

Challenges of Managing Colleges of Education in Nigeria: The Way Forward

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Abstract

Colleges of Education are the main institutions purposely designed for teacher training in Nigerian educational system. The goals of these institutions are to produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for basic and post basic schools and further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers. Since the last two decades, the matters about these colleges suggest that the institutions have lost their early glory. Therefore, some critical issues and challenges require solutions as education changes globally. Essential, they are expected to provide full time courses in teaching, instruction and training and to conduct courses in education for qualified teachers. It is rather unfortunate that effective management of Colleges of Education in Nigeria is faced with a lot of challenges, which have prevented the institutions from delivering on their mandate. Many COEs are in deplorable state, facing so much difficulties and challenges, thereby affecting their management for quality outputs. With the way Nigeria Government is handling the issues of funding and academic standard in education, prospects for effective management of colleges of education in the country in the years ahead do not seem bright. It is against this backdrop that this paper presents an overview of COEs in Nigeria and identified inadequate funding, lack of political will, deteriorated infrastructure, inadequate quality and quantity of staff, unnecessary political interferences in the selection of administrators, high students' enrolment, poor education data bank and brain-drain syndrome as some of the challenges to effective management of Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Some suggestions were also put forward on how to improve on these challenges for effective management of Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Management, Colleges of Education, Challenges*

Introduction

Education is the bedrock of growth and development in all ramifications. The development of every nation depends on the type and quality of education provided

Muhammad Musa, Ibrahim (PhD) Umar Aliyu.,

to her citizen and particularly on the teachers who are the hub of the educative process (Aliyu, Dauda & Nasidi, 2020). Ibrahim (2022) observed that the difference between the developed and the underdeveloped parts of the world is in the quality of their education. He further asserted that countries branded as first world have higher quality education than those branded as second and third worlds. There are different higher educational institutions established to cater for the specific manpower need of a nation. College of Education (COEs) is one of such educational institutions. In Nigeria, as in most countries of the world, Teachers Training Colleges otherwise known as Colleges of Education occupies a strategic position in the nation's education system. It represents an important segment for the production of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for basic and post basic schools and further encourages the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers. It does not only contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower but also encompassed the production of professional teachers who are equipped with skills and methodologies of teaching in basic secondary levels of education in Nigeria (Ebisine, 2014). Importantly, these colleges are expected to provide full time courses in teaching, instruction and training and to conduct courses in education for qualified teachers.

In the recent years, Nigerian higher education is plagued with many challenges (Monday & Mallo, 2021). In the past two decades, the rapid growth of population in Nigeria has led to more demand for education. With the increase in the demands for education, enrolment rate into COEs has increased. Unfortunately, the available human and material resources in the colleges cannot commensurate with the number of applicants in the country. Staffing strength of Colleges of Education is weak and inadequate, government seems to lack political will to fund education, infrastructure and other facilities are inadequate and deteriorated, brain-drain is high which eventually creates a stumbling block to effective management of COEs in Nigeria. It is therefore, expedient that qualitative education should be given at this level of education, so as to ensure rapid growth and development of the nation in all its ramifications. This underscores the important of effective management of Colleges of Education in Nigeria for quality outputs. However, in order to critically discuss the dilemmas of managing of Colleges of Education in Nigeria, there is a need to provide a conceptual definition of terms, so that we can follow the discussion from the proper perspectives.

Concept of Management

The term “Management” has been defined by different authors from different perspectives. For instance, Akpakwu (2012) observed that, the term management comes from the verb to “manage” which can mean to handle, to control, to make and keep submissive, to organize, to alter by manipulation and to carry out for a purpose. He further described management as a kind of work a manager performs to enable people to work most effectively together. According to Elujekwute, Okigbo and

Elujekwute (2021), management is the act of getting people together to accomplish desired goals and objectives using available resources efficiently and effectively. Adamu (2015) described management as an effective allocation and utilization of scarce resources to achieve predetermined results. The scarce resources include people, money, materials and time. Of these, human beings are the most important, because the effectiveness with which they are used determines the quality of results produced by other resources. Jumare (2021) viewed educational management as the planning, budgeting, organizing, supervision, staffing, communication and evaluation of an education project and programmes to achieve educational goals. From the definitions given above, it is evidence that educational management entails general coordination of both human and material resources in order to achieve the goals of education. One of the biggest challenges is the management of funds. In this regard, Yusuf, Aminu, Yusuf, Danpanna and Bulus (2022) and (Tilebius, 2022) asserted that it is obvious that tertiary educational architecture in the country need to raise finance to complement government financing, and not only this, there is demand for effective oversight of how such financial resources are being utilized prudently due to the corrupt attitude of some stakeholders in the African continent, most especially Nigeria. The main task of management in COEs is to achieve organizational goals and objectives by setting and carrying out certain functions which aid the achievement of educational goals and objectives as contained in National Policy on Education about Colleges of Education.

Overview of Colleges of Education in Nigeria

Colleges of Education are teachers training institutions in the country. They occupy a strategic position in the nation's educational provisions and third cadre in the ladder of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria Educational system. They provide the nation with professional teachers who are equipped with methodology and skills of teaching in pre-primary/Nursing, Primary and Junior Secondary levels of education in Nigeria (Atanda & Adeniran, 2020; Suleiman, Dass, Inuwa, & Saleh, 2020). Historically, College of Education in Nigeria came into existence due to the Ashby Commission report of 1960 that produced Teacher Grade One College (Aina & Akintunde, 2022). In order to improve on the quality of teacher education, Advanced Teacher Colleges and Colleges of Education were established in Nigeria (Awodun & Boris, 2020). The Colleges were established to train primary and junior secondary school teachers and were mandated to award the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE). The curriculum and programmes of these Colleges were designed to meet the nation's educational needs. However, as society undergoes changes, so also the curriculum and programmes became obsolete with global changes in education. The objectives of establishing Colleges of Education stipulated in Decree No. 4 of 1986 are as follows:

- a. provide full-time courses in teaching instruction and training:
- I. In technology applied science, commerce, arts, social science, humanities and management.

- ii. In such other fields of applied learning relevant to the needs of the development of Nigeria in the areas of industrial and agricultural production and distribution and for research in the development and adoption of techniques;
- b. conduct courses in education for qualified teachers;
- c. arrange conferences, seminars, and workshops relative to the fields of learning specified in paragraph “a” above (Suleiman, 2015).

The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) promulgated by Act, 1989 NO, 3, is the body in charge of the supervision of the colleges of education. The Longe Commission Report of 1992 re-examined the developmental role of Colleges of Education in Nigeria and described the goals of Colleges of Education as teaching, encouragement of the spirit of inquiry and creativity in teachers; and production of highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for Primary and Junior Secondary levels of the educational system (Alumode & Onuma, 2016). Colleges of Education are thus established by provisions of decrees or edicts/laws enacted by the military authorities. These enabling regulations establish ownership and possession of the colleges for the authorities as well as give the institutions the required measure of autonomy to operate efficiently.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) declared that the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) is the minimum qualification for entry into teaching profession. As a result of this, Colleges of Education have been established in almost every state to produce NCE teachers and to upgrade the lower educational qualifications of the existing teachers through in-service training programmes. Competition for admission into the Colleges of Education is keen since all future teachers have to be trained in Colleges or Universities that have faculties and institutes of education for the production of graduate teachers to obtain the required qualification to teach or gain employment. Today, there are 235 Colleges of Education and Polytechnic awarding institutions (Diploma in Education) in Nigeria, at Federal, State and Private levels (NCCE, 2023).

Since the last two decades the matters about Colleges of Education suggest that the institutions have lost their early glory (Ezugoh, Adesina & Yakubu, 2020). Therefore, some critical issues and challenges require solutions as education changes globally. Essential, they are expected to provide full time courses in teaching, instruction and training and to conduct courses in education for qualified teachers. It is rather unfortunate that many COEs are in deplorable state, facing so much difficulties and challenges, thereby affecting their management for quality outputs. Olayiwola and Alimi (2015) found that many Colleges of Education were not adequately prepared for blended learning as ICT facilities in the institutions were below the minimum required standard stipulated by the Federal Government of Nigeria for tertiary institutions. Ezugoh et al (2020) revealed that many of the COEs were devoid of the requisite educational resources for management of their sustainability of a better today and tomorrow.

According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), the intent of establishing the COEs was to provide educational institutions where teachers shall be professionally trained, whose programmes shall be structured to equip teachers for effective performance of their duties. In this regard, the goals of COEs as teacher education institutions include to help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals; provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adequate adaptable to changing situations; and enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession

Challenges of Managing Colleges of Education in Nigeria

There is no an iota of doubt the fact that effective management of Colleges of Education in Nigeria is faced with a lot of challenges, which have prevented the Colleges from delivering on their mandate. Some of these challenges are enumerated as follows:

1. **Inadequate Funding:** Fund is indispensable for successful of any educational programme. For many years, budgetary allocations to education in Nigeria have been grossly inadequate. According to Monday and Mallo (2021), many factors are responsible for shortage of funds in the Nigerian higher education and they include poor financial planning, lack of political will to fund higher education, corruption and drop in national revenue. In this regard, Aliyu, Sunusi and Tijjani (2021) observed that the replacement of infrastructure, tools, machines, and recruitment of qualified staff that can make teaching, learning and research work meaningful and relevant to the needs of the modern day Nigeria all need money which is not always available. The implication of this is that the quality of education will be scarifies at the expense of poor funding. This is big challenge to effective management of Colleges of Education in Nigeria.
2. **Lack of Political Will:** Political will of leader is paramount to the success of any educational programme. Every action of school administrators, management, quality assurance officers or academic staff in COEs must have the backing of the political leaders in order to ensure success (Aliyu et al, 2020; Rufa'i, 2019). It is rather unfortunate that most political leaders of this country did not have much priority for education (Aliyu, Lamido & Yahaya, 2023). This, more often than not, creates a stumbling block to effective management of COEs in Nigeria.
3. **Deteriorated Infrastructure:** There is no doubt, the fact that the availability of the infrastructural facilities in adequate quantities will support effective administration of educational institutions and the inadequacies will prevent effective administration of educational institutions (Monday & Mallo, 2021). However, it is unfortunate that Colleges of Education in Nigerian are fast decaying as all the resources for education process are in short supply and obsolete. Lecture halls, laboratories, students' hostels, library space, books and journals and office spaces are all seriously inadequate. This has left the equipment for leaching, research and

learning either lacking, inadequate or in a bad shape to permit basic functions of academics. These hinder effective management of COEs in Nigeria.

4. Inadequate Quality and Quantity of Staff. The quality of education to a large extent depends on the quality and quantity of staff. Indisputably, the quality of lecturers in any tertiary institution (COEs) is positively related to the quality of the graduates produced by the institution (Innocent, 2019). In spite of well articulated goals of COEs in Nigeria, inadequate quality and quantity of staff create set back to its effective management. To lend credence to this assertion, **Suleiman (2015)** revealed that staffing strength of Colleges of Education is weak and inadequate, more especially on the area of staff-student ratio of the Colleges. He also revealed that both at the departmental and the College levels the recommended staff- students' ratio is not maintained

5. Unnecessary Political Interferences in the Selection of Administrators: Politics cannot be divorce from education and influence of political leaders cannot be detached from the management of education at any level of education. However, care must be taken not to sacrifices quality at the altar of favoritism and nepotism. Many COEs' administrators appointed to head the colleges are not qualified and less exposed to handle the administration and management of the colleges. Many provosts of the Colleges do not have a clear vision because their appointments are political. Lending credence to this observation, Ossai and Nwalado (2017) asserted that most COES face problems due to their visionless administrators and Governing Council members who are politicians and lack knowledge of higher education whose primary focus is money. These people, according to Aina and Akintunde (2022), compromised the standards and brought the Colleges to the present conditions. The implication of this is that a lot of programme of activities are not carried out in such institutions, no vision for the colleges, no effective supervision and monitoring of institutional activities, staff welfare is neglected, no adequate control of staff and students among others.

6. High Students' Enrolment: Since the last two decades, there has been high enrolment rate of students in COEs. It is rather unfortunate that this high enrolment rate is not commensurate with expansion or improvement of available human and material recourses. The implication of this is that classrooms are over-crowded while laboratories and other learning materials are grossly inadequate. This has its consequences for standards and quality in form of low growth and productivity of students and graduates of the colleges of education (Ebisine, 2014). In fact, high students' enrolment rate is one of the banes of effective management of COEs in Nigeria.

7. Poor Education Data Bank: Accurate and up-to-date data is paramount to successful educational planning, programme and management. Unfortunately, this seems to be a mirage in managing COES in Nigeria. When data provided for planning any educational programme is inaccurate, inadequate and outdated, the implementation process and decision based on such data will be faulty (Aliyu, Said

& Haruna, 2018). This has been the major problem to effective management of COES in Nigeria.

8. **Brain-Drain Syndrome:** Brain-drain refers to widespread migration of academic staff from tertiary institutions in the country to overseas where their services are better rewarded. In the context of this paper, it refers to a situation whereby lecturers or professionals are migrating from COEs to another jobs to seek greener pasture. Many lecturers and researchers are leaving COEs in Nigeria to other occupations that seem lucrative for a better job offer and conducive working environment. The implication of this include; shortage of lecturers, poor quality of education and high student-teacher ratio. More so, the brain drain appears normal occurrence in Nigeria as COES loses talents in academia to other field for economic or political reasons. This, more often than not, creates a stumbling block to effective management of COEs in Nigeria.

Way Forward

Having highlighted the challenges for effective management of Colleges of Education in Nigeria, the following are enumerated as some of the strategies for enhancing effective management of colleges of education in Nigeria.

1. Every successful educational programme is capital intensive, colleges of education inclusive, Federal and state government should fund teachers training colleges more than before in order to ensure and maintain the quality alongside its quantity. This can be done by allocating at least 26% of their budget to education and ensure its prudence usage.
2. Political will of leader is paramount to the success of any educational institution. Tertiary institutions of learning, research institutes and professional bodies should, from time to time, institute an annual specialized seminar/training session for key government functionaries on the need to pay more attention to the management of COEs. This will go a long way in enhancing their political will in the management of COEs in Nigeria.
3. Government and other stakeholders of COEs should ensure that all school equipment, supplies and physical structure of COEs especially for instructional laboratory and demonstration purposes should be of high quality and to the comfort of both lecturers and students. Where need be, all contracts of supplies should as much as possible be awarded to reputable and expert educational supplies contractors.
4. Staff quality is an essential pre-requisite in the issue of educational management. More staff should be recruitment based on merits and there is need to continue to encourage staff training and development strategies. The qualification and experience of lecturers matters a lot in their subject delivery. On this note, they should continually be assisted to continue to undergo refresher courses, workshops and conferences especially in their areas of specialization.
5. Political office holders or politicians should avoid unnecessary interferences

Muhammad Musa, Ibrahim (PhD) Umar Aliyu.,

in the selection of school administrators in COEs. The selection process should be free from bias and only based on merits. Those aspiring to be provost should be able to clearly state what they will do to change the status of the College.

6. There is need to ensure that minimum academic standards are established in COEs in terms of students' enrolment. This is very important as the minimum standard will serve as the bench mark for operation and admission of students into various departments and schools. All institutional operations (private or public) should also be in conformity with the minimum academic standard of enrolment.

7. Each college of education in Nigeria should maintain effective records management system capable of providing information and data for management decisions at all times. Management information system for each college should be properly configured and customized to serve the information needs of the institution.

8. To prevent brain-drain in the higher institutions in the country, the government should increase the salaries and welfare packages of academic staff in all higher institutions in the country, especially at COEs. This will help to enhance effective management of the colleges.

Conclusion

The quality of any educational institution is best judged from the perspectives of its effective management in terms of meeting the needs and expectations of the students and society. The quality of the citizens of a country depends on the quality of their education. It is therefore expedient that quality education should be given at colleges of education. Unfortunately, there are many challenges to effective management of colleges of education in Nigeria, some of which are enumerated in the body of this paper. Like many other business organizations, colleges of education must be effectively managed and be concerned with the quality of the services offered to their customers, that is, the students and society, so as to fulfill the mandates upon which it was set up.

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Muhammad Musa, Ibrahim (PhD) Umar Aliyu.,

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