

**Welcome Address by the Executive Secretary at the Workshop on
“Emerging Areas of Students Needs in Beneficiary Institutions”
Organized by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund at National Universities
Commission Auditorium on Tuesday 14 May 2024**

I once again welcome participants to another important workshop organized by the Fund to review policies and programs, and receive feedback on the implementation of our various interventions. These engagements have become veritable platforms to interact with beneficiary institutions, to critically examine our collective mandates of improving teaching and learning across the tertiary education sub-sector. Indeed, I appreciate the presence of all heads of institutions and other staff that are present here for making out time to attend the workshop despite other equally engaging assignments. It is sometimes necessary to organize workshops of this nature, especially when we feel the need to share concerns and enlighten each other on the need to improve in certain areas of our mandate and assignments, or the need to think collectively on how to improve our services based on the targets and high standards set by the Bola Ahmed Tinubu Administration.

This workshop is conceived mainly for the purpose of brainstorming over some identified areas of intervention that are seen to be highly beneficial not only to our Institutions, but to our students who are the ultimate beneficiaries of all the interventions in the tertiary institutions. Funding educational activities requires careful consideration of different needs and expectations. Funding must also be directed at essential programs which align with the strategic objectives in terms of outcomes of investment in either physical or content development that the funding usually supports.

The provision of physical facilities must be accompanied by corresponding programs that will ensure maximum impact and benefit to the target group. As such, the Fund is constantly and critically reviewing its operations and interventions with a view to ensuring that the interventions meet the actual goals that are intended at conception. New programs and intervention lines are sometimes introduced, and some innovation or alterations are carried out regarding some existing ones, and where necessary non performing ones are dropped.

In the year 2024 disbursement cycle, the Career Services Center was introduced to complement other programs in tertiary institutions. The Fund considers the establishment of these centers necessary for the development of students careers and their employability, which is the *raison d’etre* for establishment of tertiary educational institutions. Career services centers have helped students in advanced nations to make informed decisions regarding their career paths.

The centers provide information for students on trends in the job market, opportunities, and requisite skills as well as linkages with the employment industries including the alumni of the institutions. They provide students with tools for self-assessment to identify their interests, strengths, weaknesses and prospects. Career centers further provide

counselling, guidance, and support to all students. They help organize and facilitate education programs, workshops, seminars, and other similar programs to equip students with relevant employability skills to assist them search for jobs. They provide transition resources by supporting *resume* building, application processes and interview preparation. It is in consideration of the significant role that career centers play in the career development of students of tertiary education that the Fund took the decision to incorporate it in the 2024 disbursement guidelines.

At this workshop, an academic and practitioner in Guidance and Counselling has been selected to deliver a paper with the theme **“Incorporating Holistic Approaches to Career Counselling that considers Students Personal, Academic and Professional Development Needs.”** I am hopeful that his paper will not only throw light on the subject matter, but will also emphasize the significance of the centers and the services they are to provide for the benefit of the Beneficiary Institutions. The workshop will further feature a presentation by the Strategic Planning Department on the TETFund Guidelines for accessing the Career Services Center intervention so that it hastens the processing time in accessing the intervention funds. As a new intervention line, suggestions on reasonable and necessary adjustments in the guidelines are welcome.

Another area that has occupied our thoughts and concerns is the repositioning of the teaching profession and the teaching practice intervention that the Fund had consistently made available to supervisors and the sustainability of the intervention. Teaching practice provides experiences to supervisors and student teachers in-real time in the teaching environment and provides an opportunity for supervisors and student-teachers to practice the art of teaching before they become real teachers. This helps to perfect their ability and potentials in pedagogy. It enables supervisors and student-teachers to discover their weaknesses and strengths in the classroom and provides the opportunity to hone and improve their abilities. Teaching practice enables supervisors and student-teachers to develop positive attitude towards the teaching profession among several other important reasons. This is why the teaching practice intervention has remained a relevant intervention area of the Fund.

The Fund recently received a communication from the Federal Ministry of Education regarding the Presidential directive to TETFund on the support of teaching practice and the recommendations of the National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission regarding the teaching practice allowance, which now includes Faculties of Education in our Universities. This has become an issue, that I believe requires our collective brainstorming in order to give effect to the Presidential directive. It may lead to the reworking of the teaching practice funding template currently in use. The methodology employed in the computation of the allowance by the Fund and that of the Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission appear to be different, hence the need for harmonization to achieve shared acceptance.

While the Fund, as approved by the Board of Trustees, provided a 3 days Duty Tour Allowance to supervisors, based on the civil service recommended rate and a

transportation support based on grade levels, the Salaries and Wages Commission provides for the payment of monthly stipends to supervisors and students-teachers at approved rates irrespective of rank or grade level and without provision for transport. As a directive of government, the Fund is obliged to comply and implement the content and spirit of the directive. The Fund, by all means recognizes the significance of the inclusion of the student- teachers and the Faculties of Education which is to make the teaching profession more attractive. However, considering the impact of these provisions on our disbursement policies and processes, we will be making necessary adjustments in our disbursement guidelines going forward, in consultations with the Federal Ministry of Education. Your contributions and inputs would be most appreciated in this regard.

The workshop further seeks to address other equally important ICT programs and the hostel development drive using the Public Private Partnership model. Today's world is driven by information and communications technology and any education system that is not ICT driven or compliant may not compete favorably in the global environment. This is why the Fund has paid special attention to its information and communications technology roadmap that led to the development of the Tertiary Education Research, Application and Services platform (TERAS). TERAS is a centralized hub that fosters collaboration, efficiency and innovation through the provision of a wide range of services to students and researchers. The platform was launched by the Honorable Minister of Education and have access to libraries, learning resources, data bases and Eagle Scan for plagiarism checks amongst several other services, that will transform our institutions into modern digitalized centers of learning. It is also the reason why an expert has been selected to deliver the second paper with the theme **"Emerging Students Needs in Our Contemporary Learning Environment using ICT."** This is to further elaborate on the need to promote ICT driven programs in our institution and the inclusion of our robust student population in the scheme, to gain insight on the significance of ICT in today's changing world.

The workshop will also discuss other laudable initiatives that seek to promote the welfare and wellbeing of students in their learning environments. The conditions under which a student studies significantly determines his output and performance. It is in recognition of this fact, that the Fund is taking a closer look into some of the age-old problems facing many institutions in the face of scarce resources. As alluded to earlier, one of such issues is that of students' accommodation on the various campuses. Many of our students are either congested in the dormitories across campuses or living and studying outside the school environment. The existing hostels are not only grossly inadequate but most of them are in deplorable conditions especially with regard to functional utility and sanitation. This definitely will affect the performance and wellbeing of these students. The Fund and the government have tried over the years to build student hostels across the country but the government appears overstretched and unable to meet the ever-increasing number of students enrolling into the various institutions annually. As a result of this, we have at several fora advocated the consideration and involvement of the private sector under a

Public Private Partnership arrangement to provide solutions to the student accommodation crises across institutions.

Under the year 2024 intervention cycle, based on Mr. President's approval, 12 Nos institutions (6 universities, 3 Polytechnics, and 3 Colleges of Education) were identified and selected to benefit from a ₦1 billion allocation which will be utilized as equity contribution in partnership with private developers to construct hostels in these selected institutions. In line with our enabling law, two (2) institutions were selected for each of the 6 nos geopolitical zones in the country. I am pleased to inform you that the Africa Plus Partners in partnership with Akwa Ibom State University, will launch the construction of a 1, 600 capacity student hostel through the support of TETFund, tomorrow the 15th of May, 2024. This is a significant development and indeed I urge other institution to consider similar initiatives as solution to student's accommodation deficiency across institutions. The Fund hopes to sustain this development in subsequent years intervention and solicit, that our beneficiary institutions do same. Ultimately, our student's wellbeing will be greatly enhanced and our tertiary institutions more globally competitive

This workshop is encouraged to provide mutual interaction and feedback to stimulate debate on other emerging needs of students particularly in the modern world of study which we all find ourselves today. The challenging global environment makes this imperative and we must implement initiatives to strengthen and reposition our beneficiary institutions for global competitiveness. I urge participants to take this interaction seriously and make meaningful contributions. At the end of the workshop, both participants and the Fund will be better informed on the importance and ways to provide the needed learning environment for our students in a dynamic global context. I wish us all successful deliberations.

Thank you and God Bless.