

'Students are our real focus' says TETFund ES

The Federal Government through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), has announced its resolve to initiate hostel construction projects in 36 University campuses across the country this year. Executive Secretary of TETFund, Mr Sonny Echono, who announced this while receiving the leadership of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) in his office, said TETFund is working on providing free internet for students in both public and private tertiary institutions across the country. Echono appreciated NANS for their demonstration of maturity they have shown in advancing the interest of Nigerian students through constructive engagements. The Executive Secretary dismissed the misconceptions that the focus of TETFund was on schools; infrastructure and lecturers, saying the students are the real focus. In his words; "I want to assure you that we will continue to support NANS, we will partner with NANS because there is no doubt that any policy or project that you want to do in the education sector, students must be at the center of it. "Lecturers are hired for the skills that have and they are paid salaries. So, ordinarily we do hold them additional obligation of training them, but if we want to improve the learning experience of our students, we want the lecturers to renew their knowledge, we sponsor them for conferences, workshop, give them additional trainings so that they can do PhD and so on because we want them to be able to deliver their job better. "I can tell you that Mr.

live. "So, we have a programme and policy to ensure that as much as possible we will put a minimum of 50-60 percent of our students to live on the campuses and provide those hostels and those hostels will not be all those matchboxes and shanties, they will be solid buildings that can even attract students of anywhere in the world. "Also, in today's world, knowledge has changed and the delivery systems have changed with it. In those days, knowledge was about one Lecturer standing in front of a class, all knowing and basically dishing out information to the class. All of that has changed. Because in the digital age, all source of information and data you required are already on the internet. "If you have additional one you can put it back on the internet today. So our teachers are now facilitators and if you want to help students, grant them access to the internet, make it free of charge as we are going to do to access data on campuses. Let there be Wi-Fi on our campuses so that we can expose you to all these learning resources," he said.

While commenting on NANS' request for the construction of a students' national Secretariat, Echono said he will meet with the Minister and other critical stakeholders to consider their request. He said; "The initial impression we had was the NANS secretariat moves every two years from campus to campus and that is why it was felt that you will not need a national Secretariat but from what you have said, the frequency of your



President, immediately I assume office last year, also gave us a charge that we should begin to focus also on the students in not just words but in deeds and I'm going to speak on only two specific programmes that we are starting this year to demonstrate that.

"The first is the physical infrastructure side. As I speak, this year, we shall be providing hostels for students in 36 tertiary institutions across the country because we realize that parts of the places where our students live are so deplorable and only about 15 percent of our students are staying on campus. "Many of them are living outside campus, climbing okada many times during the rain. Some of them can't even come back for evening lectures because when you look at the cost and the trouble of walking all the way and coming back, then you don't know about the security situation in the areas where they are forced to

visit to Abuja for engagements, I think it makes a lot of sense particularly that they have allocated a piece of land for you that NANS should be able to have its secretariat". Echono promised that the Fund will work towards incorporating the students in the monitoring of TETFund projects as requested by NANS and assured that the Fund will work out the modalities. The Executive Secretary assured NANS that they would be incorporated NANS so that as beneficiaries of the interventions, they should be able to tell Nigerians what is happening.

Earlier, the President of NANS, Comrade Lucky Emonefe assured the Fund of the support of Nigerian students as it strives to ensure that education infrastructure is in place to compete with other nations. Emonefe said; "As NANS, we are going to monitor, supervise and protect education infrastructure to complement the effort of what Mr President and TETFund are doing.