Opening Remarks by the Executive Secretary, Tertiary Education Trust Fund, Arc. Sonny S.T Echono on Digital Communication/ICT Essential Skills Capacity Development for ICT Staff of our Beneficiary Institutions, Monday 10th July 2023

INTRODUCTION

Today, I welcome you, Heads of Institutions, Directors of ICT, and Staff of our Beneficiary Institutions to this program. It is heartwarming that despite your busy schedules, you made it to the opening week and first batch of our converged services capacity development program. You are most welcome.

BACKGROUND

You may recall from earlier presentations and our policy roadmap that the Fund is committed to ensuring digital literacy is continuously being developed at our Beneficiaries Institutions.

Developing capacity through training in our Beneficiary institutions to bridge the digital skills gap is an initiative which I am proud to be part of at the Fund.

Given the rising significance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) across diverse sectors, including education, this initiative holds immense potential to positively impact educators, students, and the overall advancement of our educational landscape.

Looking at the roadmap of Fund, you will note that with the 2016-2018 ICT Support Intervention, we gave guidelines for ICDL training and certification

for digital literacy. That intervention resulted in over 19,000 staff of our institutions being trained and certified in various digital literacy skills.

In 2019-2020 ICT Support Intervention, we gave guidelines for eLearning and training on eLearning methodologies for hybrid modes of learning given the advert of the Covid Pandemic and its attendant consequence.

For 2021-2022 ICT Support Intervention, we provided guidelines for establishment of ICDL Accredited Test Centers (ATC). That again is yet another step in the direction of establishing pedestals for deepening the digital literacy curve in our BIs.

So today is yet again another deliberate step in showing our commitment to enhancing digital literacy. In the coming days, you will be taken through an interactive and enriching session on an overview of the communications skill capacity development for students and essential ICT skills capacity development for ICT staff.

CONVERGED SERVICES

As we continue to grapple with lean resources given the increase in the number of enlisted Beneficiary Institutions and student population, converged services have become pertinent to accelerate and improve the usage of Information and Communication Technology to advance the reach of teaching, learning and research in our Beneficiary Institutions and in the Country at large.

Convergent ICT Services are centrally arranged ICT Services implemented to address complex but common problems identified from the diverse needs of our Beneficiary Institutions ranging from capacity development, internet

access availability, electronic journals and databases subscription amongst other shared educational services. These needs have been identified primarily from our Beneficiary Institutions through the following mechanisms.

    a. Impact assessments and surveys.

    b. Virtual interactive sessions conducted periodically throughout the year.

    c. Recommendations from the ICT related Committees set up by the Fund comprising Heads of Institutions, Librarians, DICTS from our Beneficiary Institutions, Regulatory stakeholders, and Industry experts.

It is becoming increasing pertinent for the fund to consolidate its ICT Intervention and spending by provisioning for convergent ICT services for the following inherent benefits.

    a. The economics of scale and the cost savings achievable in aggregated/converged services, given the great cost savings to the Federal Government at highly discounted rates.

    b. The availability of the converged services will ensure unlimited access to a target population of at least 2 million users inclusive of students, teaching, and non-teaching staff of our 253 Beneficiary institutions presently.

    c. In addition to above, state owned Beneficiary Institutions will have all year-round access same as Federal owned Beneficiary Institutions to the Converged ICT Services irrespective of receiving allocation or not in that year.

d. The Converged Services will provide standardization and increased collaboration within and across our Tertiary Institutions.

e. Converged Services is a policy thrust of the Federal Ministry of Education National Policy on ICT in Education aimed at establishing and sustaining a common ICT Infrastructure platform for education at all levels.

The identified converged services for implementation in 2023 are:

a. Communication and Essential ICT Skills Capacity Development.

Given the success of the ICDL productivity skills capacity building, the need for further capacity building in Communication and ICT skills enhancement has been identified. This capacity building will target both staff and students to improve their productivity and equip them with the essential skills necessary for our increasing digital economy.

b. Anthology (blackboard) Online eLearning Enhancements.

This has become necessary to standardize the online learning management landscape of our Beneficiary Institutions. Inherent benefits include:

(a) Creating a nationwide center of excellence in digital learning to enable and certify thousands of teachers.

(b) Access to a worldwide community of 4000+ Institutions and best practices amongst other educational benefits.

DIGITAL SKILLS DIVIDE

A major skills gap exists in our educational system today. In this regard, I am referring to the gap between the skills required by employers in today's digital world and the skills possessed by graduates produced from our institutions as well as teaching & non-teaching staff and others. We want to do our best to bridge that gap. If we succeed in equipping students with digital skills, they will become more marketable in a digital-driven job market, increasing their chances of employability and career success. For you, our educators, we want to equip you with the essential skills training you can use to provide tech support to your ICT platforms and infrastructure and to train your students and other staff in your institution on digital literacy. Furthermore, this training will play a pivotal role in propelling the technological progress of our tertiary institutions. Equipping educators and students with proficient digital literacy and essential skills will create avenues for enhanced research, innovation, and collaboration, both within the institutions and beyond. This not only empowers you as individuals but also fosters an environment conducive to technological advancements that can drive positive change in your various institutions.

TETFUND ICT PROJECTS

As you are aware, the Fund is not only committed to Digital Literacy in particular, but to the entire ICT landscape in general. We have commenced various converged services/projects including the Thesis Digitization Program, Beneficiary Identity Management Service (BIMS), Tertiary Education, Research, and Application Systems (TeRAS), Consolidated Library

Access Platform (CLAP), Aggregated Journal Subscription starting with EBSCO, Sponsored Mobile Internet Data on and off campus, Remote Monitoring Projects Platform, BPP Compliance Portal, amongst others. These programs will deliver significant value to the ICT landscape of our Beneficiary Institutions.

Even within the Fund, through the beneficiary submission portal, we are processing most of your submissions electronically, and efforts will continue until we achieve full electronic submissions for all intervention lines from Physical Infrastructure to ASTD Conference Attendance.

IN CONCLUSION

Today's training is a Train the Trainer program. That means after we train you, you will be Champions for your Beneficiary Institutions. I hope your time with us here is a success and that you will find this training impactful and valuable.

Thank you and all the best.