

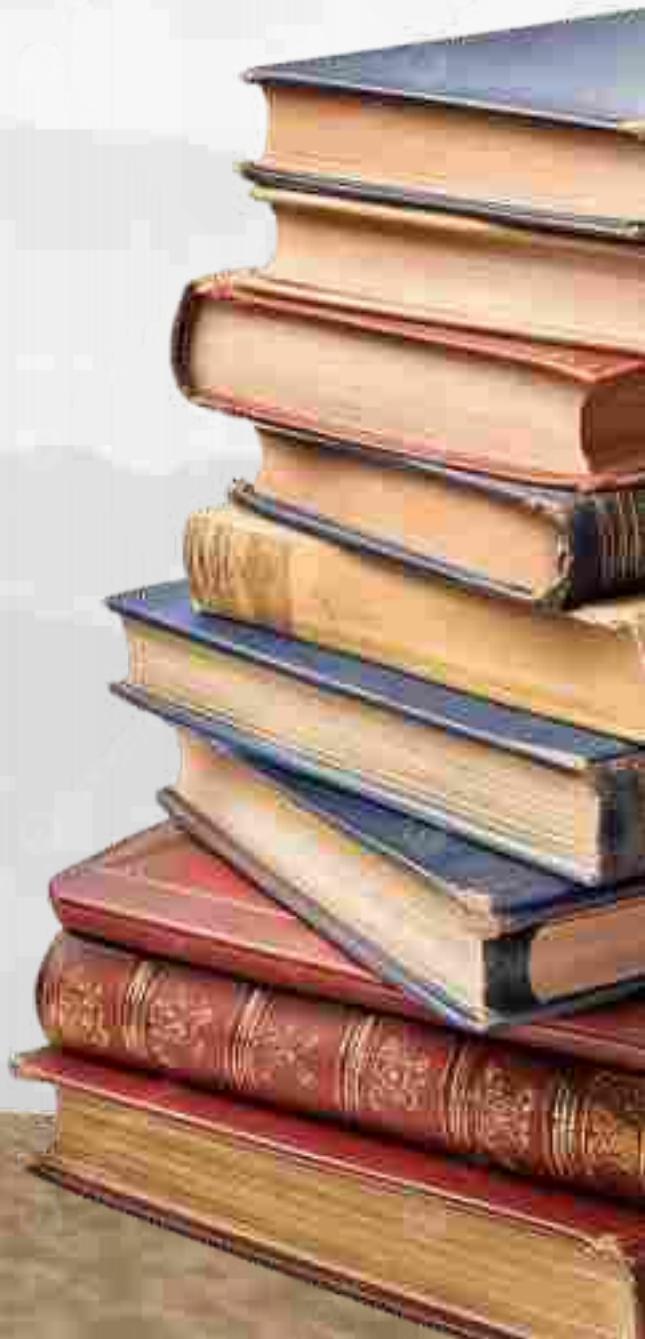


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PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Ogunode Niyi Jacob, PhD

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

Ayodele Ebunolu Nwesigbo, PhD

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Usman Ibrahim, PhD

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Oyekanmi, Funmilayo Bosede, PhD

Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, University of Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria

Mary Adanna Chinwuba, PhD.

Executive Director, Chalcedony Schools; National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS), Abuja

Adamu Awwal Salman

Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa, Nigeria

Danyawo Musa Adamu, PhD.

Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Olamoyegun, Stephania Olabisi, PhD.

Department of Science Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Ola-Adeniji Elizabeth Bolarinwa

Department of Science Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Olapade Olubunmi Olayinka.

Department of Human Resources and Administration, Nigeria Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), Nigeria

Sani Kasimu, PhD.

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria

Inemesit Nsikak Edet.

Assistant Chief Education Officer, Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, Nigeria

Nwankwo Nkechi Chinelo, PhD.

Department of Educational Management and Planning, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria

Unachukwu Ijeoma Blessing, PhD.

Department of Economics Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze, Nigeria

Christopher Idowu Ojo.

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Temitope Zulfah Mustapha

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Emeana Geraldine Chinwe

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Victor Olugbenga Ayoko.

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, National Open University of Nigeria

Galadima, Farida Ibrahim.

Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria

JAE, Talatu

Department of Educational Foundation, Taraba State University, Jalingo

Maryam Abdullahi, PhD.

Department of Education, Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano, Nigeria

Muhammad Danjuma Maiwada

Department of Education, Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano, Nigeria

Umoru Abdulrasheed Oseni.

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Saleh Khalid Mahmud.

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Ronald Winifred Abhulimen, PhD.

Biological Sciences Department, Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

TERTIARY EDUCATION AND COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

By

Sani Kasimu

sanikasimu@fuwukari.edu.ng

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management, Federal University, Wukari, Nigeria.

Abstract

This chapter investigates the committee system in Nigerian tertiary institutions as a governance mechanism, examining its forms, roles, benefits, challenges, and sustainable improvement strategies. Drawing from empirical studies in Nigerian universities and polytechnics — including research in Lagos State and North-East Nigeria — it explores statutory, standing, and ad-hoc committees as tools for participatory decision-making, accountability, quality assurance, and institutional effectiveness (Lawal, 2024; Ahaotu, Ogunode, & Ayisa, 2021). Although committees are widely established, their operations are frequently undermined by financial constraints, political interference, bureaucratic bottlenecks, resource inadequacy, communication gaps, and corruption. The chapter argues that to enhance the committee system's utility, institutions should clarify committee hierarchies, incorporate technology for coordination, include diverse stakeholders, conduct training for committee members, and establish regular evaluation and review mechanisms. By implementing these strategies, tertiary institutions can strengthen transparency, academic standards, and institutional stability. In doing so, committees will better fulfil their intended roles not merely as formal administrative tools but as dynamic, responsive bodies that improve governance, enhance academic administration, and contribute to national development.

Keywords: committee system; tertiary education; governance; transparency; accountability; institutional effectiveness; Nigeria

8.1. Introduction

Tertiary education plays a pivotal role in national development through knowledge production, innovation, and human capital formation. In Nigeria, the tertiary sector — consisting of universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education — has expanded both in number of institutions and student enrollment over recent decades, placing greater demand on governance, quality assurance, and institutional accountability (Lawal, 2024; Ogbogu, 2016). However, alongside this expansion have emerged challenges related to governance, accountability, and quality assurance. Central to the internal administration and policy formulation within these institutions is the committee system, a structured mechanism through which decisions are made, policies are debated, and institutional goals are pursued (Ogbogu, 2016.).

This chapter introduces the intersection of tertiary education and the committee system in Nigeria, exploring how this governance model operates within academic institutions and contributes to the management of complex educational structures. It lays the groundwork for understanding the historical evolution of tertiary education in the country, the rationale behind adopting the committee system, and the extent to which it influences institutional effectiveness. As we navigate the intricate relationship between educational development and administrative processes, this chapter discussed the following subheadings.

Clarification of concepts

1. Committee System
2. Types of Committees
3. Importance of Committee in Tertiary Education
4. Rationale for adopting committee system in Tertiary Education
5. Challenges Militating against Committee System in Tertiary Education
6. Sustainable Strategies to improve committee system in Tertiary Education in Nigeria

8.2. Clarification of concepts

Concept Committee System

A committee is a formally constituted group of individuals appointed or elected to perform specific functions, make decisions, or provide recommendations within an organization. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, committees typically include academic and non-academic staff, sometimes students or external stakeholders, formed to handle academic, administrative, or disciplinary matters (Ahaotu, Ogunode, & Ayisa, 2021). Committees can often be found in academic settings,

such as research committees or curriculum development committees, where they play a vital role in shaping policies and decisions. Other types of committees include legislative committees, corporate committees, and non-profit committees. They typically have a set structure and procedures in place to ensure effective communication and decision-making. As a result, committees are an integral part of many academic institutions and organizations, providing a platform for collaboration and ensuring that important tasks are completed efficiently and effectively (Alibi, Mustapha, & Abdulkareem, 2012).

A committee is a group of individuals formally appointed or elected to carry out specific functions, make decisions, or provide recommendations within an organization. Committees are typically formed to manage tasks that require detailed discussion, specialized knowledge, or collective decision-making, especially in institutions like governments, corporations, or educational organizations. A committee is a body of people delegated to consider, investigate, take action on, or report on specific matters. In tertiary institutions, a committee is a structured group made up of members of staff (academic and/or non-academic), students, or external stakeholders, formed to address specific academic, administrative, or disciplinary issues. Committees are essential tools for governance, decision-making, and the smooth functioning of universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education (Ahaotu, Ogunode, & Ayisa 2021; Okotoni & Adegbami, 2013).

The characteristics of a Committee; made up of selected or elected members, usually with relevant expertise or representation; created to perform specific functions (e.g., curriculum review, budget planning, staff promotion); operates through discussion, debate, and consensus or voting; often governed by institutional rules, statutes, or terms of reference and reports to a higher authority (e.g., Senate, Governing Council) and may have its decisions ratified or reviewed. The importance of committee in the tertiary institutions include; promotion of inclusive governance; allow for division of labor; promote transparency and accountability; enable expert input in decision-making and support institutional checks and balances. The examples of committee system in the Tertiary Institutions includes; Senate Committee on Examinations; research and Ethics Committee; Appointments and Promotions Committee and Student Disciplinary Committee (Oduneye, 2000; Eno-Ibanga, 2005).

2. Types of Committees

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria adopt a committee system as a formal structure for governance and administration. These committees are designed to handle specific functions within the institution and are typically composed of representatives from various units or departments. The committee system in Nigerian tertiary institutions can broadly be categorized into three main types:

a) Statutory Committees

These are permanent committees established by law, institutional statutes, or governing council regulations. Their existence and functions are often stipulated in the enabling acts or constitutions of the institutions.

Examples:

Governing Council: This is the highest policy-making body in most tertiary institutions, responsible for finance, staff welfare, and general administration.

Senate (in universities): Responsible for academic matters such as curriculum development, student admissions, examinations, and academic regulations.

Academic Board (in polytechnics and colleges of education): The equivalent of the Senate in non-university institutions; handles academic policies and programs.

Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GPC): Oversees financial planning, budgeting, and general resource management.

Appointments and Promotions Committee (A&PC): Handles staff recruitment, promotions, and disciplinary matters.

Features:

- * Permanent in nature
- * Membership defined by institutional rules
- * Decisions have legal or binding implications

Standing Committees

These are long-term committees established by the statutory bodies (such as the Senate or Governing Council) to manage specific functions regularly. While not necessarily created by law, they are institutionalized and recognized as essential to the operation of the institution.

Examples:

Senate Curriculum Committee: Reviews and recommends new academic programs or revisions to existing curricula.

Research and Publications Committee: Oversees the development and quality of research outputs, journals, and academic publishing.

Library Committee: Advises on library resources, acquisition of books, and user policies.

Disciplinary Committee: Investigates cases of academic or staff misconduct and recommends appropriate sanctions.

Examination Committee: Supervises the organization, conduct, and integrity of examinations.

Features:

- 1) These committees are permanent but subordinate to statutory bodies
- 2) These committees are membership may change periodically
- 3) These committees are regularly holding meetings and continue to address problems coming forth

b) 3. Ad-hoc Committees

These are temporary committees constituted to address specific, short-term issues or assignments. Once the task is completed and a report is submitted, the committee is usually dissolved.

Examples:

Investigation Panels: Set up to examine specific allegations or incidents (e.g., examination malpractice, staff misconduct, crisis resolution).

Search Committees: Appointed to recommend candidates for top positions like Vice-Chancellor, Rector, or Provost.

Accreditation Committees: Temporarily set up to prepare for NUC, NBTE, or NCCE accreditation exercises.

Strategic Review Committees: Formed to assess and propose reforms in policy, curriculum, or infrastructure.

Features:

- * These committees are temporary and have task-specific
- * These committees are dissolved after completion of mandate
- * Often include experts relevant to the issue being addressed

Table 1: Types of Committees in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Type of Committee	Nature	Examples	Functions
Statutory Committee	Permanent; established by law or institutional statutes	Senate, Governing Council, Appointments and Promotions Committee (A&PC)	Responsible for core governance, policy formulation, and high-level decision-making.
Standing Committee	Permanent; established by institutional needs	Curriculum Committee, Research Committee, Library Committee	Handles regular administrative and academic functions, ensuring continuous institutional operations.
Ad-hoc Committee	Temporary; established for specific tasks	Investigation Panel, Search Committee, Accreditation Committee	Addresses short-term or special issues requiring immediate attention or expert input.

8.3. Importance of Committee in Tertiary Education

Committees play an essential role in the effective functioning of tertiary institutions. These committees are responsible for a wide range of tasks, such as policy-making, curriculum development, budget planning, and decision making. Without these committees, the academic and administrative aspects of a tertiary institution would be disorganized and chaotic.

One of the main reasons why committees are important in tertiary institutions is that they ensure the smooth running of the institution. By having a diverse group of individuals with different backgrounds and expertise, committees can effectively handle various issues and make well-informed decisions. This, in turn, helps in maintaining order and efficiency within the institution.

Moreover, committees also promote transparency and accountability in tertiary institutions. With various committees overseeing different aspects of the institution, there is a system of checks and balances in place. This ensures that decisions are made in a fair and unbiased manner, and all actions are in the best interest of the institution.

Another crucial aspect of committees in tertiary institutions is their contribution to academic and administrative development. Committees are responsible for developing and implementing policies and programs that enhance the quality of education and services provided by the

institution. They also play a vital role in reviewing and improving existing curriculum, ensuring that it remains relevant and up-to-date.

Furthermore, committees provide a platform for faculty and staff to voice their opinions and concerns. Through committee meetings and discussions, members can share their ideas and suggestions, leading to better solutions and outcomes. This promotes a sense of community and collaboration within the institution, which is crucial for its growth and success.

Committees are an integral part of tertiary institutions, and their importance cannot be overlooked. From ensuring the smooth functioning of the institution to promoting transparency and fostering academic and administrative development, committees play a crucial role in the overall success of a tertiary institution.

8.4. Rationale for adopting Committee system in Tertiary Education

The adoption of the committee system in Nigeria's tertiary education institutions is rooted in the need for participatory governance, collective decision-making, and effective management of complex academic and administrative affairs. Given the multifaceted nature of higher institutions with diverse departments, faculties, and units no single individual or office can effectively oversee all aspects of institutional operations. The committee system, therefore, serves as a structured and democratic means of ensuring inclusive participation and accountability across all levels of governance. Below are the key rationales for adopting the committee system in tertiary education:

i. Promotion of Participatory Governance

Tertiary institutions operate on the principles of academic freedom and collegiality. The committee system facilitates the inclusion of various stakeholders' academic staff, non-academic staff, students, and external members in decision-making processes. This collective approach promotes transparency, shared responsibility, and a sense of ownership over institutional decisions.

ii. Efficient Division of Labor

Higher institutions manage a wide range of functions, including curriculum development, staff appointments, research oversight, budgeting, and disciplinary matters. Committees allow for the decentralization of these functions, ensuring that tasks are handled by those with relevant expertise. This specialization improves efficiency and enhances the quality of decisions.

iii. Checks and Balances

Committees provide a system of checks and balances that minimizes the risk of autocratic leadership or unilateral decisions by key administrators such as vice-chancellors, provosts, or rectors. Recommendations and decisions are typically reviewed by multiple bodies, ensuring that no single interest dominates the governance structure.

iv. Enhancement of Academic Quality

Academic committees, such as Senate Committees on Curriculum, Research, or Accreditation, ensure that academic standards are upheld. These committees review and approve academic programs, assess research proposals, and monitor academic performance, thereby helping maintain the integrity and quality of educational offerings.

v. Conflict Resolution and Disciplinary Oversight

The committee system also plays a vital role in dispute resolution within institutions. Committees such as disciplinary panels or grievance redress committees provide fair hearing opportunities and impartial judgment, helping to maintain order and address conflicts among students or staff.

vi. Adaptability and Institutional Stability

Committees provide continuity and institutional memory, especially in the face of leadership transitions or policy changes. Because committees are composed of multiple members and operate through documented procedures, they help preserve institutional stability and ensure that policies are not easily reversed or manipulated by changing leadership.

vii. Support for Strategic Planning and Policy Development

Strategic decision-making such as resource allocation, infrastructure development, and long-term academic planning is often informed by recommendations from specialized committees. Their role in gathering data, evaluating options, and proposing policies supports evidence-based and forward-looking institutional planning.

8.5. Challenges Militating against Committee System in Tertiary Education

The challenges that have affected committees in tertiary institutions in Nigeria are numerous and diverse. These challenges range from financial constraints, institutional bureaucracy, political interference and inadequate resources, lack of clear communication and coordination among various departments and stakeholders to corruption and nepotism.

i. Financial constraints

The financial constraints faced by committees in tertiary institutions in Nigeria have been a major concern for researchers and policymakers. These constraints have resulted in various challenges such as resource limitations, reduced funding for research projects, and restricted access to quality education. In addition, the budget constraints have hindered the implementation of effective strategies and initiatives to improve the overall performance of tertiary institutions. As a result, it is imperative for stakeholders to address these financial constraints in order to ensure the sustainability and growth of higher education in Nigeria.

ii. Institutional bureaucracy

Institutional bureaucracy has been a major issue affecting committees in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The complex and rigid structure of these institutions often leads to delays, inefficiencies, and conflicts within committees. This can greatly hinder decision-making processes and stall progress in important projects. Additionally, the strict hierarchy and rules in these institutions can make it difficult for committees to implement change or adapt to new ideas. This can stifle innovation and hinder the overall growth of these institutions. Therefore, addressing the effects of institutional bureaucracy on committees in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is crucial for promoting efficient and effective decision-making, as well as fostering a more dynamic and progressive academic environment.

iii. Political interference

Political interference in committee decisions has become a prominent issue in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The presence of external forces in academic committees has sparked controversy and raised concerns about the integrity of these institutions. There have been reports of committee members being influenced or pressured to make biased decisions based on political affiliations. This has led to a lack of transparency and fairness in the decision-making process, ultimately affecting the overall functioning of these institutions. The problem of political interference in committee decisions is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. It has been an ongoing issue for many years and has significantly impacted the academic landscape. One of the major consequences of this interference is the delay or obstruction of important academic decisions. This can range from the appointment of faculty members to the approval of curriculum changes. As a result, the quality of education and research in these institutions is compromised, leading to a decline in their overall performance. Moreover, political interference in committee decisions has also caused a divide among members, leading to conflicts and disruptions in the functioning of these committees (Ogunode & Mcbrown, 2022). Many committee members feel pressured to comply with external demands, even if it goes against their personal and professional values. This not only affects their morale but also hinders their ability to make unbiased and informed decisions. In light of these issues, there is a growing need for a solution that can address the problem of political interference in committee decisions. This is where our AI tool comes into play. By generating academic abstracts from user input, our tool can provide a comprehensive insight into the impact of political interference on committee decisions in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This can help stakeholders, such as faculty members, students, and policymakers, understand the gravity of the situation and take appropriate measures to address it.

iv. Inadequate resources

The inadequate resources present in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria have been negatively affecting the committee's ability to effectively carry out their duties. This shortage of resources has

resulted in a lack of necessary materials, equipment, and funding needed for academic activities. Due to this, the committee has been struggling to maintain the standard of education and provide quality learning experiences for students. This issue of inadequate resources has also hindered the committee's efforts to conduct research and implement new initiatives that could improve the education system in Nigeria (Ogbonida, Obiano & Emmanuel 2013). Despite their best efforts, the committee's potential for positive impact is being limited by the lack of resources in the tertiary institutions. This issue must be addressed in order to ensure the continued growth and success of higher education in Nigeria.

v. Lack of clear communication and coordination among various departments

Lack of clear communication and coordination among various departments in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has become a major concern for the committee responsible for overseeing these institutions. The lack of effective communication has led to disorganization and duplication of efforts, ultimately hindering the progress and success of these institutions. The lack of coordination has also resulted in inefficiency and delays in decision-making processes, causing further setbacks for the committee and the institutions as a whole (Ogbogu, 2013; Ogunode N J (2020).). This issue has been identified as a major obstacle for the development and advancement of the tertiary education system in Nigeria. It is crucial for proper communication and coordination to be established among all departments in order to improve the overall functioning and effectiveness of the committee and the institutions it oversee (Akinola, & Ogunode 2022). These challenges have led to inefficiencies, delays, and lack of transparency in decision-making processes, ultimately hindering the overall development and progress of these institutions.

vi. Corruption

Corruption has had a significant impact on the operations of committees in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. These committees, which are responsible for making important decisions and policies for the institution, have been plagued by corrupt practices such as embezzlement of funds, bribery, and nepotism. This has resulted in a lack of transparency and accountability, leading to a decline in the overall functioning of the institution (Asiyai, 2015; Ahmodu, & Sofoluwe, 2018). One of the major effects of corruption on committees in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is the mismanagement of resources. In many cases, funds allocated for important projects and programs are siphoned off by committee members for their personal gain. This has not only led to a waste of resources but also hindered the progress and development of the institution. Moreover, corruption has also contributed to the decline in the quality of education in these institutions. As committee members prioritize their own interests over the welfare of the students and the institution, important decisions and policies are often made without considering the impact on the academic environment (Ololube, 2016; Okonofua, 2021). This has resulted in a decrease in the standard of education and a negative reputation for these institutions. In addition, corruption has

also led to a lack of trust and confidence in the committees and the institution as a whole. Students, faculty, and other stakeholders have lost faith in these committees and their ability to effectively manage the affairs of the institution. This has created a negative perception of the institution, making it difficult to attract talented individuals and investments. Overall, corruption has had a detrimental effect on committees in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, hindering their ability to effectively fulfill their duties and responsibilities. It is crucial that steps are taken to address this issue and ensure transparency and accountability in these committees to promote the development and progress of these institutions (Ololube, 2016; Oriude, 2021a).

8.6. Sustainable Strategies to improve committee system in Tertiary Education in Nigeria

There are many sustainable strategies that can improve the committee system in tertiary education. Some of these sustainable strategies include;

i. Establishment of a clear and well-defined hierarchy of committees within the tertiary institutions

Establish a well-defined committee hierarchy, with clear mandates, reporting lines, and overlap minimised — so each committee's scope and authority are unambiguous and consistent across institutions (Okai & Wordu, 2019; Ahaotu et al., 2021). The first strategy suggested by the study is the establishment of a clear and well-defined hierarchy of committees within the tertiary institutions. This will ensure that each committee has a specific purpose and scope of work, thereby minimizing confusion and overlapping responsibilities. Additionally, this will enable effective delegation of tasks and facilitate better coordination between committees, leading to improved overall performance (Ogunode, & Onyekachi, 2021).

ii. Incorporation of technology to streamline the committee system.

The incorporation of technology to streamline the committee system. This includes the use of digital platforms for communication and collaboration, as well as implementing online systems for task assignment and progress tracking. By embracing technology, the committee system can become more efficient and time-saving, allowing for faster decision-making and implementation (Parkinson, 2014; Ogunode, Onyekachi, & Ayoko, 2023).

iii. Inclusion of stakeholders from various backgrounds and expertise in committees.

The inclusion of stakeholders from various backgrounds and expertise in committees. This will bring diverse perspectives and ideas to the table, leading to more comprehensive and effective decision-making. It also promotes inclusivity and transparency in the committee system, which can improve its credibility and accountability (Ogunode, Abubakar, & Ajape 2021).

iv. Regular evaluation and review of committees

The regular evaluation and review of committees to ensure they are functioning effectively and efficiently. This can be done through feedback surveys from committee members and stakeholders, as well as data analysis of their outcomes and impact. By continuously evaluating and improving the committee system, sustainable changes can be made to enhance its overall effectiveness (Babalola, 2014).

v. Establishment of a committee training program

The establishment of a committee training program will ensure that committee members are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their roles effectively. This training can cover areas such as communication, decision-making, and conflict resolution, among others. By investing in the development of committee members, the overall performance of the committee system can be significantly improved (Okani, Ogunode & Ajape 2021).

Conclusion

The committee system is an indispensable component of governance and administration in Nigeria's tertiary education sector. As institutions grow in size and complexity, the need for structured, participatory, and efficient decision-making mechanisms becomes more critical. Committees—whether statutory, standing, or ad-hoc—enable institutions to manage academic, administrative, financial, and disciplinary matters through collective expertise and inclusive representation.

The synergy between tertiary education and the committee system in Nigeria not only enhances institutional performance but also contributes significantly to the broader goals of national development, capacity building, and the advancement of knowledge. Continuous review and strengthening of this system are essential to meet emerging challenges and maintain the relevance and credibility of Nigeria's higher education institutions. The committee system in Nigerian tertiary institutions is structured to support a collaborative, decentralized, and participatory governance model. Each type of committee—statutory, standing, and ad-hoc—plays a unique and complementary role in ensuring the smooth operation, accountability, and academic integrity of the institution.

By dividing responsibilities across specialized committees, tertiary institutions are better equipped to handle the complexity of modern higher education governance. Also, by decentralizing authority and fostering transparency, the committee system strengthens accountability and institutional integrity. It also upholds the core values of higher education, such as collegiality, academic freedom, and merit-based decision-making. However, for the committee system to function effectively, there must be a commitment to fairness, professionalism, and timely execution of responsibilities.

Revise Questions

1. What is Committee System?
2. List four types of Committees
3. List five Importance of Committee in Tertiary Education
4. Discuss four Rationale for adopting committee system in Tertiary Education
5. Discuss five challenges militating against Committee System in Tertiary Education
6. Enumerate five sustainable strategies to improve committee system in Tertiary Education in Nigeria

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AUTHORS' BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER ONE:

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WEST AFRICA TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF WEST AFRICA COUNTRIES

Authors:

Ogunode Niyi Jacob, Ph.D.

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

About the Authors:

Ogunode Niyi Jacob, Ph.D., a professional educational planner and an administrator. Ogunode Niyi Jacob Ph.D. have written many articles and conference papers on education especially educational planning, educational administration and management in Nigeria, Tertiary education, ICT education, Green Education, Gender Education, Artificial intelligence and special education. Ogunode Niyi Jacob is currently a staff with Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. He graduated from the famous university of Abuja. He has Master and Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Planning.

CHAPTER TWO:

IMPACT OF RAPID GROWING POPULATION ON THE INFRASTRUCTURE IN NIGERIA

Authors:

Usman Ibrahim, Ph.D.

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

About the Author:

Dr. Usman Ibrahim holds Ph.D., MSc and BSc in Sociology from the Department of Sociology, Bayero University Kano, where he was a Lecturer before moving to the Department of Sociology, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State-Nigeria. Dr. Usman taught at all level of Nigerian education from Primary School Teacher in Awe Local Government Education Authority to Nasarawa State Ministry of Education (Teachers Service Commission) as Secondary School Teacher and finally to university. His area of specialization in Sociology is demography, population studies and social statistics with main interest in fertility and reproductive health and its associated social problems. He has attended so many

international and local conferences and participated in many research activities in addition to publishing in both local and international journals. Dr. Usman also contributed chapters in more than five different text books so far and is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Federal University of Lafia-Nasarawa State.

CHAPTER THREE:

ROLE OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN FISH PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Authors:

Oyekanmi, Funmilayo Bosede, Ph.D.

Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, University of Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria

About the Author:

Oyekanmi Fumilayo Bosede is a distinguished academic and fisheries scientist with over three decades of experience in teaching, research, and academic administration. She began her academic career in 1989 as a Senior Instructor at the College of Agriculture, Mokwa, and now a Reader in the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, University of Ilesa, Osun State. Her areas of specialization include aquaculture nutrition, fish farming systems, freshwater prawn ecology, and environmental impacts on aquatic productivity. Dr. Oyekanmi has contributed extensively to the academic community through numerous publications in reputable national and international journals, and conference proceedings. Her research has attracted grants, including international funding from Zoetis Pharmaq SA and TETFund IBR. She is a Fellow of the Strategic Institute for Natural Resources and Human Development (FRHD), and holds membership in several professional bodies including FISON, WAS, ANIFS, and NIAS. Her work has been recognized with multiple awards for academic excellence and nation-building contributions, she remains committed to advancing sustainable fisheries practices, mentoring young scholars, and promoting gender inclusiveness in agricultural research and development in Nigeria and beyond.

CHAPTER FOUR:

FACTORS THAT WILL ENHANCE DEVELOPMENT OF CAREER SERVICE CENTRES IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

Authors:

1. **Mary Adanna Chinwuba, Ph.D.** – *Lead Author*
Executive Director, Chalcedony Schools; National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS), Abuja

2. Adamu Awwal Salman

Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa, Nigeria

About the Authors:

Dr. Mary Adanna Chinwuba. She graduated with a 2.1 in Biochemistry from the Federal University of Technology Owerri, after which she proceeded to obtain a Post Graduate Diploma in Education, then Masters in Educational Administration and Planning and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Guidance and Counselling from the prestigious University of Abuja. She has published over 25 Academic Journals online and has featured in so many international conferences. She is a renowned educationist and the Executive Director of Chalcedony Schools. She is a certified member of Association of Professional Counsellors of Nigeria (APROCON), Secretary of National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS Kubwa Satellite), A Licensed and professional teacher with TRCN, She is a trainer and coach to a lot of teachers. She is a genuine lover of God, she is married to Pastor Chibuzo Chinwuba and they are blessed with 2 beautiful daughters.

Adamu Awwal Salman is a distinguished educational psychologist with a B.Ed from Bayero University Kano and an M.Ed from Nasarawa State University. He is a staff member at Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa. Adamu Awwal Salman has authored numerous articles and conference papers on topics including educational psychology, gender, artificial intelligence, tertiary institutions, ASUU, and educational administration. He also holds roles such as Secretary of the Akus Educational Foundation, Ankpa, and Secretary of the Economic Tree Management Committee at Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa, Director of the College of Arts, Science and Islamic Studies (CASIS) reflecting his commitment to education and community development.

CHAPTER FIVE:

TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA AND CRIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Authors:

Danyawo Musa Adamu, Ph.D.

Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

About the Author:

Danyawo Musa Adamu, Ph.D., a professional lecturer with the Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Federal University of Lafia. Danyawo Musa Adamu Ph.D. has written many articles and conference papers on criminology, especially educational planning, educational administration in

Nigeria, the role of ICT in administration, and Artificial Intelligence. Danyawo Musa Adamu is currently a staff with Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. He graduated from the University of Maiduguri. He has a Master's in Sociology and a Ph.D. in International Studies. Dr. Danyawo Musa Adamu is a lecturer in the Department of Criminology and Security Studies, in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State. He is a member of Association of Professional Councilors of Nigeria. He is an academician par excellence and a professional lecturer who has published in a number of academic journals, contributed to chapters in books, and continues to impact knowledge in Criminology and Security Studies as well as Change and Innovation in the Educational System.

CHAPTER SIX:

GAMIFICATION IN SCIENCE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Authors:

1. **Olamoyegun, Stephanía Olabisi, Ph.D. – Lead Author**

Department of Science Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

2. **Ola-Adeniji Elizabeth Bolarinwa**

Department of Science Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

About the Authors:

Stephanía Olabisi Olamoyegun (Ph.D.) is a science educator and Chemist with 15 years of teaching experience at senior secondary school. She holds a degree in Chemistry Education from University of Uyo, Masters and Ph.D. in Science Education from University of Abuja. Her work focuses on improving the teaching and learning of science. She has published scholarly articles on teacher preparation, students' misconceptions in science, and the integration of digital learning tools in classrooms. With years of experience teaching at the university level, Dr. Stephanía is committed to bridging the gap between research and classroom practice. She has served as a mentor for pre-service and in-service science teachers. Her current research interests include curriculum innovation, psychosocial factors of interest, self-efficacy, and learning environment on achievement in Basic Science among Junior Secondary School Students in North Central Nigeria, and the role of technology in advancing science education in Nigeria.

Ola-Adeniji Elizabeth Bolarinwa is a distinguished educator and chemist with a decade of teaching experience. Born with a passion for science and

education, Elizabeth has established herself as a dedicated and accomplished professional in her field. Elizabeth holds a Bachelor's degree in Applied Chemistry from Usman Danfodio University. She furthered her education by obtaining a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) from the National Open University. Her academic pursuits culminated in a Master's degree from the University of Abuja. With a strong foundation in chemistry and education, Elizabeth embarked on a teaching career that has spanned over ten years. Her dedication, expertise, and commitment to excellence have made her a respected and beloved educator among her students and peers. Throughout her career, Elizabeth has demonstrated a tireless passion for inspiring and mentoring young minds. Her contributions to the field of education have been significant, and her legacy continues to inspire future generations of scientists, educators, and leaders.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA AND HUMAN MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Authors:

Olapade Olubunmi Olayinka

Department of Human Resources and Administration, Nigeria Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), Nigeria

About the Author:

Olapade Olubunmi N. Olayinka is an experienced Public Administrator and Human Resource professional with a strong academic background, including a Master's degree and a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Administration. Currently serving at the Nigeria Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), Olubunmi has held various key roles since 2012, including Head of the Environment Unit and Officer in charge of the Office and Housing Unit. Her work spans administrative coordination, human resources, environmental management, and project oversight. A Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Human Resources Management and Member of both the Nigerian Institute of Management and the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management, she combines professional expertise with a passion for leadership and service. Olubunmi is also active in community development, particularly in women and youth-focused initiatives. Her core values are integrity and professionalism.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS AND COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

Authors:

Sani Kasimu, Ph.D.

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria

About the Author:

Dr. Sani Kasimu holds a B.A. in Public Administration (2011), M.Sc. in Public Administration (2016), PGD in Economics & Statistics (2019), and Ph.D. in Public Administration (2024) from Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Nigeria. He is a Senior Lecturer with the Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Federal University Wukari. His areas of interest include Public Financial Management, Public Sector Accounting, Statistics, Econometrics, Public Debt Management, Development Administration, Strategic Planning and Management, Project Management Analysis, and Public Policy Analysis.

CHAPTER NINE:

TERTIARY EDUCATION AND ACCREDITATION OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

Authors:

Inemesit Nsikak Edet

Assistant Chief Education Officer, Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, Nigeria

About the Author:

Inemesit Nsikak Edet is a post-graduate student currently pursuing a Ph.D. degree in Educational Administration and Planning at the University of Abuja, Nigeria. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Science Education and a Master's Degree in Educational Administration and Planning, among other professional certifications. She currently works with the Federal Ministry of Education as the Assistant Chief Education Officer. She taught Sciences in Federal Government Boys' College Abuja specializing in Biology. She is a member of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria and the Local School Board, Living Faith Church Worldwide.

CHAPTER TEN:**TERTIARY EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA****Authors:****Nwankwo Nkechi Chinelo, Ph.D.**

Department of Educational Management and Planning, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria

Unachukwu Ijeoma Blessing, Ph.D.

Department of Economics Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze, Nigeria
Email: ijeoma.unachukwu@fcetumunze.edu.ng

About the Author:

Nwankwo Nkechi Chinelo, Ph.D., is a distinguished educational administrator, planner, and researcher. Dr. Nwankwo has authored numerous articles and conference papers in the fields of educational administration, planning, and management, anxiety management, tertiary education, and artificial intelligence. She holds a Ph.D. in Educational Management and Planning from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State. She is an active member of the Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP), Association of Educational Management and Policy Practitioners (AEMPP), and Forum for African Women Educationist (FAWE).

CHAPTER ELEVEN:**TERTIARY EDUCATION AND COMPUTER-BASED TEST IN NIGERIA****Authors:****Unachukwu Ijeoma Blessing, Ph.D.**

Department of Economics Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze, Nigeria
Email: ijeoma.unachukwu@fcetumunze.edu.ng

Nwankwo Nkechi Chinelo, Ph.D.

Department of Educational Management and Planning, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria

About the Author:

Dr. Unachukwu Ijeoma Blessing is a lecturer in the Department of Economics Education at Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze. She holds her Bachelor's degree, Masters of Science (MSc), and Ph.D. in Economics (Development & Labour Economics). She is a researcher, analyst, and critical

thinker, with excellent communication and human development management skills. Dr. Unachukwu has published many papers in reputable local and international journals. She is currently the Head of Department in the Economics Department at Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze. She is an active member of the Nigerian Economic Society (NES) and the Nigerian Economic Society of Female Professionals (NESFP).

CHAPTER TWELVE:**DIGITALIZATION OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: BENEFITS, PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS****Authors:****1. Christopher Idowu Ojo – Lead Author**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Phone: 08133154731

Email: christopheroj070@gmail.com

2. Temitope Zulfah Mustapha

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Phone: 08039171701

Email: temitopemustapha29@gmail.com

3. Emeana Geraldine Chinwe

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Phone: 08033752432

Email: jaygreg2003@gmail.com

About the Authors:

Christopher Idowu Ojo, a professional educational planner and an administrator. Christopher Idowu Ojo has written several articles and conference papers on education especially educational planning, educational administration and management in Nigeria, tertiary education, and ICT education. Christopher Idowu Ojo is currently a staff with University of Abuja, Nigeria where he also graduated from. He has a Master's and Ph.D. (in view) in Educational Administration and Planning.

Temitope Zulfah Mustapha is an Educational Strategist and Media Education Expert. She has written many reports, articles, and seminar papers on education—especially on educational administration and management, basic education concerns, inclusive education, tertiary education, ICT education, gender education, and special education. She is presently a staff with the Voice of Nigeria, where she heads the Education Desk and has served for 13 years. She

graduated from the University of Ilorin and has a Master's and Ph.D. (in view) in Educational Administration and Planning.

Emeana Geraldine Chinwe is a seasoned Administrator and currently an Assistant Director/Admin with the National Film & Video Censors Board (NFVCB), Abuja. She has held different administrative positions and is currently in charge of Appointment, Promotion, and Discipline. She is also a member of the NFVCB Media Literacy Campaign Team that educates and carries out enlightenment campaigns on film matters. Emeana Geraldine C. is a professional Educational Planner and a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Human Resource Management (FCIHRM). She graduated from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and the University of Abuja, Nigeria, and is presently pursuing her Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Planning at the University of Abuja, Nigeria.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

DEPLOYMENT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR FRAUD DETECTION AND PREVENTION IN TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Authors:

Victor Olugbenga Ayoko

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, National Open University of Nigeria
Email: victorayoko@gmail.com

About the Author:

Victor Olugbenga Ayoko is a research scholar in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, National Open University of Nigeria. He is a multidisciplinary scholar with qualifications across the faculties of science, management science, social science, and education. He is a member of the Open Distance and e-Learning Association of Nigeria (ODeLAN), the National Association of Educational Administration and Planners (NAEAP), and the Nigerian Economic Society (NES). He has published in several local and international journals, contributed to book chapters, and presented papers in relevant conferences. His areas of interest include school administration, sustainable development, economic development, and open and distance learning.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN:

DEPLOYMENT OF TECHNOLOGIES IN CURTAILING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES IN NIGERIA TERTIARY EDUCATION

Authors:

Galadima, Farida Ibrahim

Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria.

JAE, Talatu

Department of Educational Foundation, Taraba State University, Jalingo

About the Author:

Galadima Farida Ibrahim has a Master's Degree in Educational Administration and Planning and is currently pursuing a Doctorate in the same field. She is a lecturer with Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. She is a research scholar and has written many articles in education and beyond. Farida is a member of the National Association of Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP).

CHAPTER FIFTEEN:

SMART RESEARCH IN TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Authors:

1. **Maryam Abdullahi, Ph.D.** – *Lead Author*

Department of Education, Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano, Nigeria

2. **Muhammad Danjuma Maiwada**

Department of Education, Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano, Nigeria

About the Authors:

Maryam Abdullahi, Ph.D., is a professional educational psychologist. She has written many articles and conference papers on education, especially educational psychology, guidance and counseling, tertiary education, computer and ICT education, and special education. Maryam Abdullahi is currently a lecturer at the Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano, Nigeria. She graduated from Bayero University Kano for her first and second degrees and obtained her Ph.D. at Federal University Dutse-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria. She has a Master's and Ph.D. in Educational Psychology.

Muhammad Danjuma Maiwada is currently pursuing his Ph.D. at Bayero University, Kano. His research interests include Educational Psychology, Literacy in Education, Tertiary Education, Special Education, and

Guidance and Counseling. He serves as a Lecturer in the Department of Education at the Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano. Maiwada is dedicated to advancing knowledge and contributing to the academic community through his research endeavors. He earned both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Bayero University, Kano, with a Master's in Educational Psychology.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Authors:

Umoru Abdulrasheed Oseni

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

About the Author:

Umoru Abdulrasheed Oseni is a part-time lecturer in the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja. He holds a Diploma in Accounting, B.Sc (Ed) Accounting, and an M.Ed in Educational Administration and Planning. He is currently working on his Ph.D. thesis in Educational Administration and Planning, all at the University of Abuja. Umoru Abdulrasheed Oseni has conducted many analytical and empirical research studies in educational leadership and management, published in reputable local and international journals. He is happily married with children.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: TERTIARY EDUCATION AND FUNDING IN NIGERIA

Authors:

Saleh Khalid Mahmud

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Email: khalidmahmuh13@yahoo.com

About the Author:

Saleh Khalid Mahmud is a professional educational planner and administrator. He has written many articles and journals on education, especially educational planning, educational administration, and management in Nigeria, tertiary education, and ICT education. Saleh Khalid Mahmud is currently a Ph.D. student in the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria. He earned his Master's degree in Educational Planning and Policy from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN:

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF URBANIZATION ON LOCAL BIODIVERSITY

Authors:

Ronald Winifred Abhulimen, Ph.D.

Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Biosciences, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria

Email: ronaldwinifred@gmail.com

ORCID iD: 0009-0006-3670-4079

About the Author:

Ronald Abhulimen Winifred, Ph.D., is a distinguished wildlife ecologist with a Ph.D. from the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. She is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Biosciences, Federal University Wukari. She has authored numerous articles and conference papers on the terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity of molluscs, arthropods, and aquatic macroinvertebrates fauna. She was awarded Best Departmental Lecturer in 2025 and serves as an Academic Board Member of ENE Health College, Wukari. She lectures both undergraduate and postgraduate students in Biological Sciences and has supervised many project works. Dr. Winifred is also a member of NES Taraba State Chapter (pioneer Financial Secretary, 2023/2024), as well as Unit Head of the Decoration Unit in her church, where she serves as a deaconess of God.