



PRESS RELEASE

THE INSIDER: HOW TETFUND AWARDED N7.6BN QUESTIONABLE CONTRACTS WITHIN TWO MONTH - A REJOINDER

The attention of the Management of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) has been drawn to a misleading publication in TheCable Newspaper of Monday, 15th April, 2024 captioned “The Insider: How TETFund Awarded N7.6bn Questionable Contracts within Two Month”.

2. It was alluded in the said publication that questionable contracts amounting to the tune of N7.6 billion were awarded by TETFund, thereby usurping the powers of Mr. President and the Federal Executive Council (FEC); and that the Fund acted outside its mandate in carrying out capacity building programmes in its Beneficiary Institutions.

3. We consider this publication as totally spurious and misleading and therefore find it necessary to provide background information and clarifications for the benefit of our various stakeholders and the general public as follows:

- i. The two Projects under reference are not Contracts but are ICT Projects being implemented under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) arrangement with the following two global academies:
 - a) Anthology USA; owners of Blackboard Inc. which is a leading global educational technology academy providing Blackboard Ultra Learning Management System.
 - b) Edunet Academy, equally a global learning academy providing certification tracks in communication, entrepreneurship and employability skills development.

These organizations are academies and owners of the intellectual property rights for their different products which does not make them open for competitive biddings in public procurements.

- ii. As part of measures to leverage on ICT in the transformation of the Nigerian tertiary educational sub-sector, three specialized committees were constituted by the Fund as follows:

1. ICT Infrastructure Project Committee headed by Late. Prof. Samuel Edoumiekumo Gowon (former Chairman, Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities)
2. TETFund Advisory Committee on Digital Literacy, Productivity and Emerging Skills headed by Prof. Olagbemiro Jegede (VC Emeritus National Open University of Nigeria)
3. Digitization Project Steering /Coordinating Committee headed by Prof. Yakubu Ochefu (Secretary-General, Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities)

iii. Based on the above, an ICT roadmap was developed and is being implemented by the Fund in conjunction with Beneficiary Institutions since 2016.

iv. Relying on the recommendations of the committees which were presented and accepted by all the heads of Beneficiary Institutions at the Fund's Annual Stakeholders forum, it was agreed that, the sum of N100m be allocated for ICT support intervention for every University, N50m for every Polytechnic and N50m for every College of Education. Of this amount, 50% was to be utilised for Infrastructure and procurement based on the peculiar needs of the institutions, while the balance of 50% was earmarked for the converged services inclusive of educational resource subscriptions, software licenses and specialised capacity development programmes for both academic/non-academic staff as well as students. The cost of implementation for Blackboard Learn Ultra is N3,812,500.00 which translates to N14,607,279.69 per institution for the Fund's 261 Beneficiary Institutions. The same applies to the certification in communication, entrepreneurship, and employability skills development project.

v. During implementation, the committee recommended the adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the providers to achieve significant discount based on economies of scale, rather than individual Beneficiary Institutions accessing these facilities at higher costs. To this end, the global President of Anthology USA, owner of the Blackboard technology and international leader in educational technology and Artificial Intelligence led a delegation to Nigeria to sign the MoU. Similarly, Prof. Klauss who is a renowned global education resource provider and the intellectual property rights owner of Edunet Solutions Academy led his

team to Nigeria to execute the MoU for its Academy. It is pertinent to note that Blackboard technology is used by over 4,000 tertiary institutions globally and during the visit of its President to the Honourable Minister of Education, he remarked that Nigeria is already late in its adoption of Blackboard given that Saudi Arabia adopted Blackboard 10 years ago and this has led to its remarkable success in improving education.

vi. Therefore, it is instructive to state that the Partnership with the two academies to execute the ICT roadmap of the Fund endorsed by Beneficiary Institutions were not carried out as contracts. Rather, Beneficiary Institutions' ICT needs were aggregated for bulk negotiation to take advantage of economies of scale. With this, 60% cost saving was achieved.

vii. TETFund has in the past, through similar MOUs engaged with other notable institutions and platforms worldwide such as the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL), Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and a host of others. Through the same mechanism in the earlier stage of the ICT roadmap, the Fund recorded success in building capacity for over 20,000 teaching and non-teaching staff of its Beneficiary Institutions using the ICDL productivity skills certification track for the intervention years 2016 to 2022.

4. For the report to allude that TETFund acted illegally in empowering students with ICT skills clearly indicate that the reporters are ignorant of the Fund's mandate and responsibilities. The Fund continues to make giant strides in ensuring that Nigerian Tertiary Institutions are globally competitive. This much was acknowledged at the Innovate African Conference 2024 held at Havard Graduate School of Education in the United States only two weeks ago.

5. For the avoidance of doubt and in total contrast to what was reported in the publication, we wish to affirm that all TETFund Disbursement Guidelines are approved by Mr. President on the recommendation of the Fund's Board of Trustees and concurrence of the Honourable Minister of Education in line with the TETFund Act 2011.

6. We therefore, state unequivocally that at no time did the Fund make any attempt to usurp Mr. President's powers or that of the Federal Executive Council, or award contracts without due process; as the entire write-up was based on the wrong assumption that contracts were awarded by the Fund.

7. While we frown at attempts by certain elements to tarnish the Fund's image for selfish purposes, we call on our Beneficiary Institutions, stakeholders and the general public who have always supported and appreciated the efforts of the Fund to ignore these campaigns of calumny.

8. We wish to reassure you that the Fund will continue to act responsibly and in line with due process in all its activities.

Abdulumumin Oniyangi
Acting Director, Public Affairs
For Executive Secretary

16th April, 2024