



FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR (PRESS & PR)

Press Release

RE: COVID-19 A SHAM

The attention of the Federal Ministry of Education has been drawn to a publication by Nigerian Pilot Newspaper of 24th June, 2020 quoting the Minister of State for Education, Hon. Chukwuemeka Nwajiuba, denying the existence of Corona Virus in the country.

Hon. Nwajiuba was said to have described the purported existence of the pandemic in Nigeria as a sham as there is no official evidence.

The Minister of State was said to have made the allegation when he appeared before the Senate Committee on Basic and Secondary Education yesterday in Abuja while presenting the Ministry's proposal on the reopening of schools.

The Minister was quoted as saying: "nobody has seen this disease in Nigeria. Anybody who says he has seen it is a joker". We wish to put it straight that the Minister was clearly quoted out of context as he never said so.

The Pilot story even contradicts itself as it reported that the Minister had, a day earlier, condemned the decision of the Oyo state government, who has announced that it will reopen its primary and secondary schools despite the current rising cases of infection in the country and the state in particular.

If indeed Hon. Nwajiuba does not believe in the existence of Covid -19 in the country, why would he go to the Senate Committee to campaign against the reopening of schools, which implies endangering the lives of innocent school children?

We are all aware that the Federal Ministry of Education was the first to shut down schools when the pandemic broke out. It is on record that not a single child died or even contracted the virus in school because of the proactive actions of the Ministry which the Honourable Minister of state co-presides. Why would the Federal Government do so if the pandemic is not real, knowing the colossal effect on the economy?

The Honourable Minister of State is even a member of the Presidential Task Force, (PTF), on Covid -19, which spearheads the fight. Why would he agree to be part of “such a sham” knowing that he is a man of integrity?

The Honourable Minister was in Lagos along with other members of the PTF on Covid 19 and he was privileged to see victims of Covid 19 and even dead bodies. It is, therefore, inconceivable that he will make such a statement.

I was at the interactive session with the Senate Committee on Basic and Secondary education and make bold to say that the Hon. Minister never said such a thing.

It is a well-known fact that the Minister has spoken severally against the reopening of schools, thus, he cannot in a twist contradict himself by doubting its existence.

Keen followers of the Ministry will confirm that the stance of the Minister has been against endangering the lives of children. The Ministry is indeed under intense pressure to reopen schools but will never succumb to such pressures until the infection curve begins to flatten.

The Ministry of Education reaffirms its commitment to the safety of Nigerian children and would, therefore, not do anything to compromise their safety.

The Federal Government is aware of the damages Corona Virus has caused to the lives of people and economies globally, including Nigeria. We will therefore not compromise an inch in this regard, no matter the blackmail.

The Honourable Minister of State and indeed the Ministry, is also of the belief that no child should die of Covid -19 due to schools being reopened at the wrong time and therefore, will resist all pressure to do so.

Nwajiuba and Arc. Sonny Echono, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, came under pressure by the Senate Committee on Basic and Secondary Education to give a definite date for the reopening of schools but the duo were unanimous on the side of caution.

The Ministry subsequently urges the public to disregard the report by Nigerian Pilot Newspaper as it is unfounded.

The report is the work of detractors of the Federal Government who do not want it to succeed in its quest to improve the standard of education in the country as well as protect the wellbeing of Nigerians.

Ben Bem Goong

Director, Press and Public Relations

25th June, 2020