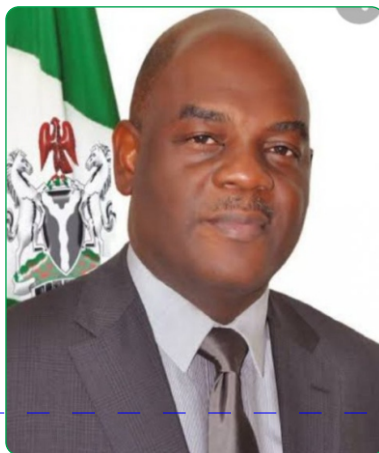


Sonny Echono

The Wise Man on the saddle in TETFund

By Peter O. Emuekpere

The Bible described King Solomon as the wisest and richest king that ever lived. This was on the account of the wisdom that God bestowed on him as a result of which the bible gave account of how great men and women from every corner of the world visited him to tap from his fountain of knowledge and wisdom. Just like in the days of King Solomon today the prowess of the knowledge and wisdom in the life of Arc. Sonny Echono the wise man on the saddle in TETFund has attracted and still attracting, the low, the high, the mighty, professionals and experts from the land of Nigeria, Africa and different parts of the world who come to tap from his wealth of experience. This thorough bred civil servant with over 35 years of exemplary service at the epicenter of policy formulation and reforms in the Nigeria civil service enjoy the admiration of his peers and superiors. This humble and great reformer cum core administrator has over the years built a solid relationship between the academia and other sub-sectors with a passion for excellence in service delivery. Arc Echono who is a doyen and promoter of knowledge based economy is a specialist in research, ideas, innovations and providing strategic workable solutions to myriads of socio, educational and economic problems and challenges. His wisdom, knowledge, administrative and leadership skill has been recognized across the country and internationally and he is been sought after thus leading to expansion of his influence and impact. His in-depth wealth of experience in both the civil and public service coupled with his partnership and cooperation with countries and institutions across the world in the field of academic research, training and development has endeared him to many great personalities across the world. His solid personal experience has come to bear in areas of developing centres of excellence, establishing mega research grant interventions, encouraging entrepreneurship all in a bid to ensure that Nigeria's tertiary institutions becomes drivers of technology advancement, growth and National Development. His mental and intellectual configuration is not only wired as a professional architect but also imbued with innate sense and ability as designer of concepts and ideas with the kind of innovations that propels institutions and organization to perform optimally and that is one of the factors that stands him out as a city on a hill and a well grounded technocrat. To him architecture is not all about designing buildings and structures; it is more about setting and implementing standards that will help institutions and organizations develop their potentials maximally to enhance National Development. Little wonder dignitaries including Professionals, Experts, Lawmakers, Ministers and State governors' troop into TETFund from time to time to see this wise man and to tap from his enormous wealth of experience. They come down from their Golan Heights to consult him and share from his vast knowledge. Sometimes one begin to wonder why state governors who superintend over their vast empire in terms of influence and massive resources will descend to pay courtesy visits to an ordinary head of a government Parastatal or Agency. One of the Governors who opened up in confidence and on grounds of anonymity during a telephone conversation with me said bluntly. *'Arc Sonny Echono is a wise, intelligent and knowledgeable personality. When you visit a wise man you get knowledge, you get ideas, you learn wisdom and understanding that will help you make more impact in the lives of your people. I tell you beside his humble disposition he is a man with immense knowledge and experience and a few*



minutes discussions with him will prove to you what I have just said. I will make it a point of duty to visit him continually on personal ground. The man is full of ideas especially when it comes to formulation and implementation of policies and programmes that bother on education, innovations and development. He has so much to offer on how to fix many sectors of the economy. He is indeed an asset not only to Nigeria but Africa as a whole.'

It is on record that right from his days in the civil service till date as the Executive Secretary of TETFund, Arc. Sonny Echono has not had a single query for any act of misdemeanor nor official misconduct neither has he been indicted for any form of corruption, misappropriation or abuse of office. This coupled with track of excellent record of performance was said to be one of the major reason why his erstwhile boss and former Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu swiftly recommended him to former President Buhari at the expiration of the tenure of Professor Suleiman Bogoro even after he has officially retired from service. The staff and senior officers of TETFund attest to the fact that the Executive Secretary is a man who conducts all his official assignments and engagements with competence, dedication, commitment and contentment with sincerity of purpose. According to one of them, 'Oga is really humane, very humble and strict to the extent that he does not tolerate laxity, it is either you do your job efficiently or you get scolded, in fact excellence is his second name, he has impacted most of us tremendously' Someone said during our Editorial Board meeting that the major difference between the Biblical King Solomon and Arc. Echono is that unlike the former, who was very rich with many wives and concubines, the wise man in TETFund is married to one beautiful wife who has been a source of strength and inspiration to him and he lives a contented life. Arc Echono once responded to a journalist from a daily tabloid not quite long who asked him whether he has ever been faced with temptation to compromise while in office. His response, *'Yes I faced such temptation everyday by virtue of the office I occupied, but my principles and values guided me and saved me. I carry myself with dignity and respect and for that purpose I don't put myself in a position where somebody will compromise me. I can simply decline an offer and walk away with my shoulders held high. What I consider the biggest disgrace in life is to be caught cheating because of the disgrace and humiliation that would come after such act. I can only ask for help which people often render without hesitation because I grew up in a family where we were taught integrity, culture and fear of God and these had been my guiding principles. My father was a civil servant and he was well celebrated because of the reputation and good name he built. My father's name opened doors for me and my siblings and I want to bequeath such to my children'* That is the sure way to go, if every father can say that for their children then there will be so many wise and intelligent men on the surface of the earth and perhaps who knows the society would have been a better place. For Arc. Sonny Echono the wise man in TETFund keep up the beat for millions of people in Nigeria and across the world are watching, learning and following your great steps. You are indeed an enigma.