



Requirement for Strengthening Nigerian Universities for Higher Global Ranking' Being a welcome Address by Professor Suleiman Elias Bogoro [FAS] the Executive Secretary of TETFund at the Capacity Building Workshop for Beneficiary Universities in Lagos.

Protocol

I am highly delighted to welcome the chairman of Board of Trustees, Heads of Institutions and other Participants to this very important engagement. It gladdens my heart that TETFund has undertaken to organize this Capacity Building Workshop for our Beneficiary Institutions with the sole aim of providing them with the relevant skills to operate in the 21st century. The workshop is part of a series of programs that the Fund has consciously lined up for tertiary institutions in the country as part of a grand design to reposition the education sector as a catalyst for national rebirth and development.

As a developing nation, Nigeria's education sector is evolving and growing steadily, with several challenges which are not unexpected of a new emerging or developing state. The nation since independence has continued to witness a huge expansion in education at all levels. Education is a critical ingredient for nation-building and has continued to be relied upon by many nations for the sustainable existence of their societies and has been identified as the panacea for the survival of mankind. Through education, knowledge is acquired, and skills are gained for various endeavors necessary for existence. The well-being and survival of mankind largely depends on what man has learned and what he can make or do for himself. The very fact that the survival of humanity is dependent on knowledge makes the need for education indispensable.

Many of the great nations that we see today as giants were able to attain such heights through education and the quest for knowledge. The historical transition from the Stone age, Iron age to the development of the Feudal society and the discovery of the machine, were all the result of education and learning. Since the industrial revolution and the advent of the machine, the textile, and the automobile industry in England in the 17th Century, the world has never been the same, technology appears to have taken center stage in the affairs of mankind and indeed the entire world. The result is that innovations have become the order of the day and the world continues to see new machines, new products, and new ways of existence, especially since the advent of internet, the computer, and the transformations

in the telecoms industry and the emergence of the ‘digital age’ as it came to be known. Humanity has been left with no alternative than to adapt to the new changes. Consequently, nations and peoples are compelled to raise their game or be ready to be second-class nations that would forever depend on and serve other nations that have advanced through learning and research.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, this has remained the basis for our desire to continue to invest in education and learning, particularly at the tertiary level, until we can catch up with the advanced society. It is only by doing so that we can seize to be a consumer nation and become producers. Universities have played a critical role in the general progress and development of all advanced nations. Through the wider impact of research, universities have transformed the lives of people and nations. Research in universities have provided ideas on which future prosperity will be founded. The success of universities internationally, aside benefits from research that helps create jobs and businesses, helps secure a nation’s share of global growth and influence. There can be no denying the fact that universities remain big players in the economies advanced nations and indeed developing nations.

There is no doubt that the Nigerian government has struggled over the years to improve the situation. However, a lot needs to be done to put the nation on a path to growth and progress and there is no better place to kickstart the process than in repositioning the nation's tertiary institutions and universities which have not fully served the purpose for which they were established. Universities help students develop the skills required by employers. Nigerian Universities have produced hundreds of thousands or millions of graduates, however, the question to ask is how many of these graduates have been able to contribute constructively to national development? There is no doubt that the Nigerian graduate is contributing his quota, however, it is not commensurate with national expectations. Universities overseas facilitate the transformation of their societies and environments through learning, research, and development. Technological innovations in Western societies, America, Europe, and Asia have reportedly been products of research in their various universities.

Today in the Global ranking of Universities, Nigerian Universities are not visible and have never been. According to the World Ranking Review [W.E.N.R], out of about four different rankings available across the world, such as the CNT Leiden ranking, Shanghai Jiao Tong academic ranking, QS world university ranking and Times Higher Education world university ranking, universities from the UK and USA and Europe generally dominate the list of the different rankings. The QS list mostly feature Harvard, Oxford, MIT, Cal Tech, Cambridge, ETH Zurich, Imperial College, UCL and the university of Chicago as the top ten highest ranking universities in the world. The University World News published an article on 10 June 2020 titled *‘Asia Rises, US, UK, Europe Decline in*

New QS Ranking’, that showed how Asian presence has increased in the list of 100 ranking universities in the world. The article further revealed the fall of about 112 of about 153 ranked U.S universities, 63 of the 84 ranked UK universities, and about 55% of Europe’s 408 ranked universities, including more than half of German universities. About 26 Asian universities are featured in the 17th edition of QS top 100 ranking of universities in 2021. In the list, China has about (6) universities on the list, Hong Kong (5), South Korea (6), Singapore (2), Japan (5), Malaysia (1) and Taiwan (1). The different approaches and methodologies employed in the assessment and ranking make clear the performance and standing of these universities. Some of the indicators include teaching, research, citations, international outlook, industry income, academic and employer reputation, Faculty/student ratio, international faculty ratio and international student ratio.

In all of Africa, it is perhaps just the universities in South Africa and Egypt that have featured in the list of top 1000 universities in the world. South Africa had 7 institutions while Egypt had 4 institutions on the list. Even within Africa, the performance of Nigerian Universities remains a disappointing one. For instance, in the year 2019, in the ranking of African Universities, out of about 47 universities, there were only 3 Nigerian Universities that were visible on the list, and they are the University of Ibadan, University of Nigeria Nsukka and Covenant University. The ranking was published The Nigerian Legal Research journal on 15th March 2019.

The situation is so pathetic and worrisome that it calls for reflection and action on the part of the government, the Nigerian intelligentsia and indeed the Nigerian people. It is challenging in the sense that the success of our universities is tied to the progress and development of the nation. If the Asian countries were able rise to such enviable place along the ranking of world universities, nothing stops Nigerian universities from making similar progress if they are determined, at least to the list of the ranking of 1000 universities. Ben Sowter, the Director of QS ranking was quoted saying with regards to the increasing presence of Asian universities in the 2021 ranking of top 100 universities that it *‘reflects the increasing competitiveness of the global higher education landscape’*, a statement of hope and encouragement for other institutions and nations across the world. Some of the problems identified as hindering the progress and performance of Nigerian Universities in the global ranking of world universities include:

- (1) Poor investment by the government in the development of universities.
- (2) Corruption in the public university system.
- (3) High number of mushroom universities not worthy of status.
- (4) Poor attitude of Nigerian Lecturers to teaching and research.

- (5) Large numbers of students at the undergraduate level and limited financial and physical resources.
- (6) Shortage of academic staff and Ph.D.'s leading to poor research output.

Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen, the problems highlighted above perhaps informed the establishment of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund by the Nigerian government. The Fund as you are aware has over the years invested and disbursed a lot of funds and materials to various tertiary institutions with the sole aim of uplifting the standard of the universities to meet up with global practices. And when I was appointed, I further insisted that research and development should be given the proper attention they deserve and headlong set up a standing committee not only for TETFund but that which will see to the establishment of a National Research Foundation for Nigeria. Nigerian universities must be repositioned to be competitive and to take the lead in research and innovation to promote the growth of the country and its economy. Recently TETFund established the 12 centers of excellence for research and development in different thematic areas, in different universities to promote, stimulate and institutionalize research and development. It is only by doing so that the nation can transit and be part of the knowledge economy. To be competitive, Nigerian universities must as a matter of urgency put strong measures in place to ensure that the following are strictly observed:

- (1) All lecturers must have PHDs.
- (2) Universities must develop strong democratic Leadership in university administration.
- (3) Develop uniform collaborative association with industry, foreign universities, linkages, and donor agencies in multiple capacities that increase funding for research, teaching and other essential facilities.
- (4) Identify strong programs and build on them through endowments chairs in medicine, engineering, pharmacy, or other fields.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, I will conclude my address with a statement of caution. While we genuinely and vigorously pursue and strive to strengthen universities in Nigeria to be globally competitive, we must ensure that such improvement is carried out carefully and with professionalism. We must in all honesty consider and adhere to all ethical concerns. As rightly observed by Kate Raworth, the economist and author of "Doughnut Economics", indicators for the ranking of the universities, create universities that "grow" up the ranking rather than those which thrive or mature. Raworth observes that indicators for ranking have put universities under pressure to grow whether they thrive or not and went on to explain that growth creates academic wealth divides

within and between countries despite the direction of growth inspired by the ranking not truly reflecting the critical purpose of universities or their contribution. Raworth identified and explained two phases for the development of universities: ‘the growth phase and the thriving or maturing and fruit-bearing phase’. We want Nigerian universities to grow the ranking and thrive, we desire universities that will mature and bear fruits and not just grow the ranking, growth must be based on a solid foundation.

Distinguished Participants, it is my sincere hope that workshops of this nature will continue to stimulate understanding, growth and excellence in Nigerian universities and position them to be competitive globally. I wish you a fruitful engagement.

Thank you and God Bless