

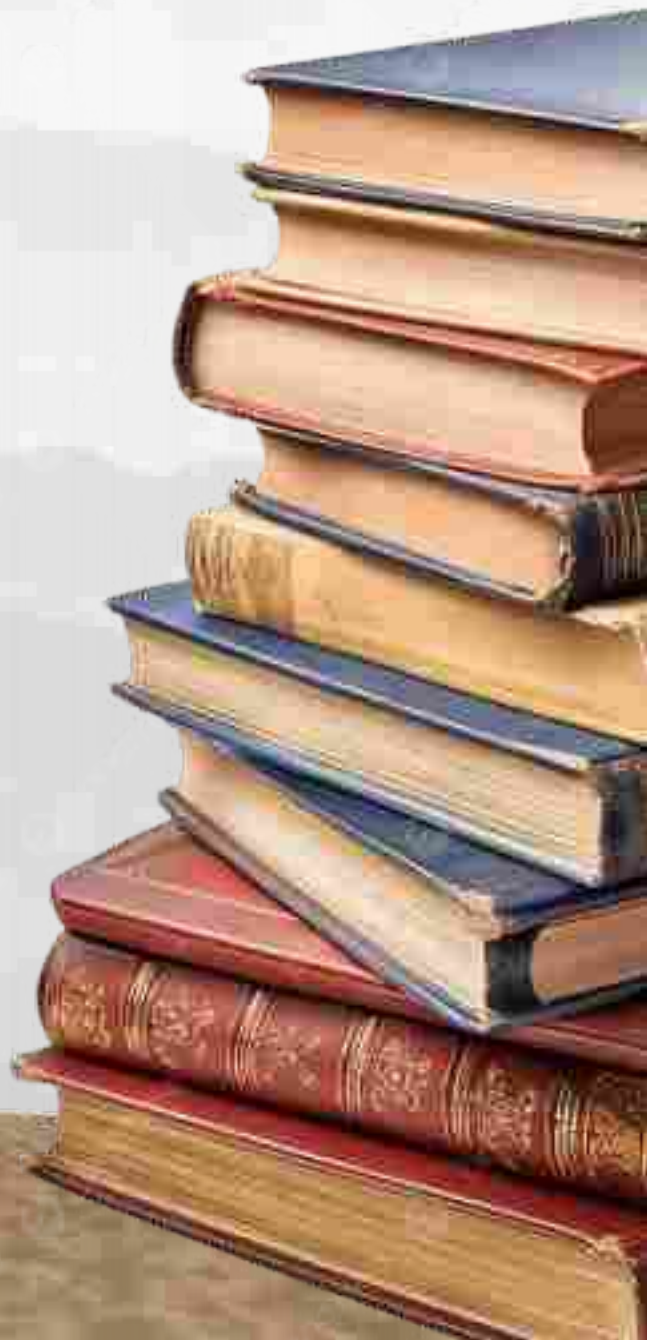


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PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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CHAPTER EIGHT

**TERTIARY EDUCATION AND COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN
NIGERIA****By****Sani Kasimu**

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Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management, Federal University, Wukari,
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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 & Adegami, 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; Orjiude, 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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