

GOVERNING COUNCIL OF FEDERAL COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

Governing Council is a statutory body constituted by the Federal Government for the control of policy, finance, personnel and physical resources of tertiary institutions. Colleges of Education are tertiary institutions established to train learners to become teachers in the primary and post primary school sectors for self-actualization and contribute to national development. Governing Council of Federal Colleges of Education just as the one of other tertiary institutions is a statutory body consisting of highly rated individuals, specially selected based on the requirements as stipulated in the ACT. Broadly speaking the body considers and approves the plan of activities, programme of studies, annual estimates and investment plans of the colleges. The composition, tenure and powers of the council members are gazette in the Federal Republic of Nigeria federal college of education official ACT with the most recent ACT published in 2023 as captured in this article. The Governing Council whether previous or the recent ACT of 2023 has no problem with its contents, it has always been laudable and received public nods. The problem of the council has always been the challenge in leadership. The mode of appointment of leaders, calibers of leaders, absence of the autonomy of leaders, inadequate finance, embezzlement etc, has always been the undoing of the governing council. Good leadership with proper enabling environment is key to the success of every organization and institution. The paper therefore looked at the Governing Council of Federal College of Education in Nigeria, 2023 ACT, the challenge of the leadership of the governing council, and posits that; Competent and strategic individuals should be appointed as council members devoid of political sentiments and affiliation, adequate provision of funds for smooth operation of the councils, autonomy in the system among others, as the way forward for quality output of the councils in the colleges of education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Governing council, College of Education, Leadership.

Introduction

Governing council is a statutory body constituted by the federal or state government for the control of policy, finance, personnel and physical resources of tertiary institutions, or a body responsible for policy making and regulations for higher institutions. According to Bensa cited in Ogbonnaya (2009), Governing council is a mixture of persons from within and without the institution that are elected in such a way to include representatives of business and industry. Also Ezecited in Ogbonnaya (2009), opined that the Chairmen of governing council and most of its members are laymen chosen to serve on the basis of their being in good public standing as well as represent external interest. The governing council of the state colleges of education just as the one of other tertiary institutions, generally consists of highly rated individuals drawn from different senatorial zones of the state. They are supposed to be men and women of competence, integrity, strategic with good leadership qualities to be able to represent the interest of various groups and stake-holders. Members of the governing council of the federal government owned colleges of education other than the Federal College of Education (technical), consist of a chairman and the following members to be appointed by the President; four persons that are reputable in the discipline of arts, science and technical education, who shall be former or serving teachers or educationists. Competent administrators and broadly speaking, representative of the whole Federation, one of whom shall be a woman, among other members.

The governing council usually meets at definite periods of time scheduled to deliberate on important issues governing the institution, such as, budget implementation, students discipline and dismissal of staff, acquiring of equipment, furniture and other property needed in the institution, preparation and submission of annual report on the administration and activities of the institution to the government as well as other responsibilities assigned to the council by the ACT. Education is key to national development, and more so education need to be qualitative. Qualitative Education according to Sunday, Nendelmwa, Suwa and Su'an (2017), is one that provides all learners with capabilities that they need in order to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods and contribute their quota to a peaceful and democratic society. The national policy on education (2013), corroborated that there is need for functional education where school programme need to be related, practical and for the promotion of progressive and united Nigeria. Successful operation of an educational institution as Federal College of Education, require competent governing council members who are strategic and effective leaders to achieve the goals of teacher education. Teachers are the bedrock in the education enterprise. The national policy on education (2013), captured it vividly that no education system can rise above the quality of the teachers. Teacher education and quality education are two key players for national development. Consequently tertiary institutions such as College of Education that are established to train teachers must be given serious attention on policy matters, especially crucial matters revolving on leadership in the Governing Council that act as a hub in which the wheel of the institutions revolves. The problem of our nation has never been on the drawing board, but on policy implementation and leadership. If our nation must achieve qualitative education for individual self-actualization and national development in the colleges of Education, the Government must give serious

attention to address the contending issues in the leadership of the Governing Councils of Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

Governing Council of Federal Colleges of Education

Composition of the Council Members

- The Council of each College, other than a Federal College of Education (technical) shall consist of a Chairman and the following members to be appointed by the President.
- Four persons that are reputable in the discipline of arts, sciences and technical education, who shall be former or serving teachers or educationists. Competent administrators and broadly speaking, representatives of the whole Federation, one of whom shall be a woman:
- Other members include:
 - (i) A representative of the Federal Ministry of Education;
 - (ii) A representative of the Regulatory Commission;
 - (iii) The Provost, and
 - (iv) The Deputy Provost:
- A representatives of the Alumni Association
- Two persons, not below the rank of Chief Lecturer, elected by the Academic Board, from among its members:
- Four persons to be elected by the Congregation, from amongst its members out of whom two persons shall not below the rank of chief lecturer or its equivalent. The other two persons shall be non-teaching staff, not below the rank of Deputy Registrar or its equivalent; and consist of chairman to be appointed by the president and the following members:
- The Registrar who shall be the secretary of the Council
- The council of each Federal College of Education (Technical) shall consist of a Chairman to be appointment by the President and the following members
- Four persons from the discipline of science and technology, technical education or a competent administrator, who shall be a former or serving teacher, educationist or administrator, and broadly speaking, representative of the whole Federation, one of whom shall be a woman:
- Other members are:
 - (i) A representative of the Federal Ministry of Education
 - (ii) A representative of the Regulatory Commission
 - (iii) The Provost, and;
 - (iv) The Deputy Provost.
- Four persons to be elected by the Congregation, from amongst its members out of which two persons shall not be below the rank of Chief Lecturer or its equivalent, and the remaining two persons shall be non-teaching staff, not below the rank of deputy registrar or its equivalent.
- A representative of Nigeria Society of Engineers;
- A representative of College Alumni
- Two persons, not below the rank of Chief Lecturer, elected by the Academic Board, from among its members; and

- The Registrar shall be the secretary to Council
- The Federal College of Education (special), shall have the same composition as the Federal Colleges Education (Conventional) in addition to two member who are persons living disability. The Federal College of Education (special), implies that it's not just a typical education establishment. Its special mandate is to train teachers at NCE Level who can cater for both normal and special needs students' at the primary and the lower arm of secondary education. Its uniqueness extends to being the only tertiary educational institution in Nigeria with the largest concentration of staff and student with special needs. By its special nature, the College welcomes students from across the nation. A conventional college here would mean a college that offers normal instructional centered traditional education, which includes all the requirements of traditional teaching and learning such as crowded classroom and information sharing.

Tenure of the Council Members

- A member of the Council shall hold office for a term of three years and, subject to the provisions of subsection (2), may be eligible for re-appointment or re-election, for a further term of three years and no more.
- There shall be no vacuum in the Council of the Colleges if:
 - (i) A member exist from the Council, or
 - (ii) The President dissolves the Council;
 - (iii) The President shall make an immediate replacement.
- The office of members appointed under section 5, subsection (1), (2) and (3) of the ACT shall become vacant if the-
- A members resigns his office by notice in writing under his hand, or
- Minister, in consultation with the Council is satisfied that it is not in the interest of the College for the person appointed to continue in office and notifies the member in writing to that effect.

Powers of the Council

- The Council has power to –
 - (i) Approve for the Colleges to receive from a student or any other person attending the College for the purpose of teaching or instruction, fee as the Council may, with the prior approval of the Minister, determine;
- Provide amenities for and make any other provision for the welfare of staff of the colleges;
- Invest the funds of the Colleges in securities, specified by law or in other securities in Nigeria, as may be approved by the Ministry of Education.
- Source for funds within Nigeria for the purpose of development of the Colleges. In such manner upon the security, as the Federal Ministry of Education may authorize;
- Recruit qualified and competent staff for the Colleges;
- Ratify the establishment and maintenance of schools, department and other teaching units within the Colleges or extramural department as may be recommended by the Academic Board;

- Provide any course of instruction, either alone or in association with other institutions whether in Nigeria or not, as the Council may determine and approve: and encourage and make provision for research and research grants in the Colleges.

Challenges

Political appointees

Mitch (2008) averred that the fundamental meaning of leadership has not changed in all of recorded history. It has always been about the person in-charge of a group. Being a leader has always meant having power over people and the authority to make decisions for the group. In the context of Colleges of education which is the subject of this paper, leadership would naturally refer to the officers of the institutions as recognized by the laws and status that establish those institutions. Ideally, council members appointed to serve in these institutions ought to come through careful selection, but it is not the case with Nigeria. Government appoints politicians who may not have the requisite skills to manage these institutions as council members. Their appointment to the councils is usually not based on qualification or merit, but rather on political compensation and the likes, the end product is ineffective leadership and low productivity in the institutions.

Political instability

It is a known fact that Leadership changes produce changes and shifts in policy and programme focuses. Different regimes and administrations have different interests, challenges and approaches. Political changes that is lacking in responsibility, accountability and vision in education often leads to eroding the existing structures, processes and quality of education. Thus, it may be concluded that political instability also produces instability in education policies, approaches, management, processes and outcomes. Frequent changes in government, programmes and unstable political appointments do not give room for indebt programme planning and execution by the governing councils in the colleges of education.

Funding

The critical area of needs of the institutions to advance them into vortex of the intellectual highway of the 21st century yet to be adequately addressed in our tertiary institutions is funding. A major challenge to the development of the right caliber of men and women that will form the critical mass of the next generation of academic leaders and researchers is funding. Funding affects decision making which also has its impact on governance. There is urgent need to invest more in Federal and State colleges of education since these institutions produces middle man power to the nation. For Nigeria to advance to global competitiveness in higher education delivery, greater financial investment than is currently available is required. Funds are required for the provision of state of the art equipment that will facilitate research and proper maintenance capacity. There is no way Nigerian Colleges of Education can compete favorably with their counterparts with best practices without the provision of well-equipped laboratories workshops and libraries. A lot of funds are required for these purposes as well as for more exposure of our academics and other College staff to global best practices through attendance at international conferences, workshops and seminars. Without adequate funds council

members will be termed unproductive in their their respective operating institutions, besides, they need funds for their statutory allowances a morale booster.

Avid Unionization

Arising from the challenges of inadequate funding and financing is the consequent emerging trend of avid unionism. Indeed, many of the unions in the Colleges have become rather uncompromising and militant. They often times pursue an operation that makes them commit entirely to bringing down an already comatose institution rather than allow for dialogue which is mutually beneficial (Ayorinde, 2022). The position of the unions is perhaps motivated by distrust engendered by many years of militarism which foisted on the institutions and some form of sole administrator ship which is alien or foreign to culture of constructive engagement and intellectual debate ahead of decision-making. This phenomenon alongsidetussles anddisagreement with the councilmembers bycollege unionism often impedes the smooth operations of the councils and the institutions.

Incompetent hands

The issue of governance is not limited to the College Governing Councils alone. The academic boardofthe institutions has great roles to play. Indeed, for quality assurance the Council and Academic Boardhas significant roles to play. A major plaque here is the quality of the membership of these bodies and other commitment to the institutions beyond mounting such commitments. It appears that in the effort of securing staff at every level of the academic for the different academic programmes in the face of expansion due to access, many individuals with inadequate qualifications or inappropriate pedigree are often recruited into the College. Many of themlack knowledge of institutional management and often behave at cross purposes to institutional objective and pursue personalinterest.

Embezzlement

Another serious challenge facing the management of Federal and State Colleges of Education in Nigeria today is how to handle funds allocated to education sector. It appears the managers of these Colleges including some governing council members are not living up to expectation in carrying out their statutory responsibilities in the area of funds management devoid of misappropriation. This was seen from the views of Ekankumo (2014) and Kemebaradikumo (2014) who stated that the major challenge facing tertiary education is poor funding and misappropriation of funds within the educational system that leadsto dysfunctional and unethical practices that has hindered education system across Nigeria. Embezzlement is outright taking away of government assets for personal use.

The Way Forward

As the way forward first and foremost, individuals to be appointed into the governing council should be on merit and not on political grounds, affiliation or compensation but men and women of zero tolerance on corruption with proven integrity. They should be people that acquire the needed competencies with strategic leadership skills. Sofa (2005) described competency as a quality of specific behavior identifiable in the summation of behavioral incidents, a degree of quality of behavior which produce the required performance needed for a particular job. Shoemaker, Krupp, & Howland (2013), identified the skills of strategic

leadership to include; the ability to anticipate, challenge, interpret, decide align and learn. Davis in Stumpf, Fulmer & Bleak (2004), said that strategic leaders are leaders, who have organization ability, with strategic orientation, translating strategy into action, assign people and organization, determine effective strategic intervention point and develop strategic competencies. Men and women to be appointed into the governing council need to possess these qualities to successfully pilot the affairs of the institutions under their purview.

Following the Management Study Guide (2013:1), the following qualities are recommended as guideline in the selection of council members;

- Loyalty to their vision by their word and action
- Keeping themselves updated about what is happening within their organization
- Judicious use of power, they play the power game skillfully, push their ideas gradually without forcing them upon others.
- They have a wider perspective and outlook, not narrowed in their specialty but a little knowledge about a lot of things.
- They are very motivational with zeal for working and inclination to achieve goals with energy and determination.
- They have compassion as understanding the views and feeling of their subordinates.
- Self-controlled in nature with potential to control distracting and disturbing mood and desires.
- Social skills of friendliness and being social
- Self-awareness and potentials to understand their moods and desires, thinks before acting
- Readiness to delegate and authorize; they are proficient at delegation to avoid over loading of responsibilities on the leaders and motivates the subordinates.
- Articulately communicate their vision to the organization members so as to boost them, and constantly convey their vision until it becomes a component of institution or organization culture.

Another way forward for effective leadership of council members to achieving the institutional goals and objectives is availability of fund for their successful operation because the major reason why most educational policy fails is related to inadequate funding. Peretomode (2009), complained of inadequate funding or impress made available in the systems, no provision for stationeries, even old equipment are not maintained and there are no conducive office accommodation. Also Anuna (2004), has the view that inadequate fund has been the bane of supervision and have almost destroyed inspection in Nigeria. The federal government and all the other concern bodies should therefore as a matter of urgency always make funds available for smooth operation of colleges and council members allowances given to them as at when due for maximum productivity in the institutions. Absence of funds impedes productivity irrespective of leadership competencies.

Administrative autonomy is another factor that should be addressed for the successful leadership operation of the council members for quality output in the college system. Administrative Autonomy refers to public Organization ability to determine their own references as well as translating them into authoritative actions. (Bach. 2010). In an autonomous organization, decision making is faster than in a hierarchical organization and

easier to respond to change instantly, because decisions and actions can be made at the discretion of the frontline (Goalous 2021). Autonomy where power and decision making discretion are decentralized, is an effective and flexible leadership tool for governing councils of federal colleges of Education for quick policy implementation and quality output in the institutions. The appointment, tenure and operations of the councils should be autonomous free from excessive political and government interference and control. Also a law should be enacted to guarantee continuity of council members until the end of their tenure irrespective of changes in government and political leaders. The need to promote cordial and harmonious relationship between the council members and the college unionism is sacrosanct to foster a healthy and peaceful work environment for the council in order to achieve the cooperate goals and objectives of the institutions.

Conclusion

Governing council of federal colleges of education is a statutory body constituted with broad objectives to consider and approve the plan of activities, programmes of studies, course and research to be undertaken, annual estimates and investment plan of the college. The role of the governing council is vital for the actualization of the institution goals and objectives. Leadership is one of the most vital aspects of human endeavors and institutional development, yet grossly neglected in our institutions today. Leadership goes beyond occupying a position; it is commitment to a course, and actualization of the goals. If our colleges of education whether federal or state must rise above its present state of average and favorable fit into the global economy, the contending issues of governing council leadership challenges must be addressed in Nigeria.

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