

Welcome Address by Arc. Sonny S. T. Echono, the Executive Secretary of TETFund at the TETFund/NBTE Sensitization Workshop on the 2023 Zonal Intervention on Skills for Rectors and Directors of Skills in Beneficiary Polytechnics

Distinguished Rectors, Directors of Skills, esteemed participants, ladies and gentlemen, you are warmly welcome to the TETFund/NBTE Sensitization Workshop on the 2023 Zonal Intervention on Skills for Rectors and Directors of Skills in Beneficiary Polytechnics. It is truly an honor to have each and every one of you here today.

I stand before you filled with enthusiasm and anticipation as we gather here to discuss and strategize on one of the most crucial aspects of our education system – skills development. As we navigate the ever-changing landscape of the 21st century, it is imperative that we equip our students and citizens with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

Today, we recognize the significant strides made by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in promoting skills development in our beneficiary polytechnics. Our unwavering commitment to advancing technical and vocational education has paved the way for countless success stories, empowering individuals and transforming communities across our great nation.

The purpose of this sensitization workshop is to discuss and enlighten participants on two key areas: One is the skills agenda and occupational areas as a panacea for gainful employment of graduates and the second is the formalization of the informal skills sector. By focusing on these aspects, we aim to address the critical needs for aligning our educational system with the demands of the labor market. We recognize that graduates equipped with relevant skills and competencies are more likely to secure gainful employment and contribute meaningfully to the development of our nation.

In addition, this workshop aims to shed light on the pivotal role of Sector Skills Councils and Awarding Bodies in shaping the skills landscape of our polytechnics. The Sector Skills Councils act as conduits for collaboration between academia and industry, ensuring that the skills taught align with the needs of the job market. Awarding Bodies play a vital role in providing quality assurance and recognition for the skills acquired by our students, enhancing their employability and facilitating their seamless integration into the workforce.

Skills development and entrepreneurship represent a holistic process in which individuals in society pursue opportunities and address needs through innovation. Acquiring skills prepares individuals for employment across all

sectors of the economy and helps overcome numerous challenges, fostering a brighter future for both the nation and individuals capable of global competition.

As we embark on this sensitization workshop, we invite you to engage actively in the various sessions and interactive activities planned. This platform provides an opportunity for collaboration, sharing of best practices, and fostering partnerships among rectors and directors of skills from beneficiary polytechnics. Together, let us explore innovative approaches to skills development, identify challenges, and devise effective solutions that will enhance the quality and relevance of technical education in our institutions.

As rectors and directors of skills, you play a crucial role in shaping the learning experiences of our students. Your commitment, dedication, and vision are instrumental in preparing our youth for the challenges that lie ahead. I urge you to make the most of this workshop by seizing the opportunity to network, learn from one another, and take back valuable insights that can be implemented in your respective institutions. I would like to emphasize the purpose and significance of this sensitization workshop. Our goal is to foster a paradigm shift in our education system by promoting skills development and entrepreneurship among our students.

By focusing on the skills agenda, we recognize the importance of equipping our students with practical, industry-relevant skills that go beyond theoretical knowledge. In today's rapidly changing world, it is essential that our graduates possess the competencies to adapt, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to their chosen fields. The skills acquired through this workshop will enable our students to become job creators, driving economic growth and development.

Furthermore, the formalization of the informal skills sector is a vital step towards harnessing the full potential of our workforce. The skills possessed by individuals in this sector often go unrecognized and underutilized. Through this workshop, we aim to bring attention to the importance of acknowledging, developing, and integrating informal skills into our educational and economic systems. By doing so, we can create a more inclusive and prosperous society.

To achieve these objectives, as mentioned previously we must recognize and leverage the role of Sector Skills Councils and Awarding Bodies. Sector Skills Councils play a pivotal role in identifying the skills needs of specific industries and ensuring that education and training align with these requirements. Awarding Bodies, on the other hand, provide certification and validation of skills, enhancing the credibility and recognition of individuals' competencies. The collaboration between these entities, educational institutions, and the private sector is essential for bridging the skills gap and promoting a seamless transition from education to employment.

In conclusion, this sensitization workshop on the 2023 Zonal Intervention on Skills is a significant step towards transforming our education system and empowering our students and citizens for the challenges and opportunities of the future. By emphasizing the skills agenda and formalizing the informal skills sector, we are paving the way for gainful employment of graduates, trainees and the holistic development of our nation. Let us embrace this purpose, engage in fruitful discussions, and forge partnerships that will shape the future of technical education in our polytechnics.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to ES NBTE, Director General NAPTIN, Director of Physical Infrastructure of TETFund, and Deputy Director NIATED of NBTE who will, for the meantime, serve as speakers and facilitators in this workshop. Your expertise in the field of skills development and your willingness to share your knowledge and experiences would be instrumental in enlightening and inspiring us all. I also express my deepest appreciation to the distinguished rectors and directors of skills from our beneficiary polytechnics.

Thank you once again for your presence and participation. Together, let us embark on this journey of knowledge, collaboration, and innovation, building a brighter future for our students and our nation as a whole.