

LEAD DEBATE ON FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION KOTANGORA, NIGER STATE (ESTABLISHMENT, ETC) BILL, 2018.

Sponsor: Sen. Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi (Niger North)

Mr. President, and my highly respected Colleagues, permit me to lead the debate on this very important Bill which seeks to provide for the establishment of the Federal University of Education Kotangora, Niger State.

The Bill was read for the First Time in this Hallowed Chamber on 4th Wednesday July 2018.

Mr. President, my Distinguished Colleagues, we all know that education is the bedrock of every modern society. The existence of a sound and robust educational system in any country is predicated on the availability of qualified and well trained teachers to impact the required knowledge on the students. Thus, the need to have a strong system in our educational sector that shall continuously produce well qualified and trained teachers as it is obtainable in other developed countries cannot be overemphasized.

The need for the establishment of this specialized institution of higher learning is also predicated on the mass failure of students in WEAC and NECCO examinations which is largely due to absence of good, qualified and well trained teachers in Nigeria, its establishment will be strengthen the improvement on the standards and quality of our teachers in Nigeria.

The objects of the University among others include-

- (a) to encourage the advancement of learning to all persons without distinction of race, creed, sex or political conviction.
- (b) to develop and offer academic and professional programmes leading to the award of certificates, first degrees, post-graduate research, diploma and higher degrees with emphasis on planning, developmental and adaptive skills in Education, technology, science, agriculture, commerce, arts, social science, humanities, management and allied professional education disciplines.
- (c) to produce socially mature Educational men and women with capabilities not to only understand Educational need of Nigeria as a nation, but also to exploit existing Educational infrastructure and improve on it to develop new ones.

(d) to act as agents and catalysts for effective Educational system, through post graduate training ; research and innovation, for effective economic utilization and conservation of the country's human resources.

(e) to bring quality change in Education by focusing on teacher Education through teaching and learning innovations.

(f) to collaborate with other national and international institutions involved in training, research and development of Education with a view to promoting governance, leadership and management skills among Educational managers.

(g) to identify Educational needs of the society with a view to finding solutions to them within the context of overall national development.

Mr. President, my highly respected Colleagues, the enactment of this Bill will help in transforming the educational fortunes of this country.

Mr. President, Distinguished colleagues, let me stress the fact that the University will replace by way of an upgrade the current Federal College of Education (FCS), Kontagora. The Federal College of Education, Kontagora located in Niger State of Nigeria was established in September 1978, as Federal Advanced Teachers College (FATC).

In 1992, a presidential Task force recommended to the Federal Government that Federal Advanced Teachers' Colleges should be renamed Federal Colleges of Education and that heads of such institutions be conferred with a new designation of Provost. To this effect, the college was renamed Federal College of Education, Kontagora in 1992.

The college became autonomous in 1989 with the establishment of National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). This College has contributed greatly to the manpower development of Nigeria, especially in Teacher Education. The College runs programmes ranging from Certificate, Pre-NCE, NCE (regular), NCE (Sandwich) to degree courses. The College currently offered fifty-three (53) different subject combinations under five (5) schools namely School of Arts and Social Sciences; School of Education; School of Languages; School of Sciences and School of Vocational Education. The five schools run a total of 30 Departments including the sandwich programme. Furthermore, the FCE currently has over 5000 students population; over 1000 staff strength out of which 412 are academic staff.

The current Federal College of Education (FCE) is located on 500 hectares of prime land in Kotangora; an ancient and historic city. It is well situated in the Sudan savannah and will serve as a catchment area to our teeming students and youths from Niger, Kwara, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zanfara, Katsina, Kaduna and Kogi States including the Federal Capital Territory with respect to diversity of educational training and learning. As for

constituents of Niger North which is the largest Senatorial District in terms of land mass at 41,000 square kilometer, it will be a great relief as many students will have access to quality education in an environment that prides itself as home of Teachers; but still struggles to attain the desire quality and quantity in educational output. What this means is that the University would be one way to restoring and re-strengthening the citizens' sense of belonging and yearning for national development.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, the challenges of education in Nigeria can be summarized below:

- Currently we have over 110 million youth under the age of 25 years and should rise to over 200 million in 50 years' time;
- 22.1million out of 42.1 million Nigerian children are in primary schools;
- Out of 33.9 million Nigerians eligible for secondary education, only 10.4 million are attending;
- Nigeria, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2013, has the highest rate of out-of-school children in the world;
- Nigeria requires about 1.4 million primary and secondary school teachers and 456,500 tertiary education teachers (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2013, NCCE, 2012);
- Of all the students who sat for SSCE examinations, from 2006 to 2016, less than 25 per cent passed with credits in Mathematics and English.
- For example, in 2017, 1.8 million candidates who registered for the 2017 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations (UTME) will jostle for about 850,000 admission spaces.

In view of the need to expand the current admission capacity of our Universities, upgrading the Federal College of Education into the Federal University of Education is not only a wise investment decision, but one that will show our responsiveness to the needs of our citizens for quality education as enshrine in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) as amended and the National Policy on Education.

In line with Order 77(3) of the Senate Standing Order 2015 as amended, which requires a compendium of the financial implication of the establishment of the University, I want to state that the Federal College of Education currently enjoys budget allocation and this upgrade of the College to a University is at no extra cost.

Therefore, I urge you all to support the expeditious passage of this Bill.
Thank you.