

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 2019 CONFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE OF PRO CHANCELLORS OF NIGERIAN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES (CPC) HELD AT KANEM SUITES, ABUJA FROM 20TH-21ST NOVEMBER 2019

Introduction

The 2019 Conference of the Committee of Pro-Chancellors of Nigerian Federal Universities held from 20th-21st November 2019. The theme of the Conference was ‘**Accountability in the Nigerian University System**’. The Conference deliberated on the issue of accountability in all its ramifications, be it moral, financial or ethical.

The Secretary-General, Prof. Yakubu A. Ochefu gave the welcome address, followed by the opening remarks from the Chairman, Committee of Pro Chancellors, Prof. Munzali Jibril. The Honorable Minister for Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu, represented by Mr. Joel Ojo, (Director Tertiary Education, Federal Ministry of Education) gave a goodwill message declaring the conference open.

Papers presented at the conference covered topics on Internally Generated Revenue: A Pivotal Means of Repositioning the Nigerian University System, Accountability in the Nigerian Universities: The Role of Campus Unions, Responsibilities, Rights and Privileges of Governing Councils, The University System, and Probity in the Procurement Process: Some Random Thought, University Autonomy Act and Stakeholders Responsibilities, Laws and Circulars Guiding Recruitment in Nigerian University, and The Procurement Act and Accountability in the University System.

The conference observed that;

1. The University is a repository of ideas and it must operate with a broad outlook that will make it relevant and competitive in today’s global village.
2. Governing Councils are empowered by Law to provide good leadership for the University; they are required to remain focused, firm, transparent and ensure due process and accountability in the discharge of their duties. It also behoves on Councils to institute appropriate sanctions and reward systems in the discharge of their duties.
3. Time has come for Nigerian Universities to become creative and innovative in the mode of generating and managing IGR. Councils should create a conducive environment for scholarship to thrive among the academics as this could be a major source of attracting research grants to the universities.
4. Governing Councils should, as a matter of policy, engender **trust** as the bedrock of their relationship with the various arms of the University administration.
5. The drastic reduction/cut in government funding of education, the indiscriminate award of honorary degrees for financial gain, improper mode of staff recruitment, sex for grade, sales of handouts and such other vices (identified or unidentified) have greatly undermined the moral ethics in our universities.

6. Staff Unions are invaluable assets which Governing Councils can leverage on in their bid to ensure accountability in the university system especially as exemplified by the role and actions of the Academic Staff Unions of Nigeria.
7. The Circulars and laws guiding recruitment in Nigerian Universities are designed to improve the quality of staff, enable inter-cultural interactions and foster unity. However, there is the challenge of inadequate sensitization of this important role by the Federal Character Commission, the agency that has been empowered by Law to oversee issues of recruitment nationally. More importantly, also, the Commission is itself not shielded from the endemic corruption that has engulfed our nation.
8. The concept of University autonomy as presently being practiced in Nigeria is inimical to the realisation of quality education. The erstwhile guided freedom of universities to enact their laws and operate under their peculiar circumstances is gradually being eroded by the promulgation of the Universities (Miscellaneous) Act.
9. The aim of the public procurement is to ensure the award of cost-effective contracts, reduce corruption and improve system planning and spending pattern. However, there are shortcomings and challenges in the implementation process that must be addressed.
10. Governing Councils have important roles to play in overseeing and superintending over the property and finances of their respective Universities. It therefore behoves on them to lead by example in the discharge of their duties.

Recommendations

1. The Federal Government, Governing Councils and all other stakeholders in education should be prepared to allocate substantial funds for research so as to translate research ideas into profitable ventures that will make our universities self- sustaining and less dependent on government funding.
2. Only persons of proven integrity with good track records in public or private endeavours should be appointed into Governing Councils. This will help to ensure smooth working relationship and reduce unnecessary frictions.
3. Councils should create a conducive environment for scholarship to thrive among the academics as this could be a major source of attraction of research grants to the universities. As a matter of policy, merit and hard work should be rewarded at all times and appropriate disciplinary sanctions should be meted out to erring staff.
4. Governing Councils should follow due process in recruitment; they should be firm and stand by the truth always. There must also be strict compliance with appointments/promotions criteria in order to avoid creating pools of unproductive staff.
5. There should be effective communication and dissemination of necessary information to all stakeholders at all times as a way of reducing rumour-mongering and engendering trust, transparency and accountability.

6. Governing Councils should put in deliberate efforts to ensure harmonious working relationship with management, unions and all other stakeholders including the alumni. That is the panacea for peace and good governance on campus.
7. All the identified grey areas in the Universities (Miscellaneous) Act should be amended appropriately so that Universities can be truly autonomous in word and in deed as they discharge their functions.
8. For the purpose of procurement, a clearly defined benchmark for determining prices of goods, services and open bidding system, better surveillance and supervision must be instituted so as to enhance transparency and accountability in the process of procurement.

APPRECIATION

We wish to thank the Honorable Minister for Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu, Resource Persons, Pro Chancellors and Council members and all other delegates that have contributed to the success of this conference. Finally, we wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Local Organizing Committee led by Prof. Mvendaga Jibo for the planning and successful hosting of a wonderful conference.

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PROF. MUNZALI JIBRIL
CHAIRMAN

PROF. YAKUBU A. OCHEFU
SECRETARY-GENERAL