

2020 ANNUAL MINISTERIAL PRESS BRIEFING

Gentlemen of the Press.

INTRODUCTION

On the 21st of May 2019, I had an interaction with you in what I considered as my valedictory press briefing. I termed it so because the tenure of that Administration and by extension my tenure as the then Minister of Education had come to an end. However, in his wisdom, the President decided to reappoint me as the Minister of Education alongside my brother, Hon. Chukwuemeka Nwajiuba as the Minister of State. At that briefing, I told you that my greatest regret then, was our inability to bring down the number of Out-of-School children to a manageable/barest minimum. Having been reappointed, we are confronting the task of reducing the number of Out-of-School persons with renewed vigour. At this Annual (2020) Ministerial Press Briefing, I will therefore, be updating you on the efforts we have made and what we have achieved in this regard as well as in other areas in the last one year in line with our Blueprint; **“Education for Change, A Ministerial Strategic Plan”**.

(1). Out-of-School Persons

This classification deals with the following;

(a). **Out-of-School children (OoSC)**, (b). **Out-of-School Adolescent Girls (OSAG)**, (c). **Adult illiterates (AI)**, (d) **School Drop Outs (SDO)**, (e) **Nomads and migrants populations**.

These five categories of persons are neither in school nor undertaking any form of formal learning. In the last one year, we have done the following:

A. OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Under the initiative of the **"BETTER EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY FOR ALL"** (BESDA), the Federal Government secured a World Bank credit facility in the sum of **Six Hundred and Eleven Million Dollars (\$611,000,000)** to support 17 (Seventeen) States of the Federation in strengthening Universal Basic Education as well as address the first pillar of the Ministerial Strategic Plan (MSP) on Out-of-School children. So far, we have launched BESDA in 10 (ten) states, namely; Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Ebonyi, Kano, Kebbi, Oyo, Yobe, Niger and Zamfara.

As at today, we have recorded impressive school enrolment figures in all the 17 states of the Federation where BESDA is being implemented. **We have reduced the figure of Out-of School children by 3,247,590 as at 31st December, 2020. This is made up of 1,792,833 through formal schools while 1,454,757 are through non-formal interventions such as Almajiri, Girl Child, Nomadic/migrant and IDPs/Education in emergencies as confirmed by the National Population Commission and the National Bureau of Statistics.**

B. THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF NAPSON - The National Association of Proprietors and School Owners of Nigeria (NAPSON) are working very closely with the Federal Ministry of Education to reduce the number of Out-of-School children. **As at last count, the Association has taken over 1 million Out-of- School children off the streets, with each private school sponsoring a minimum of five pupils. The Federal Ministry of Education also carried out enrolment programmes in 3 (three) states of Benue, Nasarawa and Zamfara during the period under review.**

C. THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS INITIATIVE FOR LEARNING AND EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME (AGILE)

This initiative is also supported by the World Bank to deal with the challenges posed by adolescent girls who are out of school or have never been in school. **A facility of Five Hundred Million Dollars**

(\$500,000,000) has been secured to ensure that these girls are taken off the streets, trained and financially empowered to enable them live normal and quality lives. Full implementation of the AGILE programme will begin in 2021.

D. ADULT ILLITERACY - The phenomenon of adult illiterates is equally disturbing with over 50 million Nigerians falling in this category. The children of illiterate parents are 80% more likely to be out of school. Attention has therefore been given to the adult and mass literacy sub-sector in the last one year. In 2019, we were able to reach and train one million Nigerians on basic literacy and numeracy across 14 states while 900,000 have been taken off that bracket in 2020. In the last two years, 1,900,000 illiterate Nigerians have been able to read and write either in English or the three Nigerian languages through this effort. Our target of three million could not be reached due to the negative impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.

We are working on an instrument that will also make it an offence for any adult illiterate not to be undertaking any form of learning. Today's illiterates will breed tomorrow's out of school children.

2. BASIC AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

(i). Harmonization of school Calendar and National Examinations:
Following the outbreak of COVID-19 early in 2020, the first step we took as a Nation was to close down all our teaching and learning facilities in March 2020. Upon closure, we proceeded to float online learning facilities in collaboration with ICT companies and content providers. We also developed educational content and broadcast them on television and radio stations across the country. The major challenges we had were electricity and internet access for teachers and learners. Consequently, while some learners continued their education, others, especially in the rural areas could not, thereby, putting our learners at different levels of exposure.

Stakeholders in the sector identified the need for us to harmonize our schools and examination calendars, be it state, federal or private schools. This is because at the end of the academic year, children in primary schools write the National Common Entrance on the same day. **Similarly, JAMB, WAEC, NECO and NABTEB have one calendar each for their examinations.**

Consequently, a National Standing Committee on the Harmonization of Schools and Examination Calendars was constituted, comprising

NECO, WAEC, NABTEB, JAMB and representatives of private school owners among others.

3. TERTIARY EDUCATION

(i). Increasing carrying capacity, and Access to Tertiary Education

In the last one year, we established 3 (three) public specialized Universities in Benue, Kebbi and Borno states along with 6 Polytechnics and 6 Federal Colleges of Education spread across the 6 geo-political zones of the country.

We also licensed 4 Private Universities, 9 Polytechnics and 14 Colleges of Education as well as other allied institutions. Applications for 20 additional private Universities have been processed for consideration by the Federal Executive Council while another 4 Polytechnics are at the final stages of approval.

(a). UNIVERSITIES

A breakdown in terms of the number of universities shows that the country now has 44 Federal Universities, 50 State Universities, bringing the total number of public universities to 94. As at last count, the country has 79 private universities bringing the number of universities in Nigeria to 173 with a combined carrying capacity of over 2.5 million spaces/students. This is still less than 50% of the desired minimum.

(b). POLYTECHNICS AND ALLIED INSTITUTIONS

Nigeria has a total of 85 (federal and state) polytechnics, sixty-one private polytechnics, 117 monotechnics (federal, state and private), comprising Colleges of Agriculture, specialized institutions and colleges of health technology. We also have 158 Innovation Enterprise Institutions (federal, states and private).

The 6 new Federal Polytechnics are located in Daura, Katsina State, Kaltungo, Gombe State, Ayede in Oyo State, Shendam in Plateau State, Ohodo in Enugu State and Ugep in Cross River State. We are working assiduously to increase enrolment and improve the quality of technical and entrepreneurial training in these institutions to meet our national skills gaps and meet the manpower needs of our national economy.

(c). COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

In the last one year, we have added six Federal Colleges of Education across the six geopolitical zones and licensed 14 other Colleges of Education. The current carrying capacity of the nation's Colleges of Education stands at 495,340 spaces. This is grossly inadequate to meet the present and projected demand for the education sector in the years ahead.

The 6 new Federal Colleges of Education are located in Odugbo, Benue State, Isu, Ebonyi State, Ekiadolor, Edo State, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Jama'are, Bauchi State and Iwo in Osun State. Arrangements

are being finalized to ensure the commencement of academic activities this year.

ii. INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

During my briefing in May 2019, I informed you that the Administration of President Muhammadu Buhari had committed a total of N1.3 trillion of capital intervention in our tertiary institutions. In 2020, approval was granted to TETFund to disburse a total of Three Hundred and Ninety-Five Billion, Thirty-Two Million, Three Hundred and Seventy-Five Thousand Naira (N395,032,375,000) for the development of infrastructure and capacity development of personnel in tertiary institutions. This is aside from the budgetary allocations and Revitalization funds to universities.

Holistically, the five and half years of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration has witnessed massive investment in capital projects totaling approximately N1.7 trillion in tertiary institutions with the universities taking the lion share of the total sum. In the history of Nigeria, no administration has invested this quantum of money in our tertiary institutions.

(iii). INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

To ensure industrial harmony in tertiary institutions and uninterrupted academic calendar, the Federal Government has recently concluded negotiation with ASUU and the association has since called off its eight months strike. All our Tertiary institutions have commenced resumption with a regrettable loss of a full academic session. With the imminent conclusion of Re-negotiation exercise with all staff unions in tertiary institutions, we hope to put the specter of frequent disruption of academic calendar firmly behind us.

(iv). Administrative Interventions;

During the year under review, we have had cause to intervene in the University of Port Harcourt, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Lagos, and the Maritime University, Okerenkoko among others in order to restore sanity in the affected institutions. We also made similar interventions in the University of Ibadan and the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti to restore normalcy.

As we approach the end of the tenure of the Governing Councils of most of our Federal Universities, we will ensure that we carefully select successors who shall enthrone a culture of harmony, probity and accountability in our University system.

It is important to place on record, that we also reconstituted and inaugurated the Governing Councils of 13 Universities on the 13th of July, 2020.

Most of the Councils where we had cohesion and unity of purpose were retained for continuity. I therefore, urge all Councils of our universities to draw a lesson from this and eschew the rancor that often attend the appointment of principal officers of our tertiary institutions. May I also seize this opportunity to thank members of all the Governing Councils of our Federal Polytechnics and Colleges of Education who have successfully completed their tenure. I appreciate their contributions to the development of the education sector and by extension, the Nation as a whole. Appointment into the Governing Councils of Polytechnics and Colleges of Education will be announced shortly.

(v). Visitation Panels- Having regard to the overall significance of Visitation Panels in tertiary institutions, and the fact that we have gone without these panels for almost a decade, the Federal Government has constituted Visitation Panels for our tertiary institutions. As schools resume, and normalcy returns to our campuses, the teams will be despatched to perform these critical assignments to ensure effective governance of the education sector.

(vi). Scholarship Awards for Year 2020

As part of government's determination to increase access to tertiary education, and reward excellence, we have continued to allocate scarce resources for scholarship awards to Nigerian students both at home and

abroad. Similarly, many countries with which we have Bilateral Agreements have kept their promises despite the negative impact of Covid 19. We are especially grateful to Morocco, the Russian Federation, Hungary, China, some Commonwealth countries, Romania, and Egypt who have awarded scholarships to Nigerian students to study in their countries.

For 2020, a breakdown of the returns so far are as follows; -

(i). Morocco-100 slots (ii). Russia - 97 slots (iii). Hungary-50 slots (iv). China - 47 slots (v). Romania - 10 slots and (vi) Egypt - 5 slots.

We also awarded over 2,294 scholarship in Nigerian Universities to indigent and gifted scholars as we continue to promote inclusive education in our country.

(vii). Continuing Learning beyond pandemics

Gentlemen of the press, in the wake of the current pandemic (COVID-19) the Ministry, constituted a National Response Committee which is working in collaboration with the United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) to ensure continuous learning. A grant has been obtained from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to build a National Education Cloud to warehouse educational resource materials for teachers and learners at all levels of education in Nigeria. Upon the inauguration of this facility, hopefully in the next 6 months, time and space will no longer be a hindrance to learning. All public universities,

polytechnics and colleges of education must prepare their workforce to operate under this environment in the foreseeable future.

4. TEACHER EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Pertinent questions are already being raised as to when the Revitalization of the Teaching Profession Policies as approved by the President will take effect. I wish to inform you that a National coordinating committee has been inaugurated for the implementation of the policy. I should also add that there will be no uniform take-off date for all the policies. However, without pre-empting the work of the Committee, I would like to indicate the take-off date for the following policies;

- a. Retirement age - 1st January 2021
- b. 40 years of service - 1st January, 2021
- c. Special teachers salary scale - 1st January, 2022

The effective dates of all other policies will be announced subsequently after the submission of the report of the National Coordinating Committee.

5. CURRICULUM AND POLICY MATTERS

(A) Enactments of Enabling Laws for New Institutions

Under this pillar of our Ministerial Strategic Plan (MSP), we are in the process of proposing legal enactments to back the establishment of some of our universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and allied institutions that are yet to have appropriate legal instruments.

We have also embarked on a comprehensive review of curriculum across the three tiers of our education system to make it responsive to changing demands of the work place and in pursuit of our global competitiveness objective. With the re-introduction of History as a stand-alone subject at basic and secondary levels, we are working with the Nigerian Historical Society and other stakeholders to re-design the curriculum and train teachers to drive implementation. Work is also at an advance stage on the formulation of a National Language Policy as well as the adoption of the mother tongue in early grade teaching.

(B). Amendment of Existing Instruments

The enabling instruments establishing some of our agencies are long overdue for amendments. The National Mathematical Centre (NMC) Act, the law establishing the Nigerian Institute for Educational Planning and Administration are ready examples. Consequently, a small committee

comprising the Director (Legal), Federal Ministry of Education as Chairman and all the agencies whose enabling instruments are due for amendment as members will be set up in the first quarter of 2021.

(C) University Accreditation Instrument

Similarly, the review of the university accreditation instrument and manual which commenced last year with a view to improving the efficiency and effectiveness in the accreditation of programmes in universities is at an advanced stage. The review of Benchmark Minimum Academics standards (BMAS) and the University Quality Assurance are also ongoing.

(D). Accreditation of the National Certificate of Education Programmes

Accreditation of the National Certificate of Education (NCE) programmes in Colleges of Education (COEs) across geopolitical zones has reached 43% accomplishment, the verification exercise to ascertain the status of existing NCE awarding institutions with a view to fishing out illegal colleges of education is 86% completed. In the course of the 2020 exercise, we discovered that 22 colleges of education are operating illegally. We have closed them down and investigations are ongoing to determine the level of culpability of their promoters for further administrative sanctions and where necessary, prosecution.

(E) Establishment of New Institutions in 2021

For the 2021 fiscal year, Presidential approval has been granted for two (2) Federal Polytechnics to be established in Munguno, Borno state and Wannune, Benue state respectively. Take-off dates for these institutions will be October 2021.

6. TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND TVET

If 2020 was the year of out-of-school children, 2021 and beyond shall be the years of technical, vocational and entrepreneurial education. To give impetus to this, the National Skills Council was reconstituted in 2020, under the leadership of His Excellency, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, *GCON* with the active participation of the Private Sector led by Aliko Dangote. The Council shall coordinate all interventions in ensuring that we meet the manpower needs of all critical segments of the national economy.

We also commenced the implementation of the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) to integrate all levels of skills in our manpower planning and development efforts.

Under the phased implementation of the National Youth Policy, Six (6nos) Federal Science and Technical Colleges were established in 2020. They include FSTC Ogugu, Kogi State, FSTC Hadeija, Jigawa State, FSTC Umuaka, Imo State, FSTC Igangan, Oyo State, FSTC Ganduje, Kano State and FSTC, Amuzu in Ebonyi State. Five (5) additional

Federal Science and Technical Colleges will come on stream in 2021. They will be located in Bauchi, Plateau, Sokoto, Enugu and Cross River States.

The World Bank supported Innovation Development and Effectiveness in the Acquisition of Skills (IDEAS) Project under which US\$200 Million shall be invested in 6 (six) participating states of Abia, Benue, Ekiti, Gombe, Kano and Edo as well as twenty (20) Federal Science and Technical Colleges nationwide was activated in 2020. Implementation will be stepped-up in 2021 to afford millions of Nigerian Youths the opportunity to acquire hands-on skills to effectively contribute to national development. Through this, we shall create employment and generate income for beneficiaries.

7. CONCLUSION

What we have tried to do in this briefing is to give you an update on the out-of-school children phenomenon, the need for the harmonization of schools and examinations calendars, our massive skills development plan, and what we have achieved in the areas of establishing new institutions, infrastructural development, policy and curriculum review, and expanding access to education at all levels.

We have also updated you on where we are on issues of scholarship awards, steps being taken in the implementation of the new conditions

of service for teachers, continuing learning in the face of the corona virus pandemic and policy issues such as amendment to existing instruments establishing some of our agencies as well as processing new ones to back the establishment of some of our institutions.

We can say with a degree of certainty, that we have recorded modest achievements in the implementation of our programme, **“Education for Change- A Ministerial Strategic Plan”**. It is our hope that we will continue to improve on the implementation of the (MSP) all through to 2023 for the overall development of the education sector and by extension, the Nigerian Nation.

I thank you for listening.