THE INFLUENCE OF COMMITTEE SYSTEM ON MANAGEMENT DECISIONS IN TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study seeks to examine factors influencing management decisions on committees, identify whether committees' work delay in decision making and ascertain how often Management pre- decides on issues that come before them.

Design/Methodology/ Approach: Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. A sample of 170 participants comprising 95 Senior Members, 25 Senior Administrative Staff, 45 Committee Members and 5 members of University Management. Simple random and purposive sampling methods were used to select the population for the study. Data was collected through the use of a questionnaire and unstructured interview for both committee members and non-committee members. Data were analysed descriptively using mean and standard deviation. The responses from the interview were transcribed and analysed in themes in line with the research questions for the study.

Findings: The findings revealed that the committee system had a high influence on the management tool for administering the University on democratic principles and as such should continue to be a tool for the University governance. The study concluded that management is handicapped in implementing some of the committees' recommendations due to reasons such as financial constraints, human resources, logistics, legal, environment, political issues, administrative support, among others. The study recommended that, for the committee system to be seen as a very effective decision-making tool in the tertiary education institutions, the university management should employ all the necessary means possible to implement committees' recommendations. In addition, by way of policy, there should be statutory provision to ensure that one person does not serve on so many Committees.

Research Limitation/Implication: The study focus on factors influencing management's decisions on committees. The study concentrated mainly on Cape Coast Technical University as a case study.

Practical Implication: The knowledge advanced in this study will inform the management of Cape Coast Technical University prospects and challenges of the committees' system.

Social Implication: The knowledge advanced in this study will help policy-makers in the administration of higher educational institutions. It will again help them to review some existing committees to streamline them to make them more effective and efficient.

Originality/ Value: The paper presents the first investigation of the committee system in tertiary education institutions. It will aid in the discussions between a range of academics, committee members and non-committee members about the roles of the committee system in university governance, the importance of committees and the effective way of managing a university's committee system. These can provide valuable pointers for policymakers in other tertiary education.

Keywords: Committee system. decision. higher education. management.Ghana

INTRODUCTION

University governance and administration have generated much interest in recent times probably due to the reason that good governance does not only lead to higher performance in teaching, research and community service but also influences institutional standing and reputation. Cape Coast Technical University has continued to develop a democratic and representative form of governance using 'the committee system of governance. Its core values are innovation, creativity, professionalism, integrity and team spirit.

Governance in higher education refers to how higher educational or tertiary institutions are formally organized and managed (Karol & Gingsburg, 2017). In other words, university governance is how universities are operated. Higher educational institutions in Ghana have a two-tier or bicameral system of governance. Their councils are vested with overall responsibility for matters relating to finance, development, appointments, awarding of degrees and discipline (Livingstone, 2013). In addition, academic boards are responsible for all academic matters and these responsibilities are performed through the committee system. The Public universities in Ghana, as exemplified in Cape Coast Technical University Schedule of Meetings, 2020/2021 academic year, are governed through the Committee system.

The university governance and administration is based on delegation of authority through the University Council and Academic Board to Schools or Faculties, Departments and Committees. The university council is the governing body of the University and is the formal employer of all university staff (Technical university Act 2016 (Act 922). It is charged with the general control and superintendence of policy, finance and property of the university. University employees are required under the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor (VC) to carry out Council's policies and its decisions. To that extent, the Vice-Chancellor may be seen as "Chief Executive". He or she is supported by the Registrar who is responsible for the university's academic and administrative support service.

Onyeonoru, (2015) indicates that the academic board is the highest academic body in the university system with the Vice-Chancellor as its Chairman. Its authority covers all academic matters, although some, such as appointments, are shared with the council. It is the academic board that has formal authority under the university's statute to make academic policies. Therefore, for it to take meaningful decisions it has to create certain committees.

The use of committees in public universities in Ghana was entrenched in the Laws/Acts establishing Ghanaian Public Universities as indicated in the Public University Act: Act of Parliament, 1961 (Act 79) which states that: "Anybody or persons established by the Act shall without prejudice of the generality, shall have the power to appoint committees consisting of members of that body and subject to the provisions of sub-section (7) of section four of this Act to authorize committee established by it to exercise, on its behalf, such of its functions as it may determine" (Asare-Bediako, 2014).

According to Ogbogu (2013), the management of such a complex organization requires participation through the committee system because of the bureaucratic, collegial and political models that are applicable in them. Nwachukwu (2019) describes a committee as a device for achieving coordination of activities and sharing of information among various departments and divisions of organizations. He further indicated that committee decisions help to promote better

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coordination in an organization. Ogunruku (2012) wrote that the primary motive of instituting the committee system in institutional governance has grown out of the motive concern for democratizing decision making in those institutions and recognition of the need for broadly based decision making as universities become more complex. The University system arguably creates an environment where no decisions, however trivial, can be taken without reference to a committee. Concerns of some university staff are that the supportive offices and units often act as drawbacks in the effective implementation of University policy decisions.

Arthur (2019) observes that there have been numerous complaints from within and outside the Cape Coast Technical University that the administrative machinery of the University is too slow. Should the perceived slow administrative machinery be attributed to the Committee system which does not make for quick decision-making?

This uneasiness felt by staff about the committee system raises the question of whether the setting up of the Committee system is an effective management tool of Cape Coast Technical University or a drawback. It is also not clear how the role of the committee system influences management decisions in Cape Coast Technical University. These are issues that require in-depth investigation which the study sought to accomplish.

Specifically, the study sought to examine the factors influencing management decisions on committees, identify whether committees' work delays management's decisions and ascertain how often management pre-decides on issues that are before committees.

THEORIES UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

Puplampu (1998), identifies two main models where the committee system locates in terms of organisational structure in university governance. These two models which are Control and Governance models serve as the theoretical framework for this study.
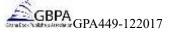
Control model

The control model is the more traditional of the two. Puplampu (1998) identified the noted theorist in this area as Mintzberg. Mintzberg (1987) stated that there are five parts to an organisation; the strategic apex, the middle line management, the operating core, the technostructure and the support structure. These parts affect their work through five coordinating or organising mechanisms, which are direct supervision, standardisation of work processes, mutual adjustment, standardisation of work outputs and standardisation of worker skills.

Combinations of the five parts of the organisation with the five coordinating mechanisms yield five different types of organisational structures known as the Simple Structure, the Machine Bureaucracy, the Professional Bureaucracy, the divisionalised form and the Adhocracy. This descriptive and analytical taxonomy has been called Mintzberg's 5×5×5. When an organisation uses a simple structure, its dominant characteristic is simplicity and a lack of elaboration. Strategic decision-making power and supervisory responsibility often coincide and are lodged within the one-man hierarchy.

The operating core, that is, those who carry out most of the productive functions tend to report directly to the manager or chief executive. New businesses, small organisations and some specialist consultancies operate this form of structure. The machine bureaucracy is

characterised by routine, simple, repetitive work that is carried out by a workforce that is trained to do its work within very elaborate administrative procedures, rigid rules and regulations and very clear functional distinctions between staff and management. The professional bureaucracy operates where those who constitute the operating core are a skilled and professional workforce who must necessarily both execute and manage their work. To achieve efficiency and standardisation of their output, these professionals must work within specified rules that guide both theory professional practice and the workings of the organisations in which they work. The divisionalized form is a structural type that depicts the advanced managerial, administrative and operational structure of a typical large business. It is characterised by organisational units which are effectively semi-autonomous production or regional enterprises. These enterprises are linked with each other by two factors; they belong to one conglomerate and they report through a performance management and control system to headquarters. Multinational firms tend to operate along these lines. The final structural configuration and the most important where this paper is concerned is the Adhocracy. Its essential characteristic is that it manages to fuse experts from different disciplines into ad hoc project teams.

The adhocracy structure depends on mutual adjustment and liaison as key coordinating mechanisms which fuse the work of the teams. Authority arises from an expert rather than executive power. Its principal advantage is in the fact that it lends itself to flexibility, adaptability and innovation. This requires that it must avoid bureaucratisation. It is important to mention here that bureaucracy as we know or have come to understand is not the bureaucracy that Weber proposed. Weber's bureaucracy is an efficient well-oiled machine that operates to time and function, not the conceptualizations that we have today of red-tapism, delays and buck-passing. So when we say Adhocracies must avoid bureaucratization, we are paradoxically saying that they must avoid the positive structural concomitants of bureaucracy such as hierarchy, emphasis on control and inapt differentiation.

The bureaucratic structure is designed to fit in with organisational goals of regularity, simplicity and repetitive worker functions, not innovation. Within the control model of organisations, Adhocracy is perhaps the most important or representative of the committee systems. This is so because of its focus on terms, experts, power and decentralisation of function. The central focus of the Control Model of Organisations is one of seeing organisations as business units that require structure to control staff and achieve corporate goals. A common theme running through its various forms is hierarchical and or executive control.

Governance Model

The other approach to organisational configuration is the Governance Model which sees organisations more as regulated institutions where the prime focus is not hierarchical control, but rather regulated systems of dealing with uncertainty, controversy and multiple centres of ideological-professional institutional concerns. This conceptualisation which is more appropriate in the study of committee systems has theorists such as Hult & Walcolt (1990) as its advocates. They list 7 structural types which arise from this model. These are hierarchical, adjudicative, adversarial, collegial competitive, collegial consensual, collegial-meditative and market structures. This approach is still very much in its infancy as a school of thought in organisational theory. Theorists, however, believe that the governance model must be seen as presenting administrative and decision mechanisms which supplement the control systems of

organisations. That is to say for example, that a machine bureaucracy may create ad hoc structures that may help it to deal with a crisis. Examples of such ad hoc structures are; quality circles, negotiating teams and so on. These structures of the governance model tend to be based on the need to increase worker participation in organisational governance.

This idea has come to remain and appears to run through all expressions of the governance model. The typology of the governance model is described as follow: The Hierarchical type locates authority at the top, information flows up and orders flow down. In terms of governance, this is seen as the best way to deal with multiple organisational concerns and coalitions. Adjudicative and adversarial structures help organisations to deal with recurrent disputes. Authority is therefore vested in the adjudicative and conflict resolution process, which becomes a principal operating and decision mechanism of the organisation or institution.

Collegial competitive structures use the basic decision mechanism of legitimacy based on the inclusiveness of all in the decisions process. Essentially, however, there is a heavy leaning towards competitive rivalry for and of ideas, strategies and portions with a corresponding pressure to persuade others to feel that one's position or strategy is representative of the general good. In this instance, therefore, an agreement exists because legitimacy is based on the fact that 'we were all at the meeting' and also from supposed potency or argument. Collegial consensus structures, however, create organisational parameters through which genuine agreement may be reached after thorough discussion. It thus allows for advisory boards, task forces, committees and an informational process that allows full or thorough comment on propositions.

The Collegial-Meditative structure, however, allows for discussion and compromise through a mediator or mediatory processes. This must be distinguished from the competitive approach where there is a focus on persuasion and from the consensual approach where there is a focus on consensus through modifications. These are the structures associated with the governance model. With the Control Model, the structural types tend to coincide with dominant organisational patterns and organisational types: for example, public sector government departments tend to be machine bureaucracies, while multinational enterprises tend to be divisionalized. The Governance Model, however, allows a flexible conceptualisation of organisational patterns in that different structures can co-exist in the same organisation and structural typology does not necessarily coincide with organisational typology.

The Role of Committees in University Governance
Several institutional goals are accomplished through the use of the committee system. Organisations including institutions of higher education use committees to achieve their targets. Committees formulate policies and advise management as to what to do to achieve success. Kinard (2012) asserts that Committees plan and formulate policies, provide advice and review operations as well as rules, regulations, procedures and systems.

The committee system is part of the structure of the University's management. The committee system is procedurally part of university governance, and it has administrative and academic roles to play. Almost everything in the University is done through the committee system. It is meant to ensure the broad participation of all members. This type is collegial because they are all colleague members. Collegiality demands that members from various constituencies come

together, share ideas and take decisions. The nature of the University is so large that, the Chief Executive Officer alone cannot decide for the entire institution. Therefore, there have been institutional arrangements to ensure that all stakeholders take part in the governance of the University.

The committee system is responsible for making sure that the organization sticks to its aims and objectives as detailed in the university statutes. Barrett (2013) indicates that as committees have overall responsibility for the management of an institution's affairs, committee members can face personal liability should things go wrong. Barrett (2013) summarises that being on a committee involves: Having a shared sense of purpose (following aims & objectives), providing direction and leadership, taking collective responsibility, dealing with compliance issues and being accountable to stakeholders (e.g. the wider community, management). Tertiary educational institutions scarcely run without the committee system as Adamolekum (2009) supported by as Bampoh-Addo (2018), emphasized that Higher Education cannot function without the use of committees.

Importance of Committees

In many organisations and institutions, administrative governance is powered through the committee system. Even though, management systems and for that matter, university structure may differ from one institute to another and from one country to another, many universities use the committee system in their decision-making.
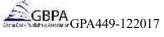
The situation at the Cape Coast Technical University is not different as the University's 2020/2021 schedule of meetings, published in January 2021, lists as many as 6 committees that form statutory committees of the Council, 27 committees form statutory committees of the academic board and 17 other committees constitute a statutory committee under administrative and social services board. In addition are Faculties and Schools Boards/Committees (CCTU 2021 Schedule of Meetings). This explains how important committees are to institutions of higher education including Cape Coast Technical University.

Arthur (2019) states that the routine of administration and management of the Cape Coast Technical University is vested in the office of the Vice-Chancellor who is assisted by the Registrar and his or her administrative secretary and other professional staff (Accountant, Auditors, Directors, Lawyers, Engineers, etc.), Deans of Faculty, and Heads of Department. The performance of the duties of these officers is guided by the decisions of various committees of the University. There are many statutory standing committees with sub-committees and ad-hoc committees. There are as many as 41 statutory and other committees in the Cape Coast Technical University (Arthur, 2019).

Bampoh-Addo (2018) opines that committees in universities are both decision-making agencies and administrative tools. They serve to draw all members of the institutions into the governance process, facilitate consensus building and are therefore expressive of a collegial and participatory ethos. Bampoh-Addo again reports that Higher Education and for that matter, Parliament cannot function without the use of effective committees. Unfortunately, it appears not much has been done in terms of scientific research to examine the influence of the committee system on Management decisions.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study is the descriptive survey involving the mixed-method approach with both quantitative and qualitative components. The target population for the study covered the 389 staff of Cape Coast Technical University. A simple random method using the lottery method was used to select a sample of 170 respondents from a population of 389. The 170 is made up of 95 Senior Members, 25 Senior Administrative Staff, and 45 Committee Members. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 5 Management members. Table 1 presents the category of respondents selected for the study.

Table 1: Population and Sample

Category of Respondents	Population	Sample
Senior Members/ Senior Staff	251	120
Committee Members	104	45
Management	20	5
Total	**389**	**170**

Source: Field Survey 2021

The main instruments used for the study were questionnaire and unstructured interviews. Two separate sets of questionnaire were prepared and administered to respondents. The return rates for Committee Members were, 77.1%; Non-Committee Members, 91.4%; and Management, 83.4%.

The five-point Likert-type scale with options strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree was adopted. The questionnaire for the staff produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.698 and 0.715 for Committee members and non-Committee member respondents respectively. Descriptive statistics involving mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data. The analysis was done using the SPSS Version 24.0.

The interviews conducted were recorded, transcribed, and shown to the interviewees for their acceptance before they were included in the study. The responses gathered from the unstructured interview were classified according to patterns and themes and a description offering explanations, and what respondents felt about the situation and conditions that prevailed in the various instances. As part of the ethics observed in this study, the actual names of the five interviewees were not used. Pseudonyms were used to introduce the respondents.
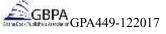
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The interpretation of the data was facilitated by the use of tables, mean and standard deviation. Thus, data from the questionnaire and interview conducted served as a guide in the analysis of responses and were brought to give a complete picture of the findings of the study.

This study intended to investigate whether the work of the Committees has some influence on management decision-making in the University. In exploring the views of Committee members on whether Committees work within time frame and how often Committees meet deadlines, the research conducted on this question recorded a mean of 2.98 and a standard deviation of 0.69. In effect, Table 2 revealed that a higher percentage of respondents indicated that Committees often meet deadlines.

Committee Members were asked to respond on how often Committee recommendations are rejected by the University Management. Table 2 also indicates that with a mean of 2.59 and a standard deviation of 0.75 respondents mentioned that University Management rarely rejects committee recommendations. From respondents' responses, it could be concluded that University Management may sometimes be assumed to be rejecting committee recommendations, it may hold them on for some reasons, which are communicated to committee members.

Table 2: Recommendations of Committees and the Influence on Management Decisions

Responses	Mean	Std. Dev.
How often do the Committees meet deadlines	2.93	0.69
How often are Committees' recommendations rejected by University Management	1.59	0.75

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 3 shows the responses given by 90 committee members and 80 non-committee members. Six (6) statements were structured to explore the respondents' views on the extent to which recommendations offered by committees' influence management decisions. Again, the results showed that with a mean of 3.47 and a standard deviation of 0.62, committee members agreed to the fact that committee work facilitates effective decision-making. Non-committee members had a mean of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 0.78 which also indicates agreement that committee work facilitates effective decision-making. A question of whether management sometimes pre-decides on issues that are to be decided by the committees was posed to investigate whether Management sometimes pre-decides on such issues. Table 3 indicates that with a mean of 3.32 and a standard deviation of 0.612 for committee members, and a mean of 2.49 and a standard deviation of 0.70 for non-committee members, respondents said they disagreed that university management sometimes pre-decides on issues which are before the committees.

Table 3: Committees' Recommendations and their Influence on University's Management Decisions

Responses	Com. Meb.		Non-Com Meb.	
	Mean	Std D.	Mean	Std. D.
Committees' work facilitates effective decision making	3.47	0.62	3.21	0.78
Management sometimes pre-decides on issues before Committees	3.32	0.61	2.49	0.70
Management sometimes amends Committees' recommendations	2.62	0.65	3.09	0.69
Reasons for management's amendments are communicated to the committee members	2.98	6.79	-	-
Management delays implementing recommendations	-	-	2.96	0.69
Committees' recommendations rejected by management are communicated to Committee members	3.85	0.75	1.24	0.65

Source: Field Survey 2021

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The study further explored to find out whether University management sometimes amends committees' recommendations. The results recorded a mean of 2.62 and a standard deviation of 0.65 for committee members, and mean of 3.09 and a standard deviation of 0.59 for non-committee members. This is an indication that respondents agreed that University Management sometimes amends committees' recommendations.

In exploring whether reasons for management's amendments are communicated to the committee members, the mean obtained for the item was 2.98 and a standard deviation of 0.79 for committee members which show that respondents were of the view that reasons for management's amendments are communicated to the committee members. non-committee members on the other hand were asked to indicate their level of agreement on whether management delays in implementing committees' recommendations. Responses indicated that respondents agreed that Management delays in implementing Committees' recommendations as mean and standard deviation scores were 2.96 and 0.69 respectively.

The final statement is intended to find out whether committees' recommendations rejected by management are communicated to committee members. The mean and standard deviation obtained for committee member respondents were 3.85 and 0.75 respectively, implying that the majority of respondents agreed that committees' recommendations rejected by management are communicated to committee members. However, non-committee members disagreed that committees' recommendations rejected by management are communicated to committee members. The mean and standard deviation obtained for this item were 1.24 and 0.65 respectively.

Again, five members of the university management were interviewed to ascertain whether there were some influences of the committee system on management decisions. Respondents were first asked whether management gives a deadline when an issue is before a committee and whether committees meet such deadlines. Respondents agreed that deadlines are given but it becomes very difficult at times to follow that established schedule and when that happens, members normally write for the extension. Respondent 1 said, "you give a deadline which is not renewable or reconstitute another committee to look at the issue or you change or review the membership".

On the same issue, Respondent 2 said "committees do not usually meet deadlines but any time there is the need for extension of time, it is granted to finish their work effectively". Respondent 3 on the other hand said, "sometimes committees can beat deadlines". Respondent 4 also confirmed in his response on the issue that, "not all the time. Sometimes they write for extension and they are granted".

On the question of how often are committees' recommendations are implemented by management, the following were responses from the interviewees. Respondent 5 said, "It depends on the type of committee you are dealing with, the implementation goes on but there are some challenges". He enumerated finance, the sensitivity of some decisions and the type of recommendations.

Respondent 2 indicated that committees' recommendations are implemented quite often. In his words, "There might be some delays due to some technicalities, but most of the committees'

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recommendations are implemented". Respondent 3 said, "most often the decisions are implemented". Respondent 4 on his side indicated that "In most cases, recommendations are implemented by management". Interviewees' responses reiterate earlier responses that even though, management implements committees' recommendations, there were delays in implementation.

Interviewees were asked to respond to a question on whether management sometimes pre-decides on issues that are before committees. These were what the interviewees said. Respondent 5 responded that: 'It depends on the issue. At least the Chief Executive Officer and Management have the mandate to take certain critical decisions and report to committees for rectification. In cases of emergency, a manager should exercise his or her prerogative discretion; take certain decisions and then report'. 'There are some other decisions that the Vice-Chancellor cannot take alone. For instance, Vice-Chancellor cannot approve Statutes without referring them to the Council.
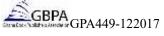
Respondent 1 said there has not been any case where management has pre-decided on issues that committees are yet to decide on. Respondent 2 indicated that "when there are issues for Committees to consider, it is reported to the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor in consultation with either the Registrar or Pro-Vice-Chancellor or any of the Deans concerned would discuss the issue'. 'If work done is not satisfactory, it is referred to the Committee for a second consideration'. Respondent 3 said that "For the years I have served here, I would not be able to provide you with this, I can't give you any". Respondent 4 in support of views expressed by the other four interviewees said, "There has not been any occasion".

Interviewees were asked to respond to whether University management sometimes rejects committees' recommendations. Their responses were as follows: Respondent 5 related that "In any instance where there were some difficulties, the Chair or the Secretary is called upon for clarification". Respondent 1 said, "I haven't seen so many cases in which management has outrightly rejected a committee's decision". While Respondent 2 said, "There has not been any instance of that sort". Respondent 3's response was affirmative. He said, "Report has been rejected before". Respondent 4 said University management would hardly reject a decision taken by a committee. If for any reason the recommendations cannot be implemented or there are operational implementation difficulties, management will tell the committees, because of these and that, this decision cannot be implemented.

The respondents' responses revealed that recommendations offered by committees positively influence management decisions. In most instances, the simple majority of respondents were satisfied with how committees work to complement University management activities regarding decision making and its implementation. In some cases, minority respondents had certain doubts on how committees' work affect management decisions. They hold the view that committees do not ensure prompt decision making, management delays in implementing committees' decisions, management sometimes reject committees' decisions, among others. On these assertions held by some University staff, the study revealed that delay in implementation of committees' decisions might be due to some technicalities, legal, human, financial or logistical constraints.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that governance by the Committee system is still useful and relevant because it is more participatory and allows for more consensus building. The study further concluded that sometimes there are delays in the implementation of Committees' recommendations. Finally, the study concluded that management is handicapped in implementing some of the Committees' decisions due to reasons such as financial constraints, human, logistics, legal, political, among others.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Management must endeavour to ensure that committees' recommendations are considered carefully and implemented promptly. This has been suggested because, when implementation is prompt, staff perception about the committee system would be positive in terms of delay in implementation.

There is the need for the University Management to source for all means to implement committees' recommendations and decisions for the committee system to be seen as a very effective decision-making tool in the University. For the committee system to be made more effective there should be statutory provision to ensure that one person does not serve so many committees. This will relieve overburden members to serve better.

Furthermore, management should implement the recommendations of committees as and when necessary. This would help encourage committee members to be at their best in the discharge of their duties.

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