongst others.

One of the systems of organizational administration is the committee system. Corroborating this, Adefiwitan (2006) describes committee as a group of people gathered together to take action on an administrative task where a group of persons to whom some organizational matters are committed. In this regard, the committee is a group of individuals saddled with the responsibility of performing certain tasks within an organization. Oyeyinka (2010) affirms that committees are persons elected or appointed and to whom any matter or business is referred in order to discuss and take decision on it. The committee is guided by the principle of collective responsibility as they are to work together for a common goal or task given to them. In the University, the committee is indispensable in the smooth running and aiding of administrative progress of the system, thus, the committee is a set of institutional device which is part of the mechanism for governance and decision-making and a management device that provides an organizational structure that is additional to line managers and general staff. The headship of a University is helped by committees in relieving administrative burden which could lead to inefficiency and under performance.

Benefits of Committee System

In order to arrive at a useful and meaningful decision that can promote the growth and development of University education, committee system is a useful exercise to do. The committee system can be a catalyst that can enhance the physical and intellectual growth of the system to encourage effectiveness of the lecturers and the attainment of University education goals. Ogbomida and Obana (2013) add that the committee system decentralizes

administration thereby encouraging individual and collective participation. As a result, the committee system is a vital ingredient to achieving effective University administration. In the Universities there are security challenges, inadequate budgetary provisions and poor internally-generated revenues, poor infrastructural development which the various relevant committees have improved through increased access to funding options through international networking and facilitating international exchange programmes for both students and staff.

Through these committees, the cooperation with other Universities of the world has yielded tangible gains in form of supply of textbooks, personal training and research grants as well as science and laboratory equipment. Other benefits of the committee system in the administrative governance of Nigerian Universities include; democratization of University system. There is devolution of powers from the Governing Council, especially the Vice-Chancellor; delegation of authority to members of the committee has increased commitment and collective responsibilities to the promotions of the ideals of the system. This has invariably allowed for stable academic calendars in the Universities. The principles of checks and balances militating against the abuse of authority by top management officers have been achieved. The use of the committee has been adopted to democratize and facilitate the decision-making process (Ede, 2000).

Challenges

Despite the benefits of committee system, a major challenge to committee system of governance in Nigerian Universities is the issue of delay in the decision-making process. Sometimes, the committees members hardly attend meetings while some perpetually go late to such meetings where vital decisions that will move the University forward are to be taken are delayed. As a further matter, the voices of dissension among committee members at meetings affect efficiency of University administrative decisions not minding the usefulness of the issues at hand and no one could be held responsible. Some Universities may reject the decisions of some committees, not minding their importance especially such decisions and recommendations that do not promote the Council or Vice-Chancellor's interests (Ogbomida & Obana, 2013). This explains why the election or appointment of committees' members is usually at the instances of the University authorities. Also, Ogunraku (2012) asserts that, appointment of personal friends to the authority may rob the genuineness and sincerity of activities of committee system to University growth and development.

Standards, quality of work and high expectations are compromised whenever people who do not possess technical, special skills and genuine love for the aspiration of the University are appointed to serve in critical committees like finance and appropriation, security, students' disciplinary committee, sports and tender board. The committee system is usually threatened by cost in terms of the huge human and material resources used. The time available for committee members is not always there to attend to crucial matters. Some non-disciplined members of the committees usually reveal highly confidential information to the congregation including students before they are deliberated upon. These acts often render the activities of such committees ineffective **and counter-productive**. The administrative complexities of the University system coupled with the increasingly high expectations on the administrators to meet the yearnings and aspirations of both the students and staff has however made committee system inevitable.

One of the challenges facing committee system according to Eno-Ibanga and Akpakwu (2009) is that the University community no longer has trust and confidence in the activities of some committees due to the fact that committee decisions are not always faithfully implemented. This is because a committee's views, decisions and recommendations which are in conflict with those of the University administration are usually ignored. As a result, all the good works of the committees, if not implemented are as good as a waste of time. Despite the fact that the committees are essential administrative bodies, they lack any formal authority to enforce their recommendations and decisions. Much of what the committee does depends upon the ways other important authorities such as the Council, Senate and even the Vice-Chancellor decide on issues (Eno-Ibanga & Akpakwu, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

The trend in most public Universities in North-Central Nigeria is that lecturers are considered as tools of accomplishing tasks without realizing their emotions and work requirements, as such; most of the Universities are plagued with poor attitude to work and ineffectiveness among workforce. Most lecturers have lost the passion and commitment for the job and their performance has been on a downward slide due to poor Universities' culture and unconducive working environment. The involvement of lecturers in decision-making activities in the University does not preclude the existence of complaints about the workings of the committee system. Such complaints include multiple memberships, poor funding of committees, and delay in the committee works resulting in delay in the completion of committees' assignments, sometimes poor attendance of members as well as delay in the implementation of committees' recommendations. These have caused confusion, personal frustration and lack of concentration by lecturers effecting teaching and learning processes in the University.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to:

1. examine the influence of University committee system on academic staff effectiveness in public Universities in North-Central Nigeria.
2. determine the effectiveness of academic staff effectiveness in public Universities in North-Central Nigeria.
3. find out the relationship between University committee culture and academic staff effectiveness in public Universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Research Question

1. How effective is the public University committee system in North-Central Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between University committee culture and academic staff effectiveness in public Universities in North-Central Nigeria?

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between University committee system and academic staff effectiveness in public Universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was both a correlational research design and ex-post facto type. The population of this study consists of all the eight thousand six hundred and thirty four (8, 634) academic staff members and two hundred and thirty two thousand four hundred and thirty four (232, 434) students working and studying in the thirteen public Universities and the Federal Capital Territory in North-central Nigeria. The sample for the study was made up of six public Universities in North-Central Nigeria. It consisted of one thousand six hundred and thirty three (1, 633) academic staff members and two thousand three hundred and sixty (2, 360) students from the sampled schools. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire tagged: University Culture Academic Staff Effectiveness Questionnaire (UCASEQ) and Academic Staff Teaching Effectiveness Questionnaire (ASTEQ). Percentage, Mean, standard deviation and, Pearson Product Moment Coefficient were used to answer the research questions and test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question One

How effective is the Committee system in Public Universities in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 1

Result on Effectiveness of Committee System in Public Universities in North-Central Nigeria

S/N	Committee System	Ineffective	Effective	Very Effective	Total
1	Staff development programme	63 (3.9%)	1030 (63.1%)	540 (33.1%)	1633
2	Admission	27 (1.77%)	531 (32.5%)	1075 (65.8%)	1633
3	Academic planning	189 (11.6%)	1219 (74.6%)	225 (13.8%)	1633
4	Finance	378 (23.1%)	1201 (73.5%)	54 (3.3%)	1633
5	General purpose	378 (23.1%)	1201 (73.5%)	54 (3.3%)	1633
6	Appointment committee	90 (5.5%)	1080 (66.1%)	463 (26.4%)	1633
7	Discipline committee	90 (5.5%)	1080 (66.1%)	463 (26.4%)	1633

Table 1 shows the frequency count and percentage result on the effectiveness of public Universities' committee system in North-Central Nigeria. The result shows that on the Universities' Staff development committee 63 (3.9%), 1030 (63.1%) and 540 (33.1%) of the respondents posit that the committee is ineffective, effective and very effective respectively. 27 (1.77%), 531 (32.5%) and 1075 (65.8%) of the respondents opined that the admission committee is ineffective, effective and very effective respectively. Also, the result shows respondents' responses on University committee on academic planning 189 (11.6%) ineffective, 1219 (74.6%) effective and 225 (13.8%) very effective. Respondents' responses on finance and general purpose committee show 378 (23.1%) ineffective, 1201 (73.5%) effective and 54 (3.3%) as very effective. In addition, the result reveals that respondents posit that the University committee on Appointment and Discipline is 90 (5.5%) ineffective, 1080 (66.1%) effective and 463 (26.4%) very effective. This implies that all the committees of the University above are effective based on the cumulative percent of 9.17% (ineffective), 61.96% (effective) and 28.48% (very effective) but not very effective to enhance effectiveness of academic staff in North-Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between University committee system and academic staff effectiveness in public Universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation of Relationship between University Committee System and Academic Staff Effectiveness in Public Universities in North-Central Nigeria

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	r	P value	Decision
University policy	2363	129.39	37.44	0.538	0.000	Reject Ho
Academic staff effectiveness	2363	363.59	85.95			

Key:

N = Number

$\bar{X}$ = mean

SD = Standard Deviation

r = Correlation

p = Calculated alpha level of significance.

Table 2 reveals the results on relationship between University committee system and academic staff effectiveness in public Universities in North-Central Nigeria. The result yielded $r = 0.538$, $p < 0.05$; indicating a weak positive relationship between the two variables. Since the p-value of 0.000 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. It was concluded that, there is a positive significant relationship between University committee system and academic staff effectiveness in public Universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Discussion

The discussion is based on the findings derived from the variables, objectives, research questions and hypotheses formulated for the study. Results show that University culture is weak and negatively influenced academic staff effectiveness in public Universities in North-Central Nigeria and hence University goals are hardly attained. The result corroborates Ifedili and Egenti (2013) that the University is meant to be a place of study and research. Also, on the extent of public University committee system in North-Central Nigeria, the finding shows a cumulative percent of 9.17 (Ineffective), 61.96 (Effective) and 28.48 (Very effective). The result shows that the public Universities' committee system is effective in all the committees in terms of appointment and promotion 1030 (63.1%), discipline 1080 (66.1%), admission 1075 (65.8%), academic planning 1219 (74.6%), finance and general services 1201 (73.5%) and disciplinary 1080 (66.1%) committees. This is in line with Adegbam's (2019) idea that most public Universities' committee systems are weak and ineffective and merely serve the interest of the authorities that set the committees. The implication of this is that for the committee system to be a functional part of the administration of the Universities, the committees should be free from the interference of the administrators for educational goals to be achieved in the Universities. On the other hand, the result showed that there is a significant relationship between committee system and academic staff effectiveness ($r = 0.538$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.000$) below the significant level of 0.05. The finding corroborates Ogbomida, Obano and Osagie (2013).

On the extent of academic staff effectiveness in teaching in public Universities in North- Central Nigeria, the finding showed a cumulative mean of 2.78 below the criterion mean of 3.00 showing that academic staff effectiveness in teaching is poor because the University culture, to a large extent, is weak. This supports Borich's (2011) idea that maintained that strong school culture is needed for a teacher to be effective in pedagogical skills, have good personality, punctual to assigned duties such as encouragement of good students' application and provision of prompt feedback to students.

On the extent of academic staff effectiveness in research in public Universities in North-Central Nigeria, the finding showed a cumulative mean of 2.54 below the criterion mean of 3.00. This result revealed that University culture is not positive and academic staff effectiveness in research is poor. The result showed that all the mean scores for factors influencing academic staff in research are below the criterion mean of 3.00. The result on the relationship between University culture and academic effectiveness in research in public Universities in North-Central Nigeria shows that there is a significant relationship between University culture and academic staff effectiveness in research ($r = 0.381$ and 0.000) below the 0.05 level of significance. This corroborates Obibuaku's (2005) idea that research entails a lot of effort and demands a great deal of money.

In addition, on the extent of academic staff effectiveness in community service in public Universities in North-Central Nigeria, the result showed a cumulative mean of 3.00. This is equal to criterion mean of 3.00. The result revealed that respondents opined that they always share knowledge with the community outside the Universities and contribute to cultural activities in their local communities. This contradicts Okinyi's (2015) that the huge load of teaching has made staff to retract on teaching occasioned by few qualified lecturers resulting in academic staff ineffectiveness in research and community services in the Universities.

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