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Federal Executive Council Approves Eight New Private Universities

*T*he Federal Executive Council at its meeting of 2nd May, 2007 gave approval for the issuance of licenses for the establishment of eight new private Universities. The approved universities are:

- i. Caleb University, Lagos, Lagos State;
- ii. Fountain University, Osogbo, Osun State;
- iii. Obong University, Obong, Ntak, Awka Ibom State;
- iv. Salem University, Lokoja, Kogi State;
- v. Tansian University, Umunya, Anambra State;
- vi. Veritas University, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory;
- vii. Wesley University of Science & Technology, Ondo, Ondo State;
- viii. Western Delta University, Oghara, Delta State.



President Olusegun Obasanjo *GCFR*

Pursuant to the provisions of Act 9 of 1993, the National Universities Commission concluded the statutory processing of applications entailing 13 steps. Each step allows for self-assessment by the proprietor for effective monitoring and adherence to the rigorous requirements for the establishment of private universities. The 13 stages are:

- (i) Application in writing, stating the intent for the establishment of the University;
- (ii) Collection of Application Forms;
- (iii) Submission of application forms and relevant documents;
- (iv) Intensive review/analyses of documents by experts in relevant NUC Departments;
- (v) Revision of documentation by proprietor based on report by Standing Committee On Private University (SCOPU) of NUC;
- (vi) Interactive Meeting of SCOPU with the proposed universities;
- (vii) First Site Assessment Visit;
- (viii) Finalisation of Documentation
- (ix) Second (Final) Site Assessment Visit;
- (x) Security Screening of Proprietor and Board of Trustees;

- (xi) Approval by NUC Management;
- (xii) Approval by NUC Board; and
- (xiii) Approval by Federal Executive Council.

These eight universities – out of over 200 applications – satisfied the requirements, having undergone stringent assessment over a considerable period of time (ranging from 3 – 7 years).

Monday Bulletin congratulates the Board and Management of the NUC for mid-wifing the birth of 8 more private universities into the Nigerian University System. To the successful proprietors, we say, “hearty congratulations”. The proprietors must constantly be cognizant of the all importance fact that the approval is more than a license to manage a *run of the mill university* but a call to nurture one that will rank high amongst the best in the world.



Professor Julius A. Okojie
Executive Secretary, NUC

University System Programmes Audit

*I*n the *Monday Bulletin* of 18 December, 2006, the National Universities Commission’s intention to embark on programme audit for the University System was reported. The exercise is predicated on the fact that there is the need for the Commission to have the exact number of, and know what programmes are offered in the Nigerian University System without equivocation.

The exercise which commences today involves 62 panels made up of 62 eminent professors across Nigerian universities with staff of the Commission facilitating.

The objectives of the programme audit are to:

- a) generate information to assist government in planning for human and material resources for the university system and by extension the nation;
- b) determine the exact number of programmes in the Nigerian University System as well as the number of unapproved programmes;
- c) track down the programmes of unapproved affiliations and satellite campuses of universities; and

- d) verify the statements of fact and claims supplied by universities in their submissions to the National Universities Commission.

Prior to the comment of the exercise, universities were required to provide comprehensive baseline information on their respective programmes using the template provided by the Commission as a guide.

It is important to note that there is a moratorium on the establishment of new programmes for now until the programmes audit is completed.

National Workshop on Tertiary Education Financing: Which Way Forward?

The assertion that “*without a proper Educational Sector, there is no possibility of attaining our Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Education For All (EFA) or fast-tracking NEEDS*” by Mr. President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo GCFR in 2004 encapsulates the critical role of education in the macrocosm of national development. The expansion of tertiary education is necessary and desirable for at least two main reasons. First, the imperatives of globalization crowd out organizations and nation states that fail to embrace the ensuing challenges. Next, the pervasive effect and changing nature of technological advancement have ushered in new platforms and strategies for organizational survival in the emerging knowledge society. The convergent impacts of these two forces provide the critical dimensions and importance of tertiary education as a main driver of growth. Knowledge accumulation and application have become major factors in economic development. In the process, tertiary education is generally perceived as a major catalyst for rapid growth and catch-up as well as the fulcrum of a country’s competitive advantage.

However, tertiary education financing is an issue of utmost concern to all stakeholders: governments, the civil society, academics, parents and students, NGOs and development partners. This concern comes at a time of increased competing budgetary pressure and rising costs of education. The current reform initiatives - with the policy goal of evolving a “tertiary education sector that provides access to all students ..., that is responsive to the needs of individuals, states and the nation and is entrepreneurial in its activities” – have served to intensify public interests in how to finance and deliver Nigeria’s tertiary education to fulfill its global mandate.

Nigeria’s tertiary education system must be globally competitive and locally relevant to the needs of our socioeconomic development. The accomplishment of this goal is the collective responsibility of all stakeholders.

This workshop is anchored on the role and commitment of education to the national vision of making Nigeria one of the world’s top 20 economies by 2020. Given the role of education as the foundation for societal transformation and the trigger for catapulting the nation towards realising this vision, it is imperative for all hands to be on deck in the pursuit of this goal.

The foregoing provided the context to the convocation of the Stakeholder workshop on “*Tertiary Education Financing: Which Way Forward?*”. The workshop, which took place at the University of Lagos Julius Berger Lecture Theatre on April 23rd and 24th 2007, was a platform for various stakeholder groups to overview the challenges of tertiary education

financing and articulate the way forward, in the light of the current reform in the Education sector.

The workshop, under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Education, was facilitated by the National Universities Commission (NUC) in conjunction with University of Lagos. The workshop had a total of 640 participants drawn from the Federal Ministry of Education, the National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics, Colleges of Education, Academic and Non-Academic Unions, Student Unions, the Organised Private Sector, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Development Partners, and other Stakeholders. Among the principal participants were immediate past Minister of Education, Mrs Obiageli Ezekwesili, Pro-Chancellors and Chairmen of Governing Councils, Vice-Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts of Tertiary Institutions, and Officials of the Federal Ministry of Education.

The workshop was organised in two parts, the opening session and technical/plenary sessions. In a brief welcome address at the opening session, Professor Oye Ibidapo-Obe, Vice-Chancellor of University of Lagos, underscored the importance of the workshop in the light of the reform initiatives. He profiled the increasing demands and changes in tertiary institutions and hoped that the workshop would offer perspectives on how to tackle the associated funding challenges.

In his opening remarks, Professor Julius Okojie, Executive Secretary of NUC, sketched the history and tortuous funding regimes of tertiary education in Nigeria. He observed that with the growing students' population, dwindling budgetary allocations in real terms and greater government focus on basic education, the over-reliance on government subvention will weaken the institutional capacity to meet the global challenges in the absence of private sector contribution.

In his keynote address, Chief Afe Babalola (SAN), Pro-Chancellor of the University of Lagos and Chairman of Committee of Prof-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, traced the global history of universities as philanthropic organizations that are concerned with human development. He isolated the historical differences in both the quality and funding of tertiary education since independence, and espoused the virtues of the Harvard University model of financing higher education, where endowments and alumni support and other forms of private sector support constitute the leading sources of financing. He called for the introduction of tuition fees as a parallel measure of responsibility by parents and students in the acquisition of higher education, consistent with global practice.

In declaring the workshop open, Madam Minister for Education presented a policy address, highlighting the features and benefits of the Education Reform Agenda and the substantial financial support required to carry the reform through. Commenting on the state of education in Nigeria, she stressed the growing importance of teacher quality, programme accreditation, use of ICT in teaching and learning, creating an entrepreneurial class, and alumni tracking for institutional support. She urged all stakeholders to be involved in finding a lasting solution to the problems of tertiary education financing.

During the technical/plenary sessions, 15 papers were presented on the following three themes:

A. *Stakeholders' Perspectives:*

- ❖ Federal Ministry of Education on Policy Issues
- ❖ Organised Private Sector

- ❖ Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
- ❖ Public Private Partnership Dimension: Private Education Providers
- ❖ Organised Academic and Non-Academic Unions
- ❖ Students Unions and Parents

B. *Funding Models:*

- ❖ Cost-Sharing, Scholarship Issues, Government Subventions and Endowments
- ❖ ETF and the Private Sector Involvement
- ❖ The Role of Development Partners
- ❖ The Role of Civil Societies
- ❖ Opportunities for Creation and Management of the Entrepreneurial University

C. *Internal Control Framework for System Stability:*

- ❖ Accreditation, Carrying Capacity, Benchmark and Minimum Academic Standards, University System Annual Review and Monitoring
- ❖ Other Internal Control Measures
- ❖ Security Measures

Resolutions

After the plenary presentations and extensive discussions on the thematic issues, participants declared as follows:

We, the participants at the National Workshop on *Tertiary Education Financing: Which Way Forward?*, held in Lagos from 23rd – 24th April, 2007:

Noting the need for a concerted and objective assessment of the funding problems of the tertiary institutions and to proffer practical solutions that will return quality education in Nigeria;

Recognising the importance of the following critical components and drivers of quality assurance in tertiary education: Minimum Academic Standards, Accreditation, Carrying capacity, Visitation, Impact assessment, Research and Development, Publications and Research Assessment, system stability via provision of infrastructure and utilities for viable institutional capability;

Acknowledging the efforts of the Federal Government in funding education in general and the limited effects of budgetary allocations on tertiary education, in particular, relative to the pressure for funding from competing sectors;

Cognizant of the reform initiatives of the Federal Ministry of Education and the economic consequences of these on tertiary education financing;

Conscious of the need to align human and institutional capacity building and research in the tertiary institutions to the needs of the labour market and national economic development;

Noting further that with increasing student population and intense pressure on governments for greater expenditure on various social programmes, tertiary institutions more than ever face severe financial crises;

Recognising that no Nigerian university has ever made the league of the top 6,000 universities in the world;

Concerned about the constraints of inadequate funding and the impact of inert political will, economic fluctuations, excessive enrolment, corruption and bad governance on tertiary education;

Appreciating the role of the Education Trust Fund, Development partners, a few individual and institutional members of the organised private sector, and NGOs in the development of tertiary education;

Consequently, do hereby make the following **Resolutions and Recommendations as Framework for Priority Action:**

- i. Tertiary institutions should develop the creative ability and initiative to generate sufficient capital to apply to their many and diverse needs.
- ii. Tertiary institutions should embark on proactive and creative measures to overcome the steady decline in the percentage of government subventions.
- iii. The introduction of tuition fees should be regarded as a relevant, necessary and complementary source of financing, given the fact that tertiary institutions predictably experience nontrivial reductions in government subvention.
- iv. The Governing Councils of tertiary institutions should institute transparent and accountable governance structures which will prospectively lead to the entrenchment of best management practices.
- v. Government should consider substantial increases in and timely release of funds, including the institution of task allocation that involves the private sector in an organized and sustainable basis.
- vi. Every tertiary institution should strive to carve a niche for itself, with emphasis on the pursuit of excellence in their programmes, in consonance with the protection of their brand name as configured in their strategic visions and mission statements.
- vii. Tertiary institutions should progressively adopt active strategies to diversify their resource base and thus become less vulnerable to government subvention which ostensibly weakens their capacity to meet their global mandate.
- viii. Tertiary institutions should strive to become robust centres of research and academic excellence, engineered through proper economic planning and development, active alumni and aggressive private sector financial support, without dependence on government subvention.
- ix. Tertiary institutions must evolve strategies to prosper in a global environment that is characterised by highly unstable, competitive and dwindling government resources.
- x. Nigeria's tertiary institutions must realise and balance the importance of economies of scale and global branding with local responsiveness.
- xi. Financial assistance schemes, such as bursaries and student loans, should be institutionalised for indigent students.

- xii. The National Universities Commission should, as a matter of urgency, convene an Executive Roundtable with the identified funding stakeholders.

Best wishes for the week.