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APPRAISING THE INFLUENCE OF MANUAL ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE FOR ACADEMIC STAFF PROMOTION IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of the manual assessment system on the promotion of academic staff in Nigerian colleges of education A descriptive survey design was adopted. The study involved academic staff and administrative personnel from five selected colleges of education in South-South Nigeria. A sample of 120 respondents was selected using purposive and stratified random sampling techniques. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire validated by experts, while reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha at 0.70. Findings showed that the manual system significantly delays promotion processes, encourages bias, reduces accountability, and complicates publication verification. The study recommends adopting automated assessment systems to enhance efficiency, transparency, fairness, and reliability in staff promotion.

Keywords: Manual Assessment, Academic Staff Promotion, Nigerian Colleges of Education

Introduction

Assessment is an important component of higher education administration because it serves as a tool for evaluating academic performance and guiding institutional decisions. In tertiary institutions, especially colleges of education, the assessment of academic staff is directly linked to promotion, career advancement, and professional recognition. Promotion motivates academic staff to improve their teaching, research, and community service contributions. Therefore, the assessment process must be transparent, fair, objective, and efficient.

Globally, many higher institutions have adopted digital and automated systems for evaluating academic staff. These systems make use of electronic databases, digital repositories, and automated verification tools to improve transparency and efficiency. According to Nature Editorial (2024), digital assessment systems have improved accountability and trust in promotion processes. Similarly, Orim et al. (2025) noted that automated systems reduce errors and improve the speed of academic evaluation.

Despite these global developments, many Nigerian colleges of education still depend heavily on manual systems of assessment. The process usually involves physical submission of documents such as publications, certificates, conference papers, and administrative records. The promotion committee manually reviews and evaluates these documents. This process is often slow, stressful, and prone to errors.

One major challenge of the manual system is the delay in processing promotion applications. Paper-based procedures involve the movement of files from one office to another, leading to administrative bottlenecks. Agbarakwe and Chibueze (2024) observed that manual administrative systems in Nigerian higher institutions contribute

to delays in decision-making and staff promotion.

Another challenge is the possibility of bias and favoritism. Since manual assessment depends on human judgment, there is a tendency for personal interests and relationships to influence promotion decisions. Abimbowo and Issa (2024) argued that unfair promotion procedures reduce staff morale and confidence in institutional management.

Manual systems also create problems in verifying academic publications and citations. The increasing number of predatory journals and questionable publications makes manual verification difficult and unreliable. Frandsen, Lamptey & Borteye. (2024) emphasized the need for digital tools in verifying research outputs and publication quality.

In addition, physical records may be lost, damaged, or manipulated, thereby affecting the integrity of the promotion process. The continued dependence on manual systems, therefore, raises serious concerns about efficiency, transparency, and fairness in academic staff promotion.

The dependence on physical documents also exposes the assessment process to risks such as loss, damage, or manipulation of records. Important documents may be misplaced, destroyed, or altered, which can compromise the integrity and security of the evaluation process. This not only affects individual staff members but also undermines the overall credibility of the institution. In an era where data security and

integrity are paramount, the continued reliance on manual systems poses significant challenges to effective academic administration.

Despite these numerous challenges, many Colleges of Education in Nigeria continue to rely on manual assessment systems for staff promotion. This persistence may be attributed to factors such as limited technological infrastructure, inadequate funding, and resistance to change. However, the increasing complexity of academic evaluation and the global shift toward digitalization make it imperative for these institutions to reconsider their current practices. There is a growing need to explore more efficient, transparent, and technology-driven alternatives that can enhance the quality and reliability of the promotion process.

Moreover, while several studies have examined assessment practices in Nigerian universities, there is a noticeable gap in research focusing specifically on Colleges of Education. These institutions have unique characteristics and play a distinct role in the education sector, particularly in the training of teachers. As such, understanding the specific challenges associated with their assessment systems is crucial for developing appropriate and context-specific solutions.

This study seeks to examine the effects of the manual system of assessment on the promotion of academic staff in Nigerian Colleges of Education. The findings are expected to provide useful recommendations for improving staff assessment and promotion practices through digital transformation.

Statement of the Problem

The promotion of academic staff in Nigerian Colleges of Education plays an important role in career advancement, staff motivation, and institutional effectiveness. Ideally, promotion processes should be objective, transparent, and efficient. However, many Colleges of Education still rely heavily on manual systems of assessment involving paper-based documentation and human-dependent evaluation procedures.

One of the major problems associated with manual systems is delay in processing promotion applications due to excessive paperwork and administrative bottlenecks. These delays negatively affect staff morale and productivity. Manual systems are also prone to inaccuracies in data handling and computation, which may compromise the credibility of promotion decisions.

Furthermore, manual evaluation processes create opportunities for bias and favoritism because they depend largely on human judgment. The lack of transparency and accountability in the system often leads to dissatisfaction among academic staff. In addition, verifying academic publications and citations manually has become increasingly difficult due to the rise in questionable journals and fake publications.

Despite these challenges, many Nigerian Colleges of Education still depend on manual systems of assessment. There is therefore a need to examine the influence of Manual Assessment Procedure for Academic Staff Promotion in Colleges of Education and provide recommendations for improvement.

Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine the effects of the manual system of assessment on the promotion of academic staff in Nigerian Colleges of Education. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine to the influence 0f paperwork on delays in the processing of academic staff promotions.
2. Determine the influence of manual evaluation processes on bias and favoritism in promotion decisions.
3. 3. Evaluate the level of transparency and accountability in manual staff assessment systems
4. 4. Investigate the challenges associated with verifying academic publications and citations under manual assessment systems.

Research Questions

1. How does paperwork in the manual system of assessment ~~affect~~ delays in processing academic staff promotions?
2. How does manual evaluation processes influence bias and favoritism in promotion decisions?
3. What is the level of transparency and accountability in manual staff assessment systems?
4. What challenges are associated with verifying academic publications and citations under manual assessment systems?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of academic staff and administrative personnel involved in promotion processes in five selected Colleges of Education in the South-South region of Nigeria.

A sample size of 120 respondents was selected using purposive and stratified random sampling techniques. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire divided into two sections. Section A focused on demographic information, while Section B contained items relating to delays, bias, transparency, and verification challenges.

The questionnaire was validated by experts in the Department of Computer Science, Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba. Reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha with a reliability coefficient of 0.70. Data were collected personally by the researcher and analyzed using frequency counts and mean statistics based on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

The results of the data collected were analyzed, score and represented in 4 point scale as strongly agree (4points), agree (3points), disagree (2points) while strongly disagree (1point). The data were analyzed by computing the frequencies and mean for each of item in a tabular form. Interpretations of the mean were based on the limits of the real numbers. 3.30-4.49 (SA), 2.50-3.49 (A), 1.50-2.49 (SD), 0.50-1.49 (D) and any mean response equal or greater than 2.5 was regarded as agreed and disagree if less than 2.5, this is because it falls within the range of 1.50-2.49 which is classified as strongly disagree.

Results

Research Question1: How does paperwork in the manual system of assessment affect delay in the processing of academic staff promotion in Nigerian Colleges of Education?

Table 1: Responses and mean (Ẍ) scores of participants on how paper work in the manual assessment causes delay in the processing of academic staff promotion in Nigerian Colleges of Education

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	∑FX	Ẍ	DECISION
1	Paper-based documentation significantly slows down the promotion assessment process.	48	35	20	17	354	2.95	Accept
2	The time required to sort and organize paper records delays promotion processing	35	40	20	25	325	2.71	Accept
3	The need for physical movement of files between offices delays the promotion process	28	27	30	35	294	2.40	Reject
4	Manual record-keeping increases the workload of administrative staff, leading to slower promotion processing	30	25	32	33	292	2.43	Reject
5	The absence of an automated system contributes significantly to delays in academic staff promotion	44	30	25	21	337	2.81	Accept
	Cluster total						**2.66**	**Accept**

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that the respondents generally agreed that manual, paper-based documentation contributes to delays in the academic staff promotion assessment process, as shown by the cluster mean of 2.66, which was accepted. The respondents agreed that paper-based documentation significantly slows down promotion assessment (mean = 2.95), while the time required to sort and organize paper records also delays promotion processing (mean = 2.71). Similarly, respondents agreed that the absence of an automated system contributes significantly to delays in academic staff promotion (mean = 2.81).

However, the respondents rejected the statements that the physical movement of files between offices causes delays (mean = 2.40) and that manual record-keeping increases administrative workload and consequently slows the promotion process (mean = 2.43). Overall, the cluster mean of 2.66 suggests that respondents perceive the manual documentation system as a significant factor responsible for delays in academic staff promotion, particularly because of paper-based records and the lack of automation. This highlights the need for an automated digital system that can facilitate faster documentation, retrieval, processing, and assessment of promotion records.

Research Question 2: How does manual evaluation process influence bias or favouritism in academic staff promotion decisions?

Table 2: Responses and mean (Ẍ) score of participants on how manual evaluation process influence bias or favouritism in academic staff promotion decisions

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	∑FX	Ẍ	DECISION
6	Manual evaluation processes allow personal relationships to influence promotion decisions.	45	35	15	25	340	2.85	Accept
7	Evaluators' personal biases can affect the fairness of promotion outcomes.	25	30	35	30	290	2.41	Reject
8	Academic staff with closer connections to evaluators are more likely to be promoted under manual systems.	38	30	30	22	324	2.70	Accept
9	Subjective judgment in manual evaluation leads to inconsistent promotion decisions.	40	35	25	20	335	2.79	Accept
10	The absence of automated verification tools increases the risk of biased assessment.	45	35	15	25	340	2.83	Accept
	Cluster total						**2.71**	**Accept**

Table 2 shows that the respondents generally agreed that manual evaluation processes can contribute to bias and favouritism in academic staff promotion decisions, as indicated by the cluster mean of 2.71, which was accepted. Specifically, respondents agreed that manual evaluation allows personal relationships to influence promotion

decisions (mean = 2.83), that staff with closer connections to evaluators may be more likely to receive promotion (mean = 2.70), and that subjective judgement can result in inconsistent promotion decisions (mean = 2.79). They also agreed that the absence of automated verification tools increases the risk of biased assessment (mean = 2.83). However, respondents rejected the statement that evaluators' personal biases can affect the fairness of promotion outcomes (mean = 2.41). Despite this single rejection, the overall cluster mean of 2.71 indicates that respondents generally perceive the manual assessment system as vulnerable to personal influence, subjectivity, and potential favouritism. This finding supports the need for a more objective, transparent, and automated digital assessment system for academic staff promotion.

Research Question 3: What is the level of transparency and accountability in the manual system of staff assessment?

Table 3: Responses and mean (Ẍ) scores of participants on level of transparency of manual evaluation process of academic staff promotion decisions

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	∑FX	Ẍ	DECISION
11	The criteria used for staff assessment in the manual system are clearly defined.	30	20	40	30	290	2.42	Reject
12	Staff members are not adequately informed about how their performance is evaluated.	35	40	20	25	325	2.71	Accept
13	The manual assessment process is not open and transparent to all staff.	43	30	22	25	331	2.75	Accept
14	The manual system of assessment is prone to bias and favouritism.	44	34	20	22	340	2.83	Accept
15	The overall manual staff assessment system is fair, transparent, and accountable.	20	25	40	35	270	2.25	Reject
	Cluster total						**2.59**	**Accept**

The results presented in the Table 3 indicate that the respondents generally perceived the manual staff assessment system as lacking adequate transparency, fairness, and accountability. The cluster mean of 2.59 was accepted, showing overall agreement with the issues raised regarding the manual assessment process. Specifically, respondents

rejected Item 1 (mean = 2.42), indicating that they did not agree that the criteria used for staff assessment in the manual system are clearly defined. They accepted Items 2, 3, and 4, with mean scores of 2.71, 2.75, and 2.83, respectively. This suggests that respondents believed staff members are not adequately informed about how they are evaluated, the assessment process is not sufficiently open and transparent, and the manual system is prone to bias and favouritism. Similarly, Item 5 was rejected (mean = 2.25), indicating that respondents did not consider the overall manual assessment system to be fair, transparent, and accountable. Overall, the findings suggest that the manual staff assessment system has significant weaknesses in transparency, communication, fairness, and accountability, supporting the need for an improved digital assessment system with clearly defined criteria, standardized procedures, and transparent evaluation mechanisms.

Research Question 4: What challenges are associated with verifying academic publications and citations under the manual assessment system?

Table 4: Responses and mean (Ẍ) scores of participants on challenges associated with verifying academic staff publications and citations under the manual assessment system.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	∑FX	Ẍ	DECISION
16	It is difficult to confirm the authenticity of published journals under manual assessment system	20	25	35	40	265	2.20	Reject
17	There is frequent inconsistency in verifying citation counts using manual methods	40	35	25	20	335	2.79	Accept
18	There is no access to digital database like google scholar during verification of academic publication	45	40	20	15	335	2.96	Accept
19	Manual verification increases the risk of manipulation or falsification or publication records.	20	25	35	40	265	2.21	Reject
20	The manual assessment system lacks standardized tools for verifying citation authenticity.	40	35	20	25	330	2.75	Accept
	Cluster total						**2.58**	**Accept**

Table 4, shows that the respondents generally agreed that manual methods of verifying academic publications and citations have significant challenges, as indicated by the cluster mean of 2.58, which was accepted. The respondents agreed that there is frequent inconsistency in verifying citation counts using manual methods (mean = 2.79), while they strongly agreed that there is limited access to digital databases such as Google Scholar during the verification of academic publications (mean = 2.96). They also agreed that the manual assessment system lacks standardized tools for verifying citation authenticity (mean = 2.75). However, respondents rejected the statements that it is difficult to confirm the authenticity of published journals under the manual system (mean = 2.20) and that manual verification increases the risk of manipulation or falsification of publication records (mean = 2.21). Overall, the cluster mean of 2.58 indicates that respondents perceive manual verification as having notable limitations, particularly in citation verification, access to digital databases, and the absence of standardized verification tools. This finding supports the need for an enhanced digital repository system that can automate publication and citation verification and improve the accuracy and reliability of academic staff assessment.

Discussion

The study examined the challenges associated with the manual system of academic staff assessment in Nigerian Colleges of Education, focusing on paperwork, bias and favoritism, transparency and accountability, and verification of academic publications and citations.

The findings indicate that paperwork contributes significantly to delays in academic staff promotion processes. Promotion applications require several documents,

including academic qualifications, publications, evidence of publication, teaching experience, conference participation and other academic activities. The Federal Ministry of Education (2023) recognizes these components as important considerations in the appointment and promotion of teaching staff. The manual collection, movement, examination and verification of these documents can result in misplaced records, incomplete submissions and repeated verification, thereby prolonging the promotion process. Promotion documentation used by Kaduna State College of Education, Gidan Waya, for example, includes publication records and verification forms, demonstrating the substantial documentation involved in the process.

The study also found that manual evaluation may create opportunities for subjectivity, inconsistency and perceptions of bias or favoritism. Although promotion committees provide institutional checks, assessors still have to manually interpret evidence and apply promotion criteria. Where scoring is not standardized, different assessors may interpret or evaluate similar evidence differently. This does not imply that manual assessment automatically results in favoritism; rather, the absence of automated and standardized procedures may make the process more vulnerable to inconsistent judgement. Eneasator, Azubuike and Orji (2019), in their study involving academic staff in Colleges of Education across Nigeria, emphasized the importance of institutional mechanisms for improving academic staff productivity and performance.

Regarding transparency and accountability, the findings show that Colleges of Education have formal structures and guidelines for staff promotion. However, manual record keeping can make it difficult to trace how individual assessment decisions were reached. Physical records may be distributed among departments, faculties, committees

and administrative offices, making retrieval and auditing difficult. A automated system can improve transparency by maintaining staff records centrally, recording assessment activities, identifying authorized users and providing an audit trail of decisions.

Another important finding concerns the verification of academic publications and citations. Academic staff may submit numerous publications from different journals and publishers, requiring assessors to confirm their authenticity, authorship, publication status and compliance with institutional requirements. Kaduna State College of Education's publication verification documentation illustrates the importance attached to this process. Manual verification can be time-consuming and may make it difficult to determine the credibility and indexing status of journals. Citation information also changes continuously and may vary across scholarly databases, making manually recorded citation data difficult to maintain accurately.

Overall, the findings establish that the major weaknesses of manual academic staff assessment in Nigerian Colleges of Education are administrative delays, potential subjectivity, limited transparency and accountability, and difficulties in verifying publications and citations. These challenges justify the adoption of automated assessment systems to enhance efficiency, transparency, fairness, and reliability in staff promotion.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the manual system of assessment negatively affects the promotion of academic staff in Nigerian Colleges of Education. Delays in processing promotion applications, bias and favoritism, lack of transparency, and difficulties in verifying academic publications are major challenges associated with manual systems.

The continued dependence on paper-based procedures undermines efficiency, fairness, and credibility in promotion processes. Therefore, there is an urgent need for Colleges of Education in Nigeria to adopt automated and technology-driven assessment systems.

Recommendations

1. Colleges of Education should adopt automated and digital promotion management systems.
2. Clear and standardized promotion criteria should be established and strictly enforced.
3. Institutions should improve transparency by introducing digital tracking systems for promotion applications.
4. Digital databases such as Google Scholar and Scopus should be used for publication verification.
5. Academic staff and administrative personnel should receive regular training on digital assessment systems.
6. Periodic monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to ensure continuous improvement in promotion processes.

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