

A Welcome Address by Dr. Patrick Onyekwere, Director General & Chief Executive, National Teachers' Institute, Kaduna, at the Meeting With SUBEB Chairmen on Teacher Education in sub-Saharan Africa; Held at the NTI Board Room, 12th February, 2008.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I wish to welcome you to the Workshop on Teacher Education in sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA). TESSA's main aim is to develop high quality resources and support systems in ways that can help improve teacher education. The objectives of this meeting are to:

1. Inform the SUBEB Chairmen about the relevance of TESSA materials and what has been accomplished so far.
2. Discuss the specific ways in which TESSA can support teaching and learning in the classroom and ultimately facilitate the improvement of learning outcomes in our primary schools.

This meeting couldn't have come at a better time, as the new Basic Education Curriculum emphasises active learning, which is at the heart of the TESSA initiative. The reality is that most teachers do not have access to books or other teaching and learning resources. Current pupil textbook ratio in the country is put at 1 textbook to 9 pupils. In addition to this, teachers have very little opportunity for continuing professional development. Without access to teaching and learning resources, and without opportunities for professional development, it is difficult to change our classrooms to places of active learning. The TESSA initiative is thus a commendable one.

There is no doubt that the TESSA partnership programme, lead by the Open University UK will benefit teachers if properly harnessed. There is therefore the need for collaboration between key stakeholders and teacher education institutions to ensure effective use of TESSA materials in Nigerian schools. Indeed, it is our fervent hope that all the SUBEB Chairmen will adopt and use all the TESSA materials that were produced for Nigeria to re-train their Primary and Junior Secondary school teachers. These materials can be downloaded free from the internet for use with teachers. Where possible, teachers can also have direct access to them online.

I hope that this meeting will provide you with adequate opportunity and time to share knowledge on TESSA's potential to contribute to teacher education in Nigeria and to discuss plans for nation-wide dissemination of TESSA materials. It is also my hope that the meeting will help strengthen the Institute's partnership with the Open University UK and State Universal Basic Education Boards, which will in turn allow sharing of resources and future discussions on how to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Nation's primary schools.

I wish to welcome you once more and wish you all fruitful discussion sessions.

Thank you and may God Bless.