REPOSITIONING THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

PERSPECTIVE OF AN INSIDER

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Selected Speeches of Professor Emeritus Ayo Banjo in Commemoration of his 80th Birthday

Edited by

A. IDOWU OLAYINKA

University of Ibadan

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Foreword

A declared objective of the Nigerian government is that, by the year 2020, the country should become one of the twenty most developed countries in the world. It is widely accepted that, whereas the resources to do so are available, the challenge is to produce the well-educated, well-motivated workforce to convert the potentials to reality—and to ensure the enabling environment for them. Undoubtedly the universities constitute the main producer of the required manpower.

Hence the national relevance and importance of this book which comprises 19 selected lectures on the Nigerian University System. They were delivered at different fora and cover virtually all aspects of the system including its beginnings, growth and expansion, funding, governance, autonomy, quality assurance, challenges, and so forth. Where appropriate, background context is provided by discussion of the origins and idea of the university, as well as practices in other parts of the world. However, the scope of the lectures extends beyond the university, to considerations of the goal, structure and content of Nigerian education from the primary, through the secondary, to the tertiary tiers.

The lectures were delivered between 1997 and 2013 by Professor Emeritus Ayo Banjo, who is a product of primary and secondary schools in Nigeria, and has had extensive first-hand working experience at the secondary and tertiary levels. He taught at two leading secondary schools and a Teacher Training College. At university level, he has been lecturer, professor, Dean of Faculty, and the longest serving Vice-Chancellor of Nigeria's premier university. It was my good fortune to succeed him in the latter post. In addition, Professor Banjo has been Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council at three universities, two public and one private.

This unique experience and insider knowledge is evident in all these scholarly lectures. Clear definition and critical analysis of the issues is followed by thought-provoking and innovative proposals for solving the problems. Readiness to think outside the box is demonstrated. For example, the author suggests that proliferation of universities should be rationalized by grouping them into zones

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with each group made to address the ecology of the zone as well as its manpower development. He also presented useful ideas on the sharing of the burden of university funding among the federal, state and local governments as well as private proprietors and the universities themselves. Professor Banjo strongly advocates a return to the primacy of humanistic values at all tiers of education. The importance and relevance of this cannot be over-emphasized in Nigeria where features of contemporary society include widespread endemic corruption, insecurity of life and property, ostentatious materialism in the midst of abject poverty, declining standard of education, the celebration of mediocrity, a culture of filth, inordinate pursuit and worship of money and power, and a pervasive attitude of impunity.

I believe these lectures and the ideas therein have not received the deserved wide dissemination. This could, but need not, have been a consequence of the fact that most of them were delivered to one university audience or the other. In one of the lectures Professor Banjo stated: "These proposals may well in the end turn out to be unworkable, perhaps because they are too idealistic, but the hope then was, and still is, that it would stimulate debate which might lead to an optimal system for the country". The University of Ibadan has rendered a very commendable service by publishing this book to celebrate the 80th birthday anniversary of Professor Banjo. This should make the contents readily available to a national audience, facilitate access and reference, and help to realize the hope expressed by the author.

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Former Vice-Chancellor
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Editor's Notes

I approached Professor Emeritus Ayo Banjo during the last quarter of 2013 if the University of Ibadan could publish a collection of his papers which he had presented at different fora on the Nigerian University System over the years as part of the celebration of his 80th birthday anniversary. He agreed to the proposal and promised to collate all the relevant papers. Eventually, we had 19 papers which he had presented during the period from 1997 to 2013.

Only minor editorial comments have been made to the original manuscripts from Professor Emeritus Banjo. The papers have been grouped on the basis of their sub-themes into six sections namely:

Section I: Educational Foundation Issues
Section II: Challenges facing the Nigerian University System
Section III: Quality Assurance
Section IV: University Governance
Section V: The Humanities and National Development
Section VI: Case Studies

I have provided an overview (synopsis) as an introduction.

Professor Idowu Olayinka, FAS
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Synopsis*

In this section, the editor has provided some introductory remarks on each of the papers presented by Professor Emeritus Ayo Banjo.

Section I: Foundational Issues

'Turnaround of Education for National Transformation'

This chapter presents a detailed account of the goals, structure and content of Nigerian education. It has been strongly canvassed that what Nigeria needs is manpower development built on the solid foundation of human development. Efforts should be made to restore dignity to the teaching profession at the primary school level as it is only when teachers are well-motivated that they will be able to give the children the love and care they deserve and badly need at this stage of their development. The teaching of history as part of the curriculum of secondary should be emphasized while admission to the universities should be based on the projected manpower needs of the country. The question was asked whether the Bachelor of Education degree is the most effective way of preparing teachers for the secondary school rather than the old practice of having teachers who hold an honours degree followed by a year's certificate or diploma in education.

'An Agenda for Educational Development'

The point is made that the genuine development of any country depends on the efficacy of its educational system. Primary education is the foundation of the whole education system whose inefficiency resonates throughout the remaining tiers of the system. Secondary education occupies a unique position in so far as it is profoundly influenced by the quality of the primary tier and, in turn, profoundly influences the quality of the tertiary tier. The point has been re-iterated that if the standards in the secondary schools have to be raised, it is important to have teachers who are graduates in their teaching subjects first, before having them

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* Brief overview by Professor Idowu Olayinka

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trained as teachers, as was hitherto the case before the introduction of the B.Ed degree in Nigerian universities. There should be an increase in allocation to education in the government's budget, including provision for a decent wage for teachers.

'The Future of Nigerian Education'

The author considers the entire education system of the country in terms of the input, the output, the process and key gateways. He argues strongly for an improvement in the quality of education at the primary and secondary school levels, in order to lay a solid foundation for the university level. Efforts should be made to attract qualified people to the teaching profession.

'Memories of Ughelli'

The paper identifies the main weaknesses with the current 6:3:3:4 system of education in Nigeria, namely, the lack of interest in teacher-training by the various tiers of governments and the poor performance of candidates in the School Certificate examination. A strong case has, therefore, been made for the return to the old 6:5+2:3 system which would necessitate the restoration of the sixth form to elite secondary schools.

Section II: Challenges facing the Nigerian University System

'Towards Survival of the University System in Nigeria'

This paper presents a detailed account of the challenges faced by the Nigerian University System in terms of inadequate planning before the establishment of most of the universities, funding, and university autonomy. It has been argued that the system is suffused with unhappiness by the institutions themselves, the proprietor as well as the students and their parents. The author argues that in place of indiscriminate, unplanned establishment of universities, these institutions should be grouped into zones with each group made to address the ecology of the zone as well as its manpower requirements.

'Reflections on the Nigerian University System'

The author has analysed how irregular academic calendar has contributed to the non-competitiveness of the Nigerian university

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system. He argues that government at the various tiers do have a stake in the production of high-level manpower which is a main remit of the universities.

Section III: Quality Assurance

'Quality Control in Nigerian Education'

The author examines some of the factors that can ensure high quality of university education in Nigeria in this paper. These include the quality of foundation, quality of staffing, the quality of the admission process, and the quality of curriculum. The role of the National Universities Commission (NUC) as a buffer between the universities and the proprietor has also been interrogated.

'Training the Next Generation of Academics'

The author canvassed the point that since an academic is a scholar by definition, the only real attribute a prospective teacher needs is evidence of a high intellect which makes his students look up to him and be inspired by him. Consequently, each university should find a reliable way of identifying people with high intellect for recruitment. The universities should stick to their own guidelines of allowing candidates with a good first degree to pursue postgraduate courses, leading to a PhD degree, as preparation for a teaching career in a university. University teachers should be familiar with the increasing use of information and communication technology in enhancing their quality of teaching. The shortfall in the number of academics can be addressed by the training of postgraduate students in those universities which have the competence and resources to produce manpower of the highest calibre for the university system.

'Open and Distance Learning: An Imperative Tool for Educational and Economic Development in Nigeria'

The author argues in this paper that the development of the human capital is essential for national development and that no development of the human capital is possible without a vibrant university and higher education system. On account of the challenge of access in terms of suitably qualified candidates seeking admission into the higher educational institutions, the

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distance learning institutes would be expected to complement the conventional (face-to-face) mode of delivery.

Section IV: University Governance
'Challenges in University Governance in Nigeria: A Keynote Address'

The paper examines the role of the Vice-Chancellor as the executive head of the university, who invariably has to find enough funds to run the university, ensure that the highest academic standards are maintained, collaborate with the private sector, and also maintain staff and student welfare.

'On Global Best Practices in University Administration'

The author argues that the university is simply a community of scholarly people in contradistinction to being just a community of scholars or academics, more so when the latter description tends to marginalize the non-academic members of the community. The non-teaching staff, who in fact may possess degrees in any of the various disciplines available in the university, are required to have high intellectual quality. Since the professional administrators are in line of succession to the Registrar, only those who have the makings of a future Registrar should be recruited. A case is made for in-service training of the administrative staff, and such staff should avail themselves of recent developments in information and management technology for improved service delivery.

'Reflections on University Registry Workforce'

Far-reaching suggestions are made on how to reduce conflict between the Vice-Chancellor who is the Executive Head of the university and the Registrar who is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the day-to-day administration of the institution. There are also proposals on whether or not Registrars, Librarians and Bursars should have term limits. Recommendations have been made on how to ensure a smooth working relationship between the vice-chancellor and the registrar.

Many senior registry staff have misgivings about being referred to as 'non-academic staff' or 'support staff' and the author argues that in order to avoid consigning those staff to an inferior status, which is hardly the intention of the laws setting up the universities, they could be referred to as 'non-teaching staff'. A consequence of

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the widespread deployment of ICT for most administrative functions could be a reduction in staff strength in the Registry, leaving only the most competent staff. Every member of the Registry should consider himself/herself a public relations officer of the university since their schedule brings them in touch with the general public in one form or the other.

Section V: The Humanities and National Development
'The Mission of the Humanities in the Contemporary Nigerian University'

The principal aim of this paper is to demonstrate the preeminent place of the Humanities in the operations of a university. What distinguishes a university from even the best technical institution is its concern for a liberal education aimed at the refinement of the human mind. The author argues that the Faculty of Arts/Humanities is the unit in any university which provides continuity with the university's early Greek origins; the more deeply any discipline is pursued, the more it approaches a philosophical enquiry. Moreover, modern science is an outgrowth of philosophical enquiry.

'Some Humanistic Perspectives on the Nigerian Condition'

The typical Faculty of Arts offers courses in languages, literature, philosophy, history, religion and the fine arts. The author argues that only a revival of humanism can save the world at large from premature extinction, and only a return to humanistic values can give any real meaning to the much-promoted global village, or to the problems of harmonious co-existence in plural societies. It has been stressed that happiness is superior to pleasure, and that no amount of pleasure can necessarily add up to happiness. Technological development cannot be an end in itself, but is useful only to the extent that it serves the end of human happiness and development. The constraint of language is emphasized and in the case of Nigeria, English is the language of all instruction at the university level. English is not a foreign language in the country but a second language that is being actively indigenized. It is the language in which most creative thinking is done in the country today. Although an imported language, English linguistically holds

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the country together, albeit rather tenuously as only a small proportion of the population speak the language. It has been recommended that all Nigerian children should have a sound liberal education at the primary and secondary levels. Moreover, scholars in the universities should continue to extend the frontiers of our knowledge of Nigerians as individuals, as members of their various ethnic groups, and as citizens of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society.

'The Wages of Obsessive Materialism'

The roots of obsessive materialism in the modern day have been traced to the inability of a government to ensure the minimum material comforts for the citizen. The resulting disequilibrium between materialism and morality is further aggravated by a rat race in which conspicuous consumption becomes glorified, further intensifying the spiral of obsessive materialism. In the developing world, the State is more concerned for its citizens to be happy than for them to be good. And it concentrates, not on the pleasure of the intellect, but on those of the flesh. The author argues that a combination of mineral oil and military governance of the country have installed an era of giddy materialism in the country in which the leaders lead the way. The ultimate goal is the accumulation of wealth by any means imaginable, resulting in a general lack of respect for merit and enthronement of mediocrity. This cannot be expected to aid development of the country but rather gives further impetus to corruption. Nonetheless, a good education system can help in the moderation of obsessive materialism.

'Public-Private Partnership in a National Moral Crisis'

In this paper, the author admonishes the youths to refrain from excessive materialism which easily leads to greed and selfishness, the bane of a democracy that has gone awry, and ultimately corruption. He has also advocated a uniquely Nigerian brand of democracy.

'European Models and African Realities'

Against the backdrop of the global village or the invocation of an international community, the author argues that Africa appear to be

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little more than a passive observer. While democracy is often prescribed as the antidote for underdevelopment, democracy should be tailored to the history and temper of every country adopting it. Two problems besetting the continent of Africa, namely language and education, have been examined in details. In all of these, Africa is challenged to imbibe the spirit of research, instead of resorting to being mimic men of Europe and America.

Section VI: Case Studies

'Sustaining the Church's Role in Educational Development in Nigeria, especially in a Difficult Politico-Religious Circumstance'

Since true religion is an antidote to ignorance and superstition, the Church has a role to play in delivering good education. In this chapter, the author discusses the salutary intervention of the Anglican Church in the educational development of Nigeria, from the primary, through the secondary to the tertiary levels. The challenges of funding a fully residential private university are highlighted.

'Four Ages of the University of Ibadan: Milestones and Challenges'

This paper has identified four stages in the growth and development of the University of Ibadan from 1948 when it was established as a College of the University of London, till 2013. These include the Golden Age from 1948 till 1970; the Years of Challenge from 1970 till 2000; the Year of Revival from 2000 to 2013; and a return to the Golden Age. Obviously, the fortunes of the premier university of Nigeria are inseparable from the fortunes of the country, Nigeria.

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SECTION I

Educational Foundation Issues

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1 TURNAROUND OF EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION+

Introduction

First of all, I should like to express my deep appreciation to the Chairman and members of the Board of the Nigerian National Merit Award for their kind invitation to me to deliver the keynote address at this year's Forum of the Laureates. I can think of no topic more deserving of discussion than this at this stage of our national development. Preoccupation with other important topics such as the national economy, health, gender, and even security can only bring about the desired lasting efficacy if the undergirding problems of education are solved. The topics just mentioned indeed form the preoccupations of the millennium development goals subscribed to by the federal government; but as I have tried to show elsewhere (Banjo 2012) unless the problems posed by education are vigorously and effectively solved, none of these other items on the agenda of national development stands a chance of being effectively addressed.

The reason is that education, as we all know, has to do with human development, and as the Nigerian Academy of Letters is never tired of repeating, development is about people, not about the building of skyscrapers or sports stadiums, beautiful airports, or a fine network of roads—all of which, in any case, swiftly come to wrack and ruin when put at the service of an under-developed citizenry. Yet we are today more likely to hear concerns expressed about manpower development, rather than human development. The two terms are indeed semantically related but are by no means synonymous. I suggest strongly that our nation's concerns should be with both, as I hope to be able to demonstrate later in this address.

+ Keynote Address to the Fifth Forum of NNOM Laureates, Abuja, 4 December, 2012

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The distinction I am trying to make goes back to antiquity from which modern states, at different points in their development, have drawn inspiration. The privileged education which produced Plato (429–347 BC) had a staple curriculum of reading, writing, music and gymnastics. Later training of the individual had to do with the observation and study of the physical phenomena (a rudimentary form of science), and later, philosophy proper. We can describe this as education for its own sake—for the full development of the human intellect and character, while at the same time ensuring a sound mind in a sound body. You will have noticed that this ancient tradition lasted until fairly recently, until the industrial revolution in Europe forced governments to demand a surrender value from education in relation to industrial development.

Also in antiquity, but about a hundred years after Plato and in another cultural climate altogether, Confucius (551–479BC) declared: "The essence of knowledge is, having it, to apply it". This foreshadows the present concerns with so-called relevant knowledge, as if there is any knowledge that is irrelevant, and ultimately to the dichotomy already hinted at between human development and manpower development. What Nigeria needs is manpower development built on the solid foundation of human development.

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The Goals of Nigerian Education

The goal of education for any modern state determines the long-term and short-term planning. And since planning presupposes an outcome, it also determines the structure and the content.

Goals can be stated in generalized or precise forms. A generalized statement can take the form of an adumbration of the kind of society the country envisages and the kind of citizens it would like to see making up that society. Such statements are to be found in national constitutions and political manifestos. For example, the national policy on education promulgated by the Federal Government in 1981 states as follows:

> The five main national objectives of Nigeria as stated in the Second National Development Plan and

endorsed as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education are the building of:

(1) a free and democratic society;
(2) a just and egalitarian society;
(3) a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
(4) a great and dynamic economy;
(5) a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

> Nigeria's philosophy of education, therefore, is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system.

But planning has to be based on more precise terms. It needs to specify what the structure of formal education should be in order to cater for all segments of the population. It is fashionable today for every country to claim to be a democracy while in fact the system of education reinforces a stratified society and a yawning gap between the rich and the poor. Also to be taken into consideration is the national consensus on such matters as language, religion and gender.

The Structure of Nigerian Education

The general structure of formal education is very much the same in every modern state and comprises primary, secondary and tertiary tiers. Within these divisions, however, there are subdivisions to suit the goals of every country. In this country, as in most other countries, children complete primary education by the age of eleven plus. There are countries, like Britain, where the secondary tier is one continuous stretch. That too was the case in Nigeria until the introduction of the 6:3:3:4 system. The rationale for the innovation, which is a laudable one, is to give every Nigerian child nine years of free education. Unfortunately, this has not been made compulsory, and that is only one of the serious defects of the system.

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The other major defect, in fact, is the lack of a meaningful future for all the products of the nine years. Ideally, those who do not go on to senior secondary should be able to finish secondary education at such institutions as trade centres and technical colleges, where they learn skills which will place them in good stead in life and assure them of a profitable future. Moreover, the break between Junior and Senior Secondary Schools unfortunately emphasizes the division between the rich and the poor. While the children from poor homes drop out and in many cases revert to illiteracy while taking up menial jobs, the children from well-off homes tend to be sure of completing the senior secondary segment. It is not clear that a reliable selection and streaming system is operated in the junior secondary; and in any case, children from well-off homes have the choice of going to private secondary schools which ensure their survival till the school certificate year.

Meanwhile, school certificate results have been depressing over the past few years, showing that there is something fundamentally wrong with the existing secondary school system, the products of which also create problems at the tertiary level. It seems clear that the 6:3:3:4 system has failed us, not necessarily because of any inherent weaknesses in the system, but rather because of the manner of its implementation in our socio-economic environment. The time is therefore ripe to go back to the system which earlier had served us much better—the 6:5:2:3 system. This implies the retention of the primary tier as it is, but reverting to a secondary course which allows every child admitted to a secondary school to spend five years and attempt the school certificate examination. The school certificate course is then followed by a two-year sixth form for those who can profit from it.

The advantages are glaring. The system gives every child who enters a secondary school (which in effect means every Nigerian child) the chance of staying the course for five years and attempting the school certificate examination. It opens up brighter prospects even for those who do not go on to the sixth form than is the current fate of junior secondary school products (or, more accurately, dropouts). The effect of this is that every Nigerian child is offered eleven instead of the current nine years of free education.

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This of course has financial implications, but the benefits derivable are likely to more than offset the loss to the economy of the current system.

A first degree course in universities would then take three years, the entrants having been well groomed in the sixth form, which is a foretaste of university. New entrants arrive at the university intellectually and physically more mature than at present, and the current mounting complaints about the poor quality of our university graduates are certain to be eliminated.

The Content of Nigerian Education

As we all realize, the curriculum is a key factor in any programme of formal education delivery. Here it is important to bear the national goals very much in mind. The tendency in Nigeria has been to pay more attention to the programmes at the secondary and tertiary levels than at the primary. Yet it is realized that if the foundation is weak or even wrong-headed, the superstructure must suffer. In most cases, the condition under which pupils in the publicly run primary schools are expected to learn is quite appalling and degrading; and one wonders how much learning actually does take place. Consequently, more and more, those who can afford it send their children to private schools where, at least, some attention is paid to giving the pupils a passable degree of culture and education in addition to getting them ready for the entrance examinations to secondary schools, where applicable.

Private schools all over the world do maintain higher standards than the public system; but the difference between private and public schools in Nigeria is mind-boggling. Yet the majority of children have, perforce, to attend the public schools and thereby dictate the standards at the higher tiers. A great deal more attention therefore needs to be paid to providing conducive learning conditions in primary schools. This, among other things, would mean providing a meticulously hygienic environment, including the maintenance of clean toilet facilities; provision of adequate furniture and audio-visual gadgets; and adequate grounds for recreation. If we expect students to behave in a cultured manner at the secondary and tertiary tiers, the right habits have to be

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inculcated in children from the very beginning of their school experience.

But this is impossible unless we have the right kind of teachers to bring about the revolution. The reports that we hear are that many, if not most, of the teachers in primary schools are themselves barely literate and are hardly fitting role models for the children in other ways as well. With the abolition of the Grade II teachers colleges, one expects the primary schools to be run exclusively by well-trained products of colleges of education; but there is little sign of this. Rather, the schools are manned by teachers with little interest either in the profession or in the children under their care. To bring about desired development, therefore, the country has to return to the era of the meticulous training of teachers for primary schools. More than that, it must seek to restore dignity to the profession. If teachers are well-motivated, they will give the children the love and care that they deserve and badly need at this stage of their development.

As it is, because primary schools are preoccupied with preparing pupils for entrance to secondary schools where applicable, virtually all the attention is focused on the requirements of the entrance examination, and little else. The opportunity to make the children truly aware of their environment, to nurture curiosity in them and thus truly lay the foundation of human development is lost.

At this primary level, there is also the problem of language, which is central to human development. It has truly been observed that language incompetence lies at the root of much of the wastage in the Nigerian educational system. The ideal medium of instruction at the primary school is, of course, the learner's mother tongue, but this is hardly possible in a multilingual country like Nigeria, in which most of the languages have not been appropriately developed.

A highly commendable step towards redressing the situation was taken a few years ago with the establishment by the federal government of the Nigerian Institute for Nigerian Languages in Aba, which many had hoped would facilitate the implementation of the national language policy on education. The policy, you will

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remember, rightly envisages that the medium of instruction during the first three years of schooling by every Nigerian child should be the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community. The Institute was to give a fillip to the development of Nigerian languages, many of which do not even yet have an orthography. More importantly, the institute was to train teachers who were to aid the realization of the national policy of bilingualism, which envisages that all Nigerians would be bilingual in English and one of the three main languages. This is, of course, without prejudice to the development of all Nigerian languages, which would be used in appropriate contexts. These are all conditions for full human development but, sadly, no progress has been registered in this direction since the apparent dissolution of the Institute.

Ideally, the process of human development should be pursued through the secondary tier. At this level, the pupil's intellectual vista needs to be broadened, so as to make the individual increasingly hospitable to experience; but the inculcation of society's best values in conduct should also be continued. The same keen attention to the quality of the environment in which learning takes place, recommended for the primary level, should also be vigorously maintained.

One inexplicable feature of the secondary tier curriculum today is the absence of the teaching of history. It is inconceivable that human development can be envisaged in an individual who is unaware of the national and international context in which he lives, or the processes which have produced that context. Moreover, the absence of history at the secondary level is bound ultimately to affect the tertiary level where, already, the obsession with manpower rather than human development is forcing many departments of history to adopt such crutches as the study of diplomacy in order to survive. Surely, a country without the kind of fine historians that this country has produced over the past sixty years would be a country to be pitied. It is hoped that the necessary amendment will be made without further loss of time.

As already hinted, a decision has to be made about the nature of the secondary tier. Whatever happens, it is necessary to diversify subject offerings at this level, as manpower development

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begins to loom large in the government's, as well the pupils', considerations. An experiment was once tried with the Aiyetoro Comprehensive School in Ogun State, where it was intended to take the requirements of children who were not academically inclined, but gifted in other areas, into consideration. That experiment sadly failed, as the school developed into one of the finest in the country, but purely as a regular grammar school. If my earlier proposal of making every child do five years of secondary education is accepted, then some technical subjects have to be incorporated into the curriculum while careful selection and streaming should be done to ensure that pupils follow the lines of their natural inclination. We may in fact decide to have two alternative examinations at the end of the fifth form.

It may be instructive in this connection to note that this same matter is, in fact, at present agitating the minds of the government of the United Kingdom, in spite of that country's technological achievements. There, the government is planning to introduce, in addition to the GCSE, another examination to be called a baccalaureate, for the non-academically inclined pupils. We may well borrow a leaf from this to ensure a bright future for all categories of pupils. This, in turn, as we shall see, has implications for the tertiary level.

If the national goal is to produce and maintain an egalitarian society, this reform is urgent, and its effect on national development can be expected to be phenomenal.

At the end of the fifth form, then, if the proposed reforms are implemented, we should have children who have been reasonably developed as human beings being fed into areas where they will be optimally suitable for manpower development.

At the same time, the presence of a sixth form in a school is bound to raise the tone of the school, as it will ensure the recruitment of highly competent staff, without whom the sixth form cannot succeed. In this connection, it may well be necessary to find out, through a research project, whether the B.Ed degree is the most effective way of preparing teachers for the secondary school. It will probably be found that the old practice of having teachers who hold an honours degree, followed by a year's certificate or

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diploma in education, is more effective. Such teachers would have a stronger grounding in the subject that they teach, followed by thorough training. The faculties of education in universities would then be purely postgraduate and research centres.

Much discussion in recent times has centred on the unsatisfactory quality of tertiary institutions. I suspect, however, that if the other tiers of the system are subjected to the same kind of scrutiny as universities, it will be found that they are in fact faring far worse, to the detriment of the human, technological and industrial development of the country.

It is envisaged that the non-academically inclined products of the fifth form will enter trade centres or technical colleges, where they will receive up-to-date training. Most artisans in the country today are products of nondescript apprenticeships and consequently render very poor quality of work. The proper running of trade centres and technical colleges would save the country a good deal of money now lost through poor-quality structures, including roads. It would also improve the aesthetics of public works and private buildings.

As indicated, universities would now run a three-year degree course, as indeed they used to do in the halcyon days of the system. With entrants from the sixth form, the quality of graduates is bound to improve. If the present varieties of tertiary institutions are to be maintained, as indeed they should, for maximum manpower development, it has to be ensured that each variety performs the functions intended for it. It is, for example, incongruous to have a university of technology or of agriculture running degree courses in law. And it is not as if there is a dire shortage of lawyers in the country.

It is recognized that the viability and quality of the entire education structure depend on the quality of the university system, for it is the universities that, immediately or remotely, provide the personnel that run the entire system. It is, therefore, right that the universities should constantly be under scrutiny. In this connection, rather than the visitation to universities being a mere ritual, the reports of visitation panels have to be taken seriously, as they used to be in the early years of the first-generation universities. Today,

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there is a tendency for the proprietor of a university to merely 'note' important suggestions for improvement of their institutions instead of firmly taking responsibility for effecting remediation.

At present, there is a mismatch between the products of universities and the manpower needs of the country because admissions are not based on any manpower projections. Yet there are constant complaints that the universities are not as relevant to national development as they ought to be. The present *laisser faire* approach to admissions to universities clearly needs to be replaced with a definite eye on projected manpower needs in the country.

In trying to confront this problem, I made a revolutionary suggestion some years ago (Banjo 1997) that the universities should be grouped and zoned according to the country's ecological regions or zones. There is no time here to go fully into the rationale for this proposal, so a brief summary should suffice. By this view, all universities will fully engage in teaching and research in the humanities, the physical sciences (including ICT), medicine and engineering. But over and above this, universities will specialize in areas of study necessary for the rapid development of the ecological region in which they are located. This is even more important in the field of research, which should aim at solving specific problems in the area. This means that problems which cut across the zones will be tackled by as many zones as necessary.

This suggestion has important implications for the financing of the universities, the greatest problem confronting the entire university system today. It is suggested that all tiers of government should contribute to the funding of university education, whether federal, state or private. These three categories of proprietorships would be maintained, and the bulk of the funding would be borne by the proprietors, but the other tiers of government (or, in the case of the private universities, all three tiers) should make modest contributions on an agreed formula. Apart from other considerations, this would remove the present inequity in which some university students pay nothing for their tuition, while others have to pay the economic costs.

In any case, it is suggested that research funds should be pooled somewhere, such as the National Universities Commission,

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and made accessible to researchers in all categories of universities purely on merit. Such an arrangement exists and works very well in South Africa.

Conclusion

National development is a many-faceted phenomenon, at the heart of which is educational development. Educational development, in turn, should not be narrowly defined strictly in utilitarian terms. Rather, it should aim, first of all, at developing every citizen to the limit of his or her natural ability. Morality and refinement should be the main preoccupation at the primary level, continued into the secondary tier, where it is supplemented with concerns for manpower development. The structure and content of formal education should reflect the government's concern with the full development of all individuals as moral beings and then as efficient contributors to the development of the country. I have offered in this address some suggestions which may be the basis of further thinking by the experts in the field.

Meanwhile, it is a good omen that education takes the pride of place in budget allocations this year. The objective now should be to ensure the most efficient way of disaggregating that allocation, so that the national goals are met, and we thus bring about a society of fulfilled and motivated citizens eager to try ever harder to make the country realize its bountiful potentials.

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2 AN AGENDA FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT*

I should like, to begin with, to express my gratitude to His Excellency the Governor of Rivers state, Mr. Rotimi Amaechi, and the Honourable Commissioner for Education, Dame Alice Lawrence-Nemi for the honour of the invitation to attend this Summit on Education and to deliver the Keynote Address. I have followed the bold initiatives that have been taking place in recent years in this State and would like to commend the government for its commitment to the development of the State.

It is a trite saying that the genuine development of any country—or, as in this case, any part thereof—depends on the efficacy of its educational system. This admission is vociferously made in all corners of the world—from the most backward countries in Africa and Asia to the most sophisticated ones in Europe and America. The only difference would appear to be that whereas those countries which we would have considered very highly developed already sincerely mean what they proclaim, the underdeveloped ones hardly ever sufficiently match their words with deeds. I have every reason to believe, however, that this summit has been convened to do real business, to resolve to take bold actions, and to be prepared to think outside the box.

The educational responsibilities of the government in Nigeria have increased over the years, not only in terms of the potential beneficiaries of the system, but also in terms of tiers of the educational system to be provided for. The country has moved from pre-occupations with Universal Primary Education with a six-year span, to concerns with Universal Basic Education with a nine-year span; and States have also taken on the provision of university

* Keynote Address at Rivers State Education Summit, 2013

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education. But already, countries in the developed world are setting their sights on universal tertiary education which will be a mix of universities and technical colleges.

The usual alibi of the poor countries is that they cannot afford the costs of quality education, or even of universal primary education of any description. Yet this cannot be true. In this same country sixty years ago, Obafemi Awolowo decided to offer free primary education to the children of Western Region, and instead of complaining about costs, simply devoted 40% of the Region's budget to education. When he needed more money, he levied an education tax, which the citizens willingly paid because they could see the benefits unfolding before their very eyes. Ghana also currently spends a similar percentage of its budget on education; and now Nigerians concede that that country has better educated citizens, while Nigerian parents are sending their children over there in droves for secondary and tertiary education. Perhaps what is preventing parents from sending their children over to Ghana for primary education is the merciful proliferation of high quality private primary schools at home. But as we know, these operate outside of the State system. One is reminded of the famous quip which says: if you think education is too expensive, try ignorance. I believe to a large extent we have indeed tried it in this country in recent years, with resultant huge costs in resources and talent, and seen how it makes us lag farther and farther behind the developed countries; and that, in an age which places a high premium on knowledge.

What I thought I might do, in the time available to me at this meeting, is to draw attention to just a handful of key features of the existing educational system which could do with some re-thinking.

It would be useful, in looking first at primary education, to remind ourselves of the crucial importance of this tier. It is natural to think of primary education as the foundation of the whole education system whose inefficiency resonates throughout the remaining tiers of the system. Thus the woeful performances in the school certificate examinations have to be traced largely to the poor foundation of the elementary tier. Similarly, the much-lamented unsatisfactory quality of many university graduates in

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this country has to be traced to the same source. However, one other important role of primary education in terms of access and quality which has often been overlooked in this country is in ensuring quality leaders for a country. We may recall that this was very clearly brought out in nineteenth century Britain by the famous debates in the British Parliament leading to the promulgation of the Elementary Education Act of 1870. This Act had, in turn, been triggered by the Reform Act of 1867, in which Robert Lowe, later first Viscount of Sherbrooke, played a leading role. This was when Lowe uttered those immortal words: "We must educate our masters". The Reform Act of 1867 had added another one million names to the electoral voters' list, and Lowe was scared by the prospect of the country's leaders being voted into office by an illiterate and uneducated electorate. Perhaps we could do worse than quote Lowe at some length:

> There is no effort we should not make, there is no sacrifice either of money, or prejudice, or feeling we should not submit to – rather than allow a generation to grow up in ignorance, in whose hands are reposed the destinies of all of us, the destinies of the nation. It is a thing which must be done, and done immediately. We cannot suffer any large number of our citizens, now that they have obtained the right of influencing the destinies of the country, to remain uneducated…now, it is a question of self-preservation, it is a question of existence, even of the existence of our Constitution, and on those who shall obstruct or prevent such a measure passing, will rest a responsibility the heaviest that mortal man can possibly be under. (Marcham 1973)

These are strong words, and we would do well to note the concluding imprecation. They were spoken nearly one and a half centuries ago in a different clime from ours, but the lesson for us today in this country is by no means less poignant. The question now is, What can be done to salvage the situation? The simple answer is: An overhauling of the primary system to make it fully

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play its role. In the time at my disposal, I can hardly do more than just offer a list: proper schools have to be built with functioning toilets and adequate playing grounds; proper teachers have to be provided in place of the present demoralized work force, such teachers having to be provided with continual re-training and paid a decent wage; proper supervision through a corps of inspectors should be maintained. In sum, the children should be given a decent start in life so that they can grow up into decent citizens.

Of the three tiers of an education system, the secondary perhaps occupies a unique position. It is unique in the sense that it is profoundly influenced by the quality of the primary tier and, in turn, profoundly influences the quality of the tertiary tier. In addition, in view of the current policy of nine years free education embodied in the policy of universal basic education, the secondary tier also determines the quality of the Nigerian electorate—the masters of the political leaders. This makes it important to consider carefully the surrender value of the universal basic education. I believe it would be agreed that there is still a lot of work to do in this respect.

As a result of this new policy, it has been thought wise to restructure the secondary tier altogether, breaking it into junior secondary and senior secondary. It is hard at the moment to see where the junior secondary education leads its beneficiaries in spite of the national policy on education. Ideally, they should be able to go into technical colleges and trade centres, but I think the current situation would warrant a major study by the experts in the field to determine the efficacy of the system. Meanwhile, school certificate results in recent years present a gloomy picture, and the influence of this on the tertiary tier, particularly the university system, is also becoming alarming.

Another definitive study to be made by the experts, surely, is the purported superiority of the 6:3:3:4 system of secondary education over the sixth form system. It has recently been revealed that one of our major universities has 80% of its students graduating with third class honours. While that university deserves to be praised for not lowering its standards in order to achieve a more favourable profile, this situation, which is likely to be

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repeated in some other universities, raises a cause for alarm. It would appear, at least impressionistically, that the entrants into universities were much better prepared when they came from sixth forms or with 'A' levels. The reason for this is too evident to be belaboured here: entrants were more mature in age (which is no mean consideration) and had had a foretaste of university education before arriving at the universities.

I have heard three main arguments from very distinguished educationists against going back to the previous system. One is that it is untidy for the country to appear to be going backwards and forwards. But I would have thought that if there were compelling reasons for a change, we should not allow loss of face to prevent us from making it. The second argument is that the sixth form is elitist. But if we are opposed to elitism in education, I think we should abolish, altogether, universities, whose business is to admit and train elites of the intellect. Even as things stand now, the products of the junior secondary cannot be compared to those of the senior secondary, indicating that a measure of elitism is at work even there. But the most telling comment of the experts is that the 6:3:3:4 system is admirable in design but has not been implemented faithfully. If after so many years a faithful implementation is not yet in sight, it is surely time to consider alternatives.

Another current practice which could bear careful examination relates to the training of teachers for the secondary tier. Before the establishment of the B.Ed degree in Nigerian universities, the prevalent way of preparing graduate teachers for secondary schools was to have graduates in the different teaching subjects do a postgraduate diploma or certificate in education. The B.Ed degree came essentially as a fix-it method of producing graduate teachers in larger numbers. Over the years, however, there has come a realization that many of such B.Ed graduates do not have sufficient grounding in the subjects that they teach. Meanwhile, to complicate matters, a number of sub-specializations have developed within the B.Ed degree itself, the most popular of which seems to be educational management, which is hardly a teaching subject.

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If the standards in the secondary schools have to be raised, it is important to have teachers who are graduates in their teaching subjects first, before having them trained as teachers, as was the case in the past. This becomes even more imperative if the sixth form is to be re-introduced into the second tier. I have also discussed (Banjo 2012b) other changes that can be made to further raise the standard of basic education.

Two measures that can ensure an effective work force at both primary and secondary tiers are effective supervision and constant re-training of teachers. There was a time in this country when the ministries of education maintained a vigorous inspectorate division. The inspectors were so strict that they were a terror in the schools. The effect was that teachers were kept on their toes because they could never predict when the bogey-man would turn up. Headmasters similarly kept a strict eye on their teachers. It would appear that this era is now completely gone, and instead, one all too often hears of scandalous dereliction of duty, particularly in the primary schools, on the part of so-called teachers, who apparently have hardly any interest in teaching and guiding their pupils but are on a constant watch-out for a better-paid job elsewhere.

Indeed, the remuneration of teachers needs urgent review, because pay inevitably determines status. Right up to the middle of last century, primary school teachers, even in the most remote villages in this country, were regarded as part of the elite, sometimes even rated higher than the village head. For example, Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel,* pitches the baale, no less, against the village teacher for the favours of the local beauty. But sadly the inevitable surge in the number of schools has resulted in loss of status for the teachers who, lacking motivation, have become demoralized. Therefore, part of the advocated increase in allocation to education in the government's budget should be used to provide for a decent wage for teachers. A truly professional corps of teachers can then be raised again in the country.

The problems of the tertiary tier are well-documented. They start with a lack of diversification, resulting in concentration on the universities. Consequently, polytechnics and colleges of education

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are still regarded largely as stepping stones to the university. The remedy is to create attractive career prospects for all products of the tertiary tier, and this should not be beyond the ingenuity of the salaries and wages commission.

Then there is the well-known problem of funding as well as issues of autonomy. It has to be admitted that the government funding of universities has improved substantially in recent years, but there is still more work to be done, and I have recommended (Banjo 2012a) a systemic change in the way that universities are funded. As regards autonomy, the federal government, which gives the cue in these matters, has also developed a more liberal attitude to the councils of universities and even now allows them to choose their vice-chancellors; but vice-chancellors still have to go to Abuja to perfect the award of contracts because there is a lingering feeling that universities are part of the civil service.

But autonomy can also apply to the relationships among the universities themselves. The private universities do not have a problem in this respect, but the federal universities tend to be carbon copies of one another, forced to sing from the same hymn-sheet and even operating more or less an identical university law. Surely, each council should be encouraged to be innovative and exploit its natural advantage.

Outside the formal system, we must draw attention to adult education. One of the distinctive features of University College Ibadan, when it was established in 1948, was the institution of a virile department of adult education. The presence of the department was felt in rural areas throughout the country, and perhaps most notable of its activities was its engagement with tobacco farmers, who were made literate in Yoruba and thereafter supplied with literature in Yoruba on tobacco cultivation. Certainly, from being able to read the literature relevant to their occupation they went on to read other writings in Yoruba. Classes were also held throughout the country for literate people desirous of improving themselves, even with a view to gaining admission to the University College itself.

Now that we have a network of universities throughout the country, the literacy rate in the country can be improved if the

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universities took an interest in extending their activities to the rural areas. What we have today are distance learning centres which, though highly desirable, are not the same thing, as these actually prepare students for university degrees. It is also useful to recall that ministries of education in the past used to have very active adult education divisions.

Every investment in education yields very rich dividends, and in the current knowledge-based global culture, any people left behind will be reduced to the status of hewers of stone and drawers of water in the global village. Nigeria, like other underdeveloped countries, has a long way to catch up, and that is why our interest in educational development needs to be single-minded, producing at one end researchers of the first order, and at the other, worthy masters of their political leaders.

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3 THE FUTURE OF NIGERIAN EDUCATION[+]

Introduction

I must, to begin with, express my warm thanks to the Board of Tanus Communications Limited, and especially to its Executive Chairman, Dr. Yemi Ogunbiyi, for the honour of being asked to participate in the celebration of the twentieth year of the organization by giving a Keynote Address. Among the reasons for readily accepting the invitation is the fact that I have known Yemi Ogunbiyi for a very long time and can vouch for the inimitable standards of his undertakings. And of course, it would have been difficult for me to resist an opportunity of participating in discussions about the baffling topic of Nigerian education.

Let me further congratulate Tanus Communications for its decision to go into the herculean task of the remediation of the national education system through the supply of quality textbooks into the system. We can say that the organization started off in the field of mass enlightenment, which is education in a broad sense, but has now also decided to intervene where it matters most—in the formal education system. It is already making a spectacular impact in this area and will, by all indications, play its full part in reforming the system.

Education is a topic much discussed throughout the world today, and it may seem strange to some Nigerians that the President of the United States of America harps on it, while Tony Blair of Britain, when as Prime Minister he was asked what his priorities were, said: "Education, education and education". For a country that seems aeons away from Nigeria in educational development, this response should give us much food for thought. Indeed, education has been important from the time of ancient Greeks, who placed much value on the full development of the

[+] Keynote Address at the 20th Anniversary of Tanus Communications Limited, Lagos,

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individual. This emphasis—indeed, concentration—on personal development persisted till the founding of the first European university in Bologna in the eleventh century and lasted till the industrial revolution in Europe in the late 18th century when, increasingly, education was regarded as an agent, not only of personal, but also of national development.

We recall that education on the European model found its way to Nigeria in the middle of the nineteenth century in a rather informal way, prompted by the desire of the missionaries to promote evangelization. For this purpose, it was necessary to produce a small corps of Nigerian interpreters and translators. When at the close of the century the country was formally colonized, the colonial government simply built on the foundation already laid by the missionaries. A small number of government primary—and later, secondary—schools were established by the government, but the great majority of schools were run by voluntary agencies, with grants in aid from the government. Not surprisingly, the colonial government specially rewarded the teaching of English in the primary schools in anticipation, presumably, of the day when the language was to become Nigeria's official language, and consequently, second language.

It would be rewarding to take a brief look at one or two key features of the colonial education policy. The emphasis on the English language has already been mentioned. It would appear, for reasons that we need not go into here, that the government made a spectacular success of this policy, for it is common to hear people observe nowadays (impressionistically of course) that the products of the primary system of the early twentieth century in this country spoke and wrote better English than their offspring of today. Since all learning beyond the primary stage now takes place in English, the knock-on effect of general incompetence in the language is reflected in every other department of learning. We would do well to bear this in mind in considering the future of education in our country.

The other aspect of the colonial policy that we may look at is still related to language. The practice was for teaching in the first three years of primary school to be conducted in the mother

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tongue. As it turns out, this practice had at once a practical as well as a philosophical grounding. It is obviously expecting too much to require pupils, many of whom had never encountered the language, to start using the language as the medium of instruction from their first day in school. Teaching in the mother tongue in the first three years of schooling facilitated the learning of all the subjects on the curriculum. At the same time—and this is the philosophical part of it—consolidating the pupils' knowledge of the mother tongue in the first three years while English was being taught as a subject, prepared the foundation for the use of the English language as the medium of instruction in the remaining years. There is also a useful lesson here as we consider the future of education in the country.

By 1960, the colonial education code had given way to home-grown policies. If the country was to be able to cope with the demands of independence, very special attention had to be paid to education. At this point, Nigeria joined the league of countries all over the world which saw education as a means of achieving personal and national development, and the rulers' chief concern was, perhaps understandably, with providing access to as many Nigerian children as possible. Unfortunately, it is probably a truism that the more access is emphasized, the more marginal quality becomes.

It is perhaps apposite at this point in this lecture to adopt a conveyor-belt model of the education system of this country; a model, incidentally, which is applicable universally. It is a model which, in an ICT age, lends itself to easy comprehension. We look at the input, the output, the process and key gateways. The reforms necessary will, I hope, in the process become clear.

Primary Education

The starting point, of course, is the primary school, though some particularly fortunate children may begin their schooling at a crèche or infants school before entering the mainstream of primary school. Here, there is no gate-keeper, for the ideal is to offer every child a minimum of primary education. Rather, the problem is one of access. Even today, it is doubtful if the governments of the

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federation are able to offer admission to every child of primary school age. The matter is thus left to blind chance, with children in the cities and towns standing a much better chance than those in the rural areas. It goes without saying that the input will be much improved if every single Nigerian child is enabled to receive primary education. Apart from anything else, we cannot tell at this stage which of them might turn out to be a genius.

It is a curious fact that while there is great concern about the output of the entire system, which is from the tertiary institutions, and particularly the universities, very little worry has been expressed about the input beyond voting vast amounts of money which are not yielding adequate results; and this becomes even more alarming when we come to discuss the dimension of process. Access to university education has been vastly improved in the last twenty years or so, and while there is room for much further expansion, the real worry today is with the quality of the products of universities and other tertiary institutions. It is worth bearing in mind that the major problem at the input stage is that of access, while that at the output stage is that of quality. There is obviously a connection between the two, which holds the key to a more secure future for education in the country.

There is no country in the world known to offer tertiary education to all of its citizens, although there are countries which appear to have embarked on the realization of this ideal situation, for the better educated the work force of a country, the better the chances of human and national development. On the other hand, very many countries have achieved primary education for all their children, and this is the reason why they may, in fact, achieve the seemingly impossible universal tertiary education.

It is now time to consider the process and key gate-ways in the system. The output, as already indicated, is currently causing a great deal of dissatisfaction. One argument could be that if the net is spread wider at the input stage, output may be improved. Many more children, particularly from the rural areas, may find their way into the system, and some of them may be particularly gifted. It should be noted, however, that the argument for universal primary or basic education is an *a priori* one, and not one based simply on

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the need to improve the output. But at the same time, we cannot ignore the salutary effect that universal primary or basic education can have on the output of the system.

The argument is also sometimes made that in the colonial days, in spite of highly restricted admission to the primary school, the output at the end of that tier was superior to what obtains today. Primary education then lasted six years, and at least two reasons can be adduced for the success that was recorded. The first is that the schools, whether government-established or founded by voluntary agencies, were supported by a network of Grade II teacher-training colleges, which ensured that the teachers were well-trained and indeed enjoyed a much higher status in society than their modern equivalents. Such high premium was placed on training by the proprietors at the time.

Grade II teacher-training colleges have now been phased out in most parts of the country, and one would have expected that the products of the colleges of education who are now presumably expected to take over teaching at the primary or basic level would make an even greater success of their profession at this level. But this is hardly the case. There is, indeed, little clarity on this matter. It is not evident whether the products of the colleges of education are destined for the secondary school or the primary school. Following the recent expansion of the university system, one would have thought that teaching at the secondary level would now be reserved exclusively for graduates, many of whom are reportedly roaming the streets without jobs. Moreover, it does seem that fresh graduates doing their youth service are being used as the backbone of the teaching force in the secondary school. Apart from the fact that most of these graduates have no teaching experience, many of them are made to teach subjects only marginally, if at all, related to the content of their degrees. Many of them, in fact, complain of great frustration during their service year. The scheme obviously needs a lot of re-thinking. This labour force can be more gainfully deployed, and should not be used as an excuse for not training teachers for the primary and secondary levels carefully. This is obviously an important lesson to learn for the future development of education in the country.

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The other hallmark of colonial education policy taken over after independence and further reinforced in a number of states in the country was a virile inspectorate division in each ministry of education. Not only were teachers well-trained but they were kept on their toes by dreaded inspectors. Teachers' notes of lessons were scrutinized and the quality of teaching was assessed by eagle-eyed officers who had, sometimes surreptitiously, embedded themselves in the classroom. Obviously, in such circumstances, the teachers almost surpassed themselves. Here is another crucial lesson for the future of education in our country.

The co-existence of lack of proper training and absence of supervision is a recipe for the parlous situation in which the system finds itself today.

The result is that teaching has acquired a poor image and very few people now choose to be teachers. So, to the scenario already painted must be added poor motivation on the part of the majority of the work force, giving a sad edge to the famous quip that those who can, do; those who can't, teach.

Of course, there is no country in the world which makes millionaires of its teachers; but at the same time, no serious country makes paupers of them; and as for image, it is on record that the Headmaster of the famous Manchester Grammar school in Britain rose to the status of peerage in that country. I am not aware that any teacher at the primary or secondary level in this country has ever won national honours.

The problem with the teaching profession at the primary level, as is well known, is that every country requires a very large work force of teachers, and so, remunerating them adequately becomes a problem. Still, the successful countries of the world do manage to attract people to the teaching profession by making them comfortable financially and securing a good image for them. Those are the countries where large numbers of people do choose to be teachers, and their countries are so much the better for it. But they are also countries which place a high premium on training and re-training—in fact, continuous training.

This raises, for us, the question of the financing of education. It is up to every country to decide, in view of the circumstances in which it finds itself, what priority to place on education, and what

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proportion of the national budget to devote to it. UNESCO and other agencies may advise, as they have reportedly done, though there are denials, but copying other countries' percentages will perform no magic. The old Western Region under Chief Obafemi Awolowo spent as much as 40% of its budget on education, indicating the seriousness with which that government embarked on producing an enlightened citizenry. Similar high percentages have been recorded in other parts of the world, including our neighbour, Ghana.

Some government officials in this country, perhaps genuinely unaware of the critical importance of education, or perhaps harbouring other motives, argue that medicine and agriculture, for example, deserve as much, if not better, attention from the government as education. Nobody denies the importance of having healthy and well-fed citizens, but the point to consider is whether an educated populace is not likely to take the best advantage of medical facilities and stimulate agriculture so that it can maintain that desirable state of health. The activities in the medical and agricultural sectors are likely to be rendered more difficult by ignorant citizens. Education, as every country in the world realizes, is the prime mover of development, from which all other sectors are likely to benefit.

If this is realized, it should not be impossible to devote an appropriate proportion of the country's budget to education, particularly as the sector is now in a state of crisis, without neglecting other sectors but admitting that the process of education itself is facilitated when the learners are healthy and well-fed. Statecraft consists precisely in being able to balance all the legitimate and competing demands on a country's resources.

Meanwhile, it has to be said that what the primary system lacked in terms of access in those days, it gained in terms of the quality of education delivered. Very many products of the primary school at that time went on to make successful careers for themselves in the public and private sectors of the economy. Indeed, so high was the surrender value of primary education then that one of the most outstanding heads of the civil service in Western Region did not have any secondary education.

Secondary Education

The secondary tier equally concentrated on quality. Here, in the past, there was an important gateway in the form of entrance examinations, which ensured that only the cream of the products of the primary schools got admitted to the secondary schools; and it is perhaps necessary to add, in view of our present predicament, that those entrance examinations were absolutely transparent.

To the extent that entry to primary schools was highly restricted, access to the secondary tier also represented only a tiny percentage of children of secondary school age. Most of the secondary schools were run by voluntary agencies which had education secretaries for the efficient administration of their schools; but the few government secondary schools, usually named Government Colleges, were undoubtedly among the best in the country. With time, this tier of the system became greatly expanded, with individuals, as opposed to corporate bodies, establishing schools of varying quality. It is remarkable that hardly any secondary school founded by a single individual has ever risen to the standards of the Government Colleges or the leading missionary schools.

With the reform in the Federal Ministry of Education in the 1980's came the now prevailing 6:3:3:4 segmentation of the entire system. The government had decided to give every Nigerian child nine years of basic education, which was a laudable idea. The implementation has, however, been anything but impressive. First was the structural problem. What really was the rationale for breaking the former six-year secondary course into two halves, namely, Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary? And secondly, where did the first half belong structurally—to the preceding six years or the following three? After an initial period of uncertainty, the practice now appears to be to insist that the Junior Secondary, as the name implies, belongs to the secondary tier. This in effect means that another tier has been added to the system, with separate Heads for the Junior and Senior sections. But are the two halves viable?

Before attempting to answer this question, let us take a brief look at an experiment tried in the old Western Region. The government of the Region established at Aiyetoro, in Egbado

Division of the Region, a Comprehensive School. The initiative had the support of some American universities who did all they could to give the school a good start. The curriculum was diversified, bringing in technical and secretarial studies. The School almost immediately became one of the leading secondary schools in the Region, though largely because of the excellent results it recorded in the School Certificate examinations. Very little has been heard of the fate of those students who followed the technical and secretarial options. That was an attempt, a failed attempt we must admit, to cater for varied aptitudes within the six-year structure.

The comprehensive school experiment may have been a casualty of ideological disagreements, as had happened in Britain. There, the Labour government of the nineteen fifties favoured this system, obviously intending to use it to fight class discriminations. The Tories, on the other hand, preferred exclusive schools which favoured the well-to-do. In Nigeria, where there is little clash of ideology, every parent, whatever their social class, wanted their wards to be set on the course for university admission, whatever their aptitudes might have indicated. Not surprisingly, therefore, Comprehensive School, Aiyetoro has, over the years, become just another typical secondary school, and indeed, it has been reported that the school has now been moved out of its impressive setting to make way for another kind of institution.

The secondary tier began by being a six-year course leading to the School Certificate examination conducted by the Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, in England. Those who passed this examination with distinction were granted exemption from London matriculation, meaning they could enter the University of London without further ado. The rest of the products had to look for jobs, usually in the civil service, but after 1948, they were able to compete for the few places available at University College Ibadan, which had been established in that year.

Later, many schools started the Sixth Form course, necessitating the school certificate examination to be taken in the fifth year. But the Sixth Form, in spite of the singular form, really took two years - Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth. In schools which had them, the secondary tier had thus been elongated to seven years.

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Let us now return to the two questions earlier posed. The philosophical underpinning of the 6:3:3:4 policy cannot be all that different from that which gave birth to Comprehensive School, Aiyetoro, namely, that education should cater for the varied aptitudes of children at the secondary level. While the Aiyetoro model attempted to do this in one institution under one Head—and therefore presumably more economically—the prevailing model breaks the secondary tier into two separate institutions.

In both cases, the success of the model depends on careful screening and streaming of the pupils. At Aiyetoro, the streaming was done from the very beginning and an appropriate course of studies was prescribed for each pupil. In current practice, however, it does seem as if the screening, if there is any at all, does not take place till the end of the junior secondary. No attempt is made at streaming at any stage. The junior secondary syllabus is common to all entrants into secondary schools. And the examination at the end of JSS3 determines who goes on to the senior secondary, and who drops out. In practical terms, however, the assumption on the part of every pupil who enters secondary school is that he or she will stay the course till the school certificate examination at the end of senior secondary.

Naturally, a gateway has had to be erected at the end of junior secondary, but the reliability of this gateway is constantly called to question. It is likely, at any rate, that children entering secondary schools from private primary schools will have much less difficulty negotiating the gate than those from the dilapidated and badly-run public primary schools.

But an important question is, just what kind of jobs have the products of junior secondary been prepared for? None, by the look of it. To all intents and purposes, the breaking of the six-year secondary school into two halves is a meaningless one occasioning additional costs without compensating benefits. Some pupils are creamed off to the senior secondary, and the rest simply go into unskilled labour, possibly losing the modest literacy they have acquired.

If the government is committed to giving nine years of basic education to every Nigerian child, it is its responsibility to ensure that those nine years, for those not considered suitable for senior

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secondary, do lead to the acquisition of some elementary skills which make the beneficiaries useful to the economy. Avenues may even be created for them to further develop those skills. This is how the 6:3:3:4 model is operated in Japan, for instance; and we are all today witnesses to the spectacular development that has been achieved in that country. This suggests that the problem is not with the model but with the inability to operate it properly.

The model which it replaced in fact worked much better and deserves consideration here. Before the 6:3:3:4 model was inaugurated, the six-year secondary model had in fact been modified for some thirty years, with encouraging results. The leading secondary schools in the country had introduced the Sixth Form which creamed off the best students in the school certificate examination into a two-year pre-university course. The problem that the innovation immediately raised was the old tension between quality and access. Only few schools offered the Sixth Form. To remedy the situation, the three branches of the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology admitted large numbers of students for the 'A' Levels of London University while many other candidates found private means of acquiring the 'A' level in three subjects in order to gain admission to Ibadan or universities abroad.

This system had many things to recommend it. First of all, the break between the Fifth and the Sixth Forms is a meaningful one. Many successful candidates in the School Certificate examination who failed to go on to a Sixth Form were not only able to secure respectable appointments in the public and private sectors, but actually, through other means, were able to acquire 'A' levels. Soon, the universities themselves took steps to offer places to many of such students by instituting the 'preliminary year', which collapsed the two-year Sixth Form into one year at the university. Thus there were now two routes to the university: the direct entry with 'A' levels, and the concessional entry with 'O' levels, the latter being one year longer than the direct entry.

Secondly, the Sixth Form is a foretaste of university. The students were treated as adults, with much interaction between them and their teachers; and they had more freedom to plan their lives and study more independently than in the previous five years.

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Finally, since most admissions to the universities were through direct entry, it ensured that most students arrived at the university more mature than through the current 6:3:3:4 system. For anyone who has taught at a university in recent years, this is by no means a trivial point.

What the future calls for is the expansion of the Sixth Form model, in such a way that every secondary school—or at least the majority of secondary schools—has a Sixth Form. But there is an important caveat, namely, that it has to be ensured that the secondary schools are properly staffed, which is not the case with the majority of schools today. With more than a hundred and twenty universities in the country today, the production of graduate teachers for the secondary schools should not be much of a problem. The process of training is, however, another matter.

The method of training teachers for the secondary schools was, until the 1960's, by having the individuals take an honours degree in the subject that they intended to teach, and top this up with a postgraduate Diploma in Education or a Graduate Certificate in Education. This method has, however, been abandoned in favour of the B.Ed degree, which lasts the same period as an honours degree. The attraction, presumably, is that one year is saved in the training of graduate teachers in this way. There is a general feeling, however, that the former method is superior to the current one in getting the envisaged job done. In the first place, the B.Ed degree is a degree in education, not in the sciences or the humanities. The way the degree is structured, the students spend less than half of their time in the Faculties where their teaching subjects are based, and are therefore obviously less grounded in those subjects than their colleagues who devote their whole time to them. There is no attempt here to denigrate the B.Ed degree; and it has even been argued that B.Ed holders are very useful in administrative positions in commercial establishments because of their exposure to philosophy, psychology and statistics. The intention of the originators of the degree, however, was to supply manpower to secondary schools.

If the earlier proposal for making every secondary school (or at least most of them) run the Sixth Form is accepted, obviously holders of the B.Ed degree may be handicapped in teaching the

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Sixth Form. The quality of teaching at the secondary level can, therefore, only be enhanced by having those who are, first of all, honours graduates in the subjects that they wish to teach. A year's postgraduate course can equip them with the skills of pedagogy that they need. The universities' Faculties of education can thus revert to being essentially postgraduate centres.

If we must have improved quality in the secondary schools and beyond, serious consideration should be given to the desirability of reverting to the old system of having honours graduate teachers with a postgraduate diploma in education run the secondary schools.

It is generally realized that the secondary tier of the educational system is pivotal. On the one hand, it sends many of the products to the world of work, and on the other, it prepares those who are going to be trained in the tertiary institutions to contribute to the nation's skilled manpower. Not surprisingly, therefore, the whole nation takes a keen interest in the quality of the products of this level and in the gateway that leads to the tertiary institutions.

The current weaknesses in the delivery of education at the primary and secondary levels come to a frightening climax at the end of the secondary. The statistics are by now well known. Deterioration has continued in the past twelve years, so that in 2012, only 20% of those who took the school certificate examination were qualified to proceed to a tertiary institution. At a time when the university sector is expanding, this is most unfortunate.

But that is not all. The gateway to the universities is manned by the operators of the Joint Admissions Matriculation Board (JAMB). The story here is that only a fraction of those with the requisite entry qualifications eventually attain the cut-off point of 200 out of a total of 400 marks. This year, the nation was shocked at the news that only three candidates scored more than 300. These poor results emanate from a combination of a number of factors—lack of any real education at the primary level, except in some privately-owned schools, resulting from untrained and even poorly educated teachers; lack of supervision by a competent corps of inspectors; poor manning of the gateway between junior and senior secondary schools at that level; widespread cheating in the school certificate examinations and even in the examinations conducted

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by JAMB itself. Regarding that last point, it is even reported that some parents lead their children in perpetuating various forms of corruption of the system. Obviously, the values of the larger society are making the business of education an uphill task.

In view of this, some reforms are urgently called for at these two levels. The deficiencies just enumerated have to be eliminated. The good news is that we do not need to send delegations to the far ends of the world to find out how other countries are making a success of their education system. We simply need to study our own history. At the primary level, while enlarging access, the quality assurance mechanisms of the past should be restored, i.e. proper training colleges for the teachers, and very careful supervision through dedicated inspectors. Equally important is the need to design standard school buildings with proper furniture and adequate toilets. All primary schools should be compelled to comply with the specifications. The total environment in which learning takes place at this level is crucial. It should not even be out of the question to suggest that school lunches should also be provided. Many children will benefit from having one simple balanced meal a day at school.

At the secondary level, the suggestion already made is that teachers with honours degrees and postgraduate diplomas in education, if adopted, will raise standards. Effective supervision is also required at this level, with incentives for outstanding performance. Also, reversion to a system of five years followed by a Sixth Form should be the norm for most schools, and this is bound to raise the standards of entrants into the universities. If the government desires to offer a minimum of nine years of presumably free and compulsory education to every Nigerian child, a three-year post-primary system should be designed for this. There, simple skills can be taught, and access to further education from there should not be foreclosed.

University Education

Of the three tiers of education, the university has received the most attention in the country in recent years. It seems to be the level that everybody wishes to see performing its roles of teaching, research and public service adequately. It is always in the news. The reason

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for this attention stems partly from the perceived deterioration in the quality of graduates produced in recent years, and the apparent inability of the system to maintain a predictable calendar, thus causing agony to the students and their parents. There is, of course, also the role of the unions in bringing the deficiencies of the system to public attention, and in fighting for better conditions of service from their proprietors.

The gateway to the universities at present is the matriculation examination conducted by JAMB. If admission is confined to candidates with 'A' levels, this examination, with all its heartbreak, will no longer be necessary. As was done in the past, 'A' level results will be weighted by each university and admission offered to the best candidates. An aspect of bureaucracy will have been removed from the administration of tertiary education, and greater transparency can be ensured. Also, the four-year degree course will be reduced to three years, making for more economical use of staff. JAMB, perhaps under a different name, can then concentrate on what is perhaps the most important function it was set up to perform, namely, facilitate the elimination of multiple admissions which could create a bottleneck in the admissions process.

The problems of the universities themselves are very well known. These are funding, stability of the university calendar and university autonomy. I have had the opportunity in recent years (University of Uyo, 1997; Lead City University, 2012) to deal at some length with each of these problems. Other problems of which the public is aware, like union activities; depletion of first rate academics among the teaching staff; and the quality of education delivered by the universities, can in fact be explained under those three headings.

Although federal universities are today enjoying much greater funding than twenty years ago, the problems of funding still persist. In the federal universities, the problem is self-inflicted as a result of their inability to charge tuition fees. This problem is becoming more and more inequitable in a country where students in the private universities pay perhaps as much as a million naira as composite fees. The number of these private universities is rising

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steadily and now stands at 37 out of a total of 123 universities in the country. Even with the questionable policy of locating a federal university in every state, it is not unreasonable to forecast that soon, there will be more private universities in the country than public ones.

This is already the case in many African states. To make for equity and uniformity across the board I have suggested that all universities should operate in zones, so that the ecological and manpower problems of the zones can simultaneously be addressed with vigour. The universities in each zone will receive funding, in addition to moderate fees by the beneficiaries, from the federal, state and local governments in proportions which do not distort the distinctions between public and private universities. Even with support from the private sector, which is unpredictable, this method of funding offers the best assurance of funding for the universities and will eliminate duplication of efforts. It is important not to forget that adequate funding will result not only in better facilities, but also the return of a high concentration of quality to the teaching staff and, consequently, a better quality of graduates.

The problem of an unpredictable university calendar is caused by a deep distrust between the publicly-owned universities and their proprietors, consequent on loss of a reasonable degree of autonomy. The result is that Nigerian universities are out of step with the universities in other parts of the world. There, the universities open for a new session in October and close in May/June. During the long vacation (which hardly any university in Nigeria has had for a long time) lecturers go on local and international conferences and are kept up to date in their various disciplines.

In Nigeria, the session may start at each university at any time in the year and end at any time, and the vacation period between sessions can be as short as two weeks. Also as a result of this anomaly, it has become virtually impossible to attract foreign staff and students to Nigerian universities, with the result that the Nigerian system has become almost completely insular. It is no surprise, therefore, that we rank so low in the ranking of the world's universities. The system has to get back in step with the

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rest of the world, and away from rushing to complete sessions and hurriedly beginning new ones.

Next to the problem of funding, that of university autonomy is the most serious for Nigerian universities. All had been well with the University of Ibadan and the other first generation universities until the military took over the government of the country in 1966 and transferred powers in the universities from the councils to the government. Further inroads on university autonomy were made with the establishment of JAMB and the supervisory role of the NUC in form of a set of minimal standards for the universities.

Some measure of autonomy has now been restored to the federal universities in the form of powers to appoint vice-chancellors. But the ministry of education still looms very large in the lives of Nigerian universities which are still treated essentially as government parastatals. The NUC, which is an important body, appears not to be allowed to perform its proper role of serving as a buffer between the universities and the government.

What we need are credible councils in the universities. Their structure has to be carefully designed so that it is not counter-productive; and university councils should not be havens for politicians. The right balance between internal and external members needs to be struck.

The functions of the senate of a university are to admit students; to design appropriate courses for them in conformity with the standards of the world of learning; to examine them at every step; and to award diplomas and certificates to those deserving of the recognition. All these are traditionally the functions of a university senate the world over. It is anomalous for a body external to the universities to be empowered by law to admit students to the universities; and it is equally anomalous for standards to be prescribed from outside the university senates. With regard to the latter, a sure way of ensuring standards acceptable throughout the world is the system of external examiners, which enabled the University of Ibadan and the other first generation universities to invite well known scholars from all over the world to their universities, not only to participate in the determination of final year results but also to provide fruitful

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interaction between these scholars and their Nigerian counterparts. This may well render superfluous the four-yearly cycle of accreditation inspired from outside the university system though using university staff. Let us hope that the incursions into the running of universities, motivated as it originally was by the desire of the proprietors to ensure orderly growth of the system in the early years, will now gradually disappear, and older universities are made to mentor new ones.

Conclusion

If we turn the title of this address into a question and ask: What is the future of Nigerian education? The honest answer would be: bleak indeed, unless reforms are embarked on courageously and energetically. Merely tinkering with the system as it is will, I fear, get us nowhere. I have made the proposals above—have in fact been making them for fifteen years—not because they are necessarily the best possible, but in order to stimulate thought and action to do what is needful, even if not palatable to everyone.

In spite of the current shortcomings, let us freely admit that the system has turned out some remarkable graduates who can hold their own anywhere in the world. The down side is that there is a lot of wastage; many more remarkable graduates could have been turned out if the system had been well-tuned, right from the primary level to the university level. And as I have tried to show, we need not despatch delegations to the four corners of the world to shop for a system which works better in those countries; all we need to do is look at our own history, at how the early primary and secondary schools, though few, were carefully nurtured, and how the University of Ibadan once came to be one of the ten best universities in the Commonwealth; and learn appropriate lessons.

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4 MEMORIES OF UGHELLI*

I must express how pleasantly surprised I was to have been invited to address you this afternoon. Unlike Chief L.A. Sofenwa, who addressed you last year, I was at Ughelli for less than two year—not long enough, I would have thought, to have managed to make any impression on anybody. That was half a century ago, and I have managed, it is true, occasionally over the years, to run into one or two of my former pupils at Ughelli who surprisingly remembered me; and I was proud to see what success they had made of their lives. I thought I could not have done them much damage.

Actually, before being 'posted'—as the term was—to Ughelli in 1961, I had heard about the college and known what stuff it was made of. As a government college, it was a member of the elite group of schools to be found in Lagos, Ibadan and Umuahia. They were boarding schools modelled on the British Public Schools, noted for training the boys' intellect, character and physical well-being. The schools admitted the cream of the cream from the neighbouring primary schools and beyond, and an atmosphere of high seriousness pervaded the serene environment. I had heard, in particular, of Ughelli's prowess not only in academics but also in sports, particularly under the principalship of the legendary V.B.V. Powell. Here was a school designed to produce leaders in various walks of life, and it has not disappointed.

My first close and fairly prolonged contact with a mariner, however, came in the years 1953 to 1955 when, among fellow pioneers of the 'A' Level class of the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Ibadan, I met Godwin Adokpaye. Apart from myself, there were also two other boys from Igbobi College,

* Present-ed at Government College, Ughelli, 5 September, 2012

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Lagos, in that class, and it was amazing how easily we bonded with Godwin. We had had similar secondary school backgrounds. Godwin went on to read Classics at the University of Ibadan and, not at all surprisingly, became the first Nigerian head of an international oil company in Nigeria.

I, therefore, set out for Ughelli as an 'Education Officer'—another curious term. Why not just 'Master' as at Igbobi and the British Public Schools?—with curiosity mixed with excitement. I had just returned to the country after a five-year sojourn in Britain; I was young, single and, as they say, fancy free: this was the stuff of which adventure was made.

Perhaps I should first tell you how it came about that I was on my way to Ughelli. I had returned from Britain in December of 1960 armed with a Masters degree in English and a postgraduate certificate in Education. I had applied while in Britain for a job with the government of Western Region, as it then was. On reporting for duty at the Secretariat in Ibadan, I was ushered before a senior assistant secretary in the Ministry of Education. The gentleman curtly welcomed me back to Nigeria and announced that I had been 'posted' to the Government Teacher Training College, Abraka. Aghast, I reminded the officer that I had applied for a job in Western Region. He smiled and assured me that Abraka was, indeed, in Western Nigeria. There was a large map of Nigeria behind the officer where he sat, and so I asked him if he would be so good as to show me where my destination was on the map. He shamefully admitted that he himself had no idea, and so he sent for the driver who was to take me to this magical-sounding place. The driver came and firmly pointed to a spot in the Niger Delta. I had obviously returned home with a bang! Off I went then, to Abraka.

There I found I had to teach students some of whom were older than myself; but I was struck by their eagerness to improve themselves. Most of them had their sights set on 'O' and 'A' level qualifications after their teacher-training and approached me privately for help in that regard. Indeed, some of them turned out later to be successful lawyers and prominent members of other professions. Although I did not know it then, I was destined to be

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in Abraka for just about nine months. Meanwhile, I enjoyed my work and, equally importantly, settled down to a daily routine of playing lawn tennis. The principal then, a grass –widower, was absolutely enthusiastic about lawn tennis and was a very good player. Playing with him regularly helped me to develop my own skills rapidly.

Just as I was settling down to this idyllic mode of existence, word came through the principal that my services were needed at nearby Government College, Ughelli. I packed up my few belongings, not forgetting my racquet, feeling confident I was bound to have new tennis partners at my next port of call.

My first residence in Ughelli was a newly-completed bungalow just inside the gate. It was palatial and a sharp contrast to my erstwhile single-room apartment at Abraka. At least, I seemed already to be going up in the world!

So, there I was, a rookie education officer at one of Nigeria's famous colleges. I lost no time in presenting myself to the principal, a man named Nick Carter. He was a stern-looking man, and I was not surprised to learn that he was an ex-military officer. I found him an intriguing personality. His stern demeanour ensured order and discipline among the boys (and presumably staff as well!). But at the same time, he obviously was fond of the boys and, being single, held the school close to his heart. His true character became manifest whenever he was cheering the school team on at inter-school football matches. His voice could then be heard above everybody else's as he vociferously urged them on, usually to victory.

Unfortunately, he was not a lawn tennis freak like my previous principal, so I did not get to know him closely; and at any rate, the time proved in the end too short, for within a few months of my arrival he returned to the UK. Naturally, most of my colleagues on the staff were senior to me; but an early acquaintance I made was with Mr (now Chief) L.A. Sofenwa, who went out of his way to take under his wings a young officer who, in spite of himself, must have been looking a little lost on his first few days in the school. I was grateful for his 'big brother' role which helped me to settle in, and which indeed has continued since then.

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I soon discovered that I had a very interesting neighbour—the man, in fact, occupying the next bungalow to mine. He was an Englishman named Alan Ferguson. He was perhaps a trifle older than me and, like me, single. But alas, he played no tennis! However, he and I spent hours on end discussing English literature and the fortunes of the British Empire which were then on the wane. It was during one of such moments that he told me that he was a descendant of Lord Lugard, no less, to whom Nigeria owes its existence. Come to think of it, he did have an aristocratic air about him. That connection, in fact, was his motivation for coming to spend a few years in Nigeria. He was a voracious reader of English literature and took more than a passing interest in the female population. A few years later, and after we had parted ways, I saw advertised in the press what I thought to be the publication of a new novel titled *Ferguson's Physique.* I immediately thought of him. It was just the kind of novel he would have written. I tried to find out if my hunch was correct but found, to my chagrin, that there was another Ferguson who was an expert at body-building. Still, there could have been a coincidence.

As I said, Nick Carter returned home a few months after my arrival at Ughelli, but who was sent to replace him but my former principal and tennis partner at Abraka, S.F. Edgal, a Classics graduate of University College of Ibadan whose English bore the hallmarks of his classical training. I renewed my tennis career and felt even more at home.

I had the privilege of interacting with the boys in and out of classrooms. As was to be expected, the boys were a bright lot. But they were also vivacious and well-behaved. I do not recall having any problem with any of them, whether academically or in terms of behaviour. Interacting with them in the classroom was, indeed, a pleasure.

Outside the classroom, I had the pleasure of being the cricket coach, and was struck by the high standard of the game at the school. I particularly remember Karieren, who was a natural batsman. I was not surprised to find in later years that he represented Nigeria at international matches.

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I left for Government College, Ibadan in 1962, amidst the rumblings of the impending creation of Midwest State but was only able to stay at the Ibadan post for two years before returning to the UK for postgraduate work. Looking back, I am grateful for the opportunity of having taught at two of the country's top boys' schools.

But less than twenty years later, the reign of philistinism descended on Nigerian schools, as it did on all other erstwhile carefully nurtured national institutions. The systematic vandalization was singlemindedly pursued, at least in Western and Midwest Regions, in an effort, apparently, to bring what had once been elite schools to the level of the nondescript ones, together with which the whole system then nosedived. The Old Boys of the erstwhile elite schools for a while looked on in profound agony, but were finally forced to intervene and to embark on a gigantic rehabilitation of their schools, forcing the squatter schools which had been located within the precincts of some of these schools to be sent packing, and admissions which had sky-rocketed to be brought down gradually. I know how it was because my own school had been a victim of this onslaught.

About twenty years ago, I took the opportunity of travelling from Ibadan to Port Harcourt by road to refresh my memories of Government College, Ughelli. I had thought I would spend about an hour there looking for signs of progress. In the event, I left after only about ten minutes, after my sight had been assaulted by indescribable neglect. I could not see how any meaningful education could have been dispensed in such surroundings. And it is surely no consolation to say that even during those dark years, the elite schools were still the best in the country: that is nothing but a sad commentary on the country. It would appear that in a great rush to expand access, quality had been completely forgotten.

Recent news from Ughelli have, however, renewed my faith in the school; and I would like to congratulate the Old Boys on the sacrifice they have been making to ensure that the school returns to the eminence of the glory days that I witnessed fifty years ago. The damage of the past has been considerable, but I believe that the system opted for in recent years by the government has further worsened matters. I refer to the 6:3:3:4 system, by which

secondary education has been divided into Junior and Senior Secondary Schools. Properly run, there is nothing wrong with the system, but successive governments have failed to make it work, so that now it seems unworkable. At least two things are wrong with the current practice of the system, apart from the pervading lack of interest in teacher-training by the various governments of the federation. First, it provides no sound future for the products of the Junior Secondary Schools, majority of whom, one imagines, have relapsed into illiteracy, while the more fortunate of them have joined the army of scratch-card sellers on the roadsides. In the second place, the performance of candidates in the School Certificate examination has pointed up the inefficiency of the system. This year's results, for example, show that less than 40% of the candidates who took the examination managed to pass at levels required for entry into tertiary institutions. Yet the number of universities in the country continues to grow and, of course inevitably, the quality of graduates continues to give cause for concern.

I have had cause to advocate a return to the old 6:5+2:3 system, which had served us well. In other words, I am advocating the restoration of the Sixth Form to elite schools, whose numbers should be increased. The products of the five-year school certificate course, unlike those of the current Junior Secondary, were eminently employable, and those who failed to get into the Sixth Form were able to take their ' A' Levels either privately or in institutions like the old Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology sited at Ibadan, Enugu and Zaria. The system ensured that the entrants into the universities had been far better prepared and were slightly more mature than we have now; and it ensured better staffing, at least for the elite schools, for the Sixth Form is a foretaste of the university.

May I invite the Government College Old Boys Association to add its voice collectively and individually to the growing demand to return to a system which has been well tested and which better ensures the production of an enlightened citizenry, without which democracy is unachievable, and national development a mere mirage.

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I thank the Ancient Mariners, under whose auspices this event has been organized. I congratulate them for the examples of loyalty to, and sacrifice for the Alma Mater that they are passing on to future generations of Mariners. My prayer is that this illustrious Ship, having been restored to its former glory, will have calm seas and a prosperous voyage.

Note: *Professor Emeritus Ayo Banjo was a Master at Government College, Ughelli from 1961 to 1962.*

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SECTION II

Challenges Facing the Nigerian University System

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5 TOWARDS THE SURVIVAL OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM IN NIGERIA[+]

Introduction

Let me begin by expressing my pleasure and appreciation at the opportunity given me this afternoon by the Vice-Chancellor and the entire academic community of the University of Uyo to deliver the lecture marking the university's second Convocation ceremony.

Your University is one of the youngest in the country, being just a little more than five years old, and this means that it was born into an inauspicious period of the history of the university system in this country. It is, therefore, a reflection of the dedication and determination of the staff of the University in particular, and of the resilience of the entire system, that the seed-time and harvests have continued, even though sometimes delayed. Particularly in view of the stormy period only recently negotiated by all the universities, I should like to congratulate the staff and students of this university for their ability to discharge their mandate from the nation. In doing so, I am further mindful of the fact that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors (CVC) of Nigerian Universities was, during the agonizing period, under the leadership of none other than the Vice-Chancellor of this University. It is perhaps, therefore, appropriate that one of the very first Convocation Ceremonies that I am aware of following the calm, should take place at this University.

The prevailing calm has, as we have come to expect, provided time for soul-searching in what appears to be a definite effort to banish, once and for all, the periodic convulsions in the universities which have threatened the peace of the country and so far have

[+] A Lecture Commemorating the Second Convocation Ceremony, University of Uyo, 21 March, 1997.

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defied the ingenuity of the most profound thinkers of the system. As I speak, a two-pronged approach, to the solutions of the perennial crisis is in progress, one by the special committee set up under the Etsu Nupe specifically for that purpose, and the second by the Vision 2010 Committee which also has the future of the universities as part of its remit.

Obviously, therefore, no one in the country, and least of all the government, is in doubt as to the seriousness of the crisis within the Nigerian University system. But let me quickly add that, from time to time, a good deal of thought has also been devoted to the subject, so much so that one is inclined to say that it is somewhat superfluous to seek to provide additional literature on the subject. The nature of the crisis has remained the same from the beginning, and so is that of the possible approaches to be made to contain it and thereby enable the system to fulfill all the hopes reposed in it in our efforts at national development, as well as guarantee a full and just surrender value to its beneficiaries.

Planning

The history of university education in this country has, at the beginning, been signposted by Commissions set up to ensure that the nation looked before it leapt. In the pre-independence era, the Asquith and Elliot Commissions, looking at the desirability of having higher education in the colonies, recommended a University College for Nigeria. At independence, the Ashby Commission recommended four more universities by the conversion of the three branches of the erstwhile Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, and the establishment of a university in Lagos, then the nation's capital. Benin soon joined the group to produce what has, inaccurately in my view, been described as the nation's first generation of universities. It is instructive to note that this particular recommendation of the Ashby Commission was criticized by those who felt that five universities were too few for the needs of the country at the time. But the members of the Ashby Commission were presumably thinking of quality in addition to quantity.

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Nevertheless, it is worth nothing that by 1960, the people of this country and their government had come to the unshakeable conclusion that the universities had a pivotal role to play in the development of the country; and they seemed to think that the greater the number of universities, the quicker, inevitably, would be the pace of national development. This, surely, explains the rapidity with which new universities were opened in the seventies and eighties. Seven must have been thought to be the lucky number, for a group of seven new universities in the seventies was followed by another group of seven in the early eighties. Significantly, no Commissions were set up to work before these great bursts of activity: it was considered self-evident that Nigeria needed more universities (but how many more, exactly?). The truth is that the major criteria had become political in an intensely political country, and these had, not unexpectedly, gathered a momentum all their own, so that little was heard about hard-nosed manpower projections but, instead, an assumption quietly gained ground that the Federal Government had a duty to establish a university in every State. Meanwhile, the number of states was steadily increasing. States which sought to force the hand of the Federal Government started their own universities in clearly inadequate settings while waiting prayerfully for the kind of federal take-over that Ife, Ahmadu Bello and Nsukka had experienced. The expansion of the system proceeded apace until, today the number of universities stands at thirty-seven, with one or two private ones reportedly looming in the horizon.

Meanwhile, the planning Commissions of 1945 and 1959 had given way to a new kind of Commission-fire-fighting Commissions set up in the wake of each upheaval in the system. These, with perhaps one notable exception, were essentially judicial Commissions, though invariably they had something to say about what appeared to be the root cause of the worsening instability. But such comments were not taken seriously enough to provoke a long, hard look at the system until the setting up of the Longe Commission which was specifically set up, according to the Minister of Education at the time, to take up from where Ashby had left off. The Longe Commission did a thorough job and

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submitted an admirable Report. Fine details apart, it is difficult for anyone to say much today which has not been anticipated in the Longe Report. The two bodies currently taking a look at the system would do well, therefore, to go back to the Report of that Commission for insights which were offered six years ago.

The question that the Commission started out with might have been: What is the cause of the endemic instability in the university system? But the ultimate question, surely is: What is the optimal university system for the country? And as you can see, this latter question is identical with that of survival, which constitutes our present preoccupation.

In answering these related questions, let us begin with a historical perspective. When the University College, Ibadan, was established in 1948, an over-ambitious and politically-motivated government might have opted for three Colleges instead of one: after all, Nigeria then was made up of three powerful parts. But the government decided not to take a political decision but rather a rational one, and established only one. And as it turned out, the University College, Ibadan, and its successor University up till the middle sixties, had done more for Nigeria's national unity than any other single institution or government policy. It brought together in Ibadan the cream of Nigerian youth and fostered friendships across ethnic boundaries which never failed to warm my heart as Vice-Chancellor whenever the alumni gathered in large numbers at re-unions in Ibadan and displayed unfeigned camaraderie.

Even the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, established in 1953, operated clearly above political considerations: It had three branches which were complementary to one another, so that any Nigerian from whichever part of the country who wished to study Architecture had to go to the Zaria branch; those wishing to do Secretarial Studies had to go to Ibadan; while those wishing to offer Engineering had to go to Nsukka. There are lessons here which the country has perhaps failed to learn.

But let me admit immediately that Ibadan was set up as a true, classic, Ivory Tower institution before the relentless democratic view of university education began to gain ground. Secondly, it has to be admitted that with the expansion of the primary and

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secondary tiers of education and in view of the nation's presumed rather than verified manpower requirements, more institutions had to be established offering overlapping courses. Thirdly, it must be considered desirable that universities should be spread geographically across the country because, apart from being factories for producing the requisite high-level manpower for the country, they are also engines of personal development and refinement whose influence should radiate around their immediate environments. So, what is required is a balancing of the political and rational considerations, and this is a crucial point that we shall return to later.

Funding

The great expansion in the university system in the sixties and seventies would not have occurred, however strong the political motivation, if the country, on discovering oil in commercial quantities, had not immodestly begun to fancy itself as a very prosperous country. Of course we should be glad that the succeeding governments did feel that an appreciable proportion of the money should be spent on developing university education. But it is not known that any careful planning or projections were embarked upon before tuition fees were abolished and Hall fees reduced to ninety Naira per session. In the event, the bubble soon burst, but the system carried on under its own momentum. And more and more universities continued to be established.

According to Dr. Pius Okigbo, speaking at a Committee of Vice-Chancellors Seminar in Benin in 1991, the funding of the federal universities peaked in the 1981-82 session and dropped precipitously thereafter; and that is even without taking into consideration such other factors as inflation and the changes in the exchange rate. If we do this, then we must admit that the rot really set in 1975. For example, according to Okigbo, the average unit cost of training students in 1979-80 was N5,869, which was then the equivalent of $5,846, which in turn, at today's exchange rate, is almost half a million Naira. I leave it to you to work out what should be the realistic current level of government subvention to the universities at that rate!

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The government was finally forced to admit that it could not shoulder the responsibilities alone. The universities were asked to seek supplementary sources of funds; to which many of them responded by establishing commercial ventures and consultancy companies. But as could have been predicted, these palliatives have failed to make an appreciable difference, particularly given the economic depression in the country, to the failure of even the governments of the country to patronize the various consultancies in the universities. As for the organized private sector, it has lived a more or less parasitic existence on the system until it was recently compelled to pay an education tax. It can be truly said that today, the private sector is the chief beneficiary of the nation's university system as it now creams off the best graduates. Obviously, the sector should do a lot more by way of endowments and scholarships. And most important, it should fund relevant research in the universities in order to make available to itself the full benefit of the on-going technological revolution.

Predictably, the possibility of asking the beneficiaries themselves to make a contribution has aroused strong resistance from some sections of the public, particularly the students themselves. Yet, in the spirit of free enquiry which the universities themselves are expected to uphold, all options should be laid on the table and discussed. Nothing can be less academic than foreclosing an option before carefully considering it.

What are the facts? After the last industrial crisis across the entire university system, it was hoped that in the 1997 budget, the government would give the universities a substantial leg-up. To be sure, there has been an increase in the budget for education, though it is not yet clear how much of that increase will go to the universities. But the important point is that the funding of education in the current budget still falls short of the 15% universally recommended. Many, in fact, had been hoping to see a figure nearer 30% if the system as it is was to be maintained. In the light of this unambiguous information in the budget declaring the intention of the government, it is reasonable that all other options should be considered, because the only alternative is continued deterioration leading to an inevitable collapse.

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Regarding fees, no concrete proposals have, to the best of my knowledge, been made. But it has rightly been pointed out that fees are paid at the primary and secondary levels and—more importantly—by students in the State universities. I would have thought myself that democracy demanded that every citizen should be educated, and, therefore, that free education was more appropriate at the primary and secondary levels than at the tertiary. Moreover, I have not heard the suggestion made anywhere that students should be made to pay the true costs of their education. Such true costs can be gleaned from publications in the press by various institutions which charge up to N60,000 per participant for three-day courses, excluding accommodation. Those are the fees demanded by market forces, and ostensibly eagerly paid by Nigerians. No one, as far as I know, is contemplating this level of fees in the universities; neither, in my opinion, should fees replace, but rather supplement, government subventions. If fees are introduced, pressure must continue to be brought on the government to increase subvention at the same time.

As to what percentage of a university's revenue should be made up of fees, these are matters that can be rationally determined. I doubt myself if the figure should be any higher than 20%, in which case the government would still have to contribute as high as 70% while the remaining 10% is provided from the universities' own commercial activities. The figures should be negotiable, so that in the end we have something which ensures the survival of the system without depriving able students the opportunity of university education. Various suggestions have been made as to how the payment of fees will not spell untold hardship on students—scholarships by all three tiers of government, and by the private sector, a realistic loans scheme, etc. These are all matters that deserve careful consideration.

Two alternative views are emerging as to what, meanwhile, should be done to the structure on the ground. One is that the number of universities should be reduced, without necessarily reducing the total student enrolment. The other is to recognize the political underpinning of the present structure and so rationalize courses within universities without reducing the number of universities. Let us examine each proposal in some detail.

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The first proposal is based on the old adage that one should cut one's coat according to one's cloth. Knowing how much the government is prepared to spend on university education, it suggests that we should retain only the number of universities that can be properly maintained with those resources. A suggestion has been made that we should go back to the era in the seventies of thirteen universities, while the other universities become colleges of these thirteen. But we do not know how much exactly would be saved by this process, because while we make savings from the abolition of Councils and Principals Offices, travelling expenses between satellite and main campuses may considerably reduce such gains. But we need to find out in concrete terms. The main difficulty that I see with this proposal is that it removes university presence and its invisible advantages from some parts of the country which have hitherto enjoyed them. It may, therefore, turn out to be a difficult political decision to take.

The other alternative also harks back to an earlier period of the history of higher education when the Nigerian College encouraged specialization on its three campuses. By this view, perhaps no more than twelve universities should offer Medicine while a similar number offer Engineering etc. This way, it would be possible to spend the limited resources in a limited number of places and thus achieve a higher standard. But this, too, is not a perfect solution. I suspect that it will be found that all universities have to offer a large number of undergraduate courses in common in order to cater for the demand in the teaching service, the public service and the private sector. Specialization, in my opinion, should be confined to postgraduate studies and research, which should be encouraged and properly funded wherever it is justifiable, and not in any pre-determined manner. Thus the great majority of undergraduate courses (possibly excluding Medicine and Engineering) would be offered on every campus, but any university demonstrating its competence in operating at the cutting edge of any research should be specially funded for the purpose. Universities should be made to compete for funds specially made available by the National Universities Commission (NUC) for this purpose, over and above the equitable funding of first degree courses across the universities.

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While the government has never, in the last twenty years, denied that the universities are severely under-funded, it sometimes defensively asserts that part of the problems is the inadequate management, or even mismanagement, by the universities themselves. This is usually intended as a swipe at Vice-Chancellors. But it needs to be pointed out that a vice-chancellor's authority to commit funds is not unlimited. The vice-chancellor is accountable to Council, which defines the limits of his financial authority. Moreover, every university submits to the government through the NUC its annual audited accounts. It does sound strange, therefore, that hints at financial mismanagement are made in the irregularly available Visitation Reports, which have all but degenerated into reports of judicial commissions of enquiry. In any case, as a vice-chancellor is reported to have quipped, "You cannot mismanage what you haven't got!" This is by no means to suggest that resources are perfectly managed in the universities, or even that the institutions are not occasionally visited by financial scandal, but that sometimes a mountain is made of a mole-hill. It is, in fact, possible to assert that the universities are some of the best-managed institutions in the country.

Moreover, it is worth bearing in mind that vice-chancellors are not, nor are they meant to be, professional managers. This is why their tenures are strictly limited so that they can return to their primary appointments in the universities. The universities are not intended to be run by powerful 'chief executives' but essentially by committees. The vice-chancellor is an 'executive head' drawing on all the impressive competence available in the university. Running a university, as everyone knows, and in spite of the justifiable demands for effective management and good leadership, is quite different from running a shoe factory. Problems are likely to be minimized if the system is allowed to work properly—i.e. with the committees functioning as expected, with the Council receiving quarterly reports on the finances of the university, with the Council maintaining an effective overview, with audited accounts and annual reports submitted on schedule to the government through the NUC, and with Visitations serving the purpose for which they were originally intended.

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University Autonomy

In the recurrent confrontations between the government and the academic staff of universities, the latter usually complain that the autonomy due to the universities has been steadily and seriously eroded, and the spokesmen for the government have been wont to retort by saying that he who pays the piper calls the tune, or words to that effect. To the ordinary observer, the spokesmen's retort, vested as it is with the infallibility of 'wise sayings', creates the impression that the academic staff are possibly out of their minds. It is, therefore, necessary to consider objectively what is meant—and has been meant down the ages—by university autonomy. Historically, universities are communities set apart to concentrate on scholarship and teaching. It was recognized from the very beginning that prolonged meditation requires the minimum of distractions, and, therefore, a certain degree of insulation from the mundane preoccupations of the larger society.

The connection between autonomy and the view of universities as 'ivory towers' will, I expect, have become immediately obvious. Governments have traditionally been willing to allow university communities the liberty to order their own affairs in the manner most conducive to their calling, within, of course, the law of the land. There is no denying the fact that this attitude has paid off immensely in Europe, and in the first decade of university education in this country.

The erosion of university autonomy in Nigeria can perhaps be traced to two main sources. The first is the confusion in the popular mind between autonomy and immunity. This confusion, unfortunately, is observable both within the universities themselves, and outside, so that the abuse of autonomy has to be decried, no less than erosion of autonomy. If we take the matter of discipline for example, there are, to be sure, some grey areas. While there is no question about what to do to a member of the university community who is found to have made away with a large sum of money from his Hall or from the University Bursary—i.e. hand such a person over to the law-enforcing agencies of the land—the case may not be so straight-forward when a student is apprehended for making away illegally with a book from

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the library or the bookshop. We may wish to generalize by saying that petty cases will be dealt with internally while serious ones are referred immediately to the law-enforcing agencies: but we still have to decide where to draw the line. Perhaps it is worth remembering that a university is expected to be *in loco parentis* to its students, and just as every head of a family exercises some disciplinary powers over his children and wards and does not report every case of pilfering to the police, so the universities should be allowed to exercise some discretion in disciplinary matters. In addition, avenues of appeal do exist right up to the Visitor.

From time to time, the law courts have had to overrule the Disciplinary Committees of universities after finding them to have acted *ultra vires*. Obviously, there is need for greater clarity in this area.

But there are other areas of worry, the most prominent of which relates to the appointment of Vice-Chancellors. In at least some other parts of the world, Councils of universities are left to make such appointments, and the advantage is that the process is insulated from political considerations. Particularly in Nigeria, all appointments made by the Head of State are automatically categorized as 'political' appointments, and sadly, some members of the universities themselves have often done little to change this popular perception. The crisis in the universities can be directly traced in large part to the current method of appointing vice-chancellors, in which some of those appointed immediately regards themselves as viceroys rather than vice-chancellors. But let me quickly add that I would not subscribe to the other extreme of having vice-chancellors chosen by popular elections within the universities. The choice ought to be made by the Council using the most reliable methods open to it to arrive at the best choice for the institution.

There is also the matter of the authority to close down and re-open universities. This originally, even in this country, used to be the prerogative of the universities themselves. But the authority has virtually been taken over by the government, which a few years ago ordered that if for any reason a university was closed down by

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internal decision, permission had to be sought from the government before reopening could be effected. The demoralizing effect of this decision on the authorities of universities can be easily imagined.

Worse still, the government has sometimes found it fit to discipline academics above the heads of Councils, which are the purported employers. Academics have been dismissed directly by order of government without even the benefit of a redress in the law courts, when the matter could have been referred to the Councils to deal with. Certainly, if the councils find that the laws of the land have been breached they will, in turn, hand the erring members properly to the law-enforcing agencies, and the dangers of arbitrariness will be avoided.

Perhaps only one more example would do to illustrate the point being made. There has been a growing tendency for the government to treat universities as no more than government departments (or, at best, parastatals) by issuing to them circulars that are intended to be complied with, sometimes with immediate effect. I suspect that this is really in breach of the laws setting up at least the older universities, but that is another matter. The point is certainly not that the government should have no say in the running of the universities, but the method sometimes adopted. In my opinion, the line of communication should be strictly through the NUC, which should first of all decide on relevance and appropriateness, not to talk of legality, to the Councils, who then give appropriate view, has a crucial role to play in maintaining the autonomy of the universities and therefore, itself, as a buffer, needs a certain measure of autonomy both from the government and from the universities.

It is, of course, easy enough to see how these developments have come about. With the democratization of university education, the concept of the ivory tower has come under increasing attack, yet no university can fulfill its mission effectively without a measure of insulation from the larger society. But even more important has been the nature of our society in the last few decades. Not only are we a developing country seeking short cuts to full development, we have for the most part had a military form

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of government which, by its nature, does not brook a diffusion of authority. Nothing, in fact, can be more antithetical to a military form of government than the university as an institution.

We are thus faced with a veritable contradiction. On the one hand, our rulers wish to hasten the pace of development by pursuing a monolithic form of governance; on the other hand, they seem to incapacitate the very institution best placed to ensure the desired pace of development. The tension is not an easy one to resolve, but the only viable recipe would appear to be to let the universities function in accordance with their nature while compliance with the laws of the land is strictly enforced. The only alternative would be to throw up our hands and admit that there is no place for a university system under a military form of government.

Some Survival Strategies

In view of the foregoing, it would not be an unfair summary to say that the university system in our country today is suffused with unhappiness. The universities themselves are unhappy because they are underfunded and see their autonomy being whittled down; the government is unhappy because the universities are not fulfilling their roles as important engines of development; the students are unhappy because they have no idea how long it will take them to complete a four-year degree course and their parents are unhappy because university education is no longer what it used to be, and they may even now have to pay more.

Matters have clearly reached a stage where merely tinkering with what is on the ground will be little profitable. Rather, the time has come for bold and revolutionary proposals, and I would not mind leading the way, in the hope that other proposals will similarly be laid on the table for the most rational decisions to be taken.

First we must go back to basics and re-affirm our faith in what the university stands for. If we believe in its potential for the human and material development of a country, then we must devise a system in which all the stakeholders, far from being unhappy, will be satisfied. The question that I now wish to attempt to answer is: How, given the emerging political structure of the

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country, can we ensure an optimal university system and save what we have now from total collapse?

To begin with, something has to be done about a source of confusion planted in the existing constitution, namely, the provision that university education, in addition to being on the concurrent list, is also an open field to entrepreneurs. This, I presume, places the onus of an orderly development of the system on the NUC. But the NUC, as we know, is operated by technocrats, while at the end of the day, the decisions about creation of more universities are political and not outside the arena of political horse-trading. I propose, therefore, that we recognize only two kinds of universities: publicly-run universities and privately-run universities. The existence side by side of Federal universities and State universities has bred little more than confusion and frustration.

Perhaps just two illustrations will do. State universities charge fees, including tuition, but the Federal universities charge no tuition fees. Since both categories are, in fact, government-sponsored universities, they ought to be subject to similar conditions, and one category should not be made to appear as the poor relation of the other.

Even more serious is the unwritten authority of the federal government over the State universities. Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), before its proscription, only negotiated with the federal government, and the assumption was always that whatever the federal government agreed to would be implemented in all universities. Of course the federal government, where necessary, backs up the agreements with funds for implementation. As far as I know, the State governments running universities are never as much as consulted during the negotiations but nevertheless are called upon by their own employees to implement the agreements exactly as they are in the federal universities. Yet, if we are prepared to argue that he who pays the piper calls the tune, we ought by the same token to be able to say that he who calls the tune must pay the piper. The fact of the matter is that today, most, if not all, of the State universities are on the brink of collapse while they continually pray for oxygen from their proprietor and from the federal government.

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By the present proposals, all the publicly-run universities would be grouped around the six zones that appear to have received more than the tacit recognition of the present federal government. Each zone would decide how many universities it needs, and can afford, to keep the zone supplied with adequate high-level manpower. If the zones are comparable in terms of size and development, then we would expect them to come up with roughly the same number of universities. But even if it turns out that the number is not the same in every zone, this would be hardly surprising, since the number of primary and secondary schools in each zone may also not be the same. The universities need not, of course, be established at one fell swoop, but with due regard to funding capacity. There could, for example, be a five or ten-year development plan. Attention would have to be paid, at the same time, to the development of other types of tertiary institutions in the zones.

Once the number of universities required in each zone has been determined, it would be the responsibility of all tiers of government to participate in funding them. The ratio of Federal, State and Local government contributions would be worked out.

Apart from getting rid of the present anomaly of having separate federal and state universities, this proposal would also relate the universities more closely to local needs, as the bulk of the planning would be done at the zone level with zonal needs in mind, and with the NUC playing the roles of advising and co-ordinating, to ensure that we do have one national system.

A number of decisions would flow from the acceptance of these proposals, and one of them relates to the all-important matter of governance of the universities. It follows that federal, state and local government interests, among others, would be represented on the Councils of Universities, which would better have the status of Board of Trustees. They would receive through the NUC the contributions of the three tiers of government at the beginning of each session, as used to be the case at the University of Ibadan, and not on a quarterly basis—or even worse, in arrears—generate additional funds and make the budgets, ensuring a realistic and sufficiently attractive level of wages. As previously suggested, the universities would in fact be run fully by the Councils on behalf of the governments and peoples of Nigeria, to whom they would relate through the NUC.

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This means that even greater care would have to be exercised over the composition of Councils, each of which should accept the responsibility of being the watchdog as well as the provider for its university. It would ensure that the university carried out its responsibilities in a conducive environment. In this setting, the Finance and General Purposes Committee of Councils would acquire even greater importance and would almost certainly have to meet on a monthly basis.

The Councils would maintain a firm line of communication with the NUC, which is the repository of all information on the system as well as of expertise in all planning matters relating to the universities. Moreover, the Councils would ensure the timely submission of audited accounts and annual reports to the NUC as required by law. They would not allow Visitations to degenerate into mere witch-hunts or a mere formality, but use the recommendations of the Panels, which should be made up of relevant and competent individuals, in their endeavours to improve standards in the universities

The aim should be to run first-rate first degree courses in all the universities, with particular attention to local requirements, and adequate and equitable funding should be provided for this purpose. However, particular attention will have to be paid to the running of postgraduate courses and support for topflight research. Not every university should be allowed, merely for prestige purposes, to embark on postgraduate teaching. Rather, in view of the present constraints, the potentials within each zone for postgraduate courses should be harnessed and not allowed to be unnecessarily duplicated. Moreover, as previously recommended, universities should be made to compete for special research funds from the NUC so as to generate a healthy competition in this area. Financial support should go to the centres which show the most promise, and research efforts may even be made complementary among the zones so that, on the Nigerian College model, students are encouraged to move between zones to undertake research. Collaborative research among the universities should equally be encouraged through special funding.

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It will have been noticed that these proposals simultaneously take care of the three sources of the ailments at present afflicting the universities—i.e. orderly growth, funding and autonomy, making it possible to effect marked improvements in all three areas.

Now, the big question is: What are the implications of these proposals for the system which we have on the ground? Specifically, how do we group the existing universities into zones as is being recommended? I believe that the solutions to these problems cannot defy the ingenuity of the NUC provided, in taking the final decisions, it is agreed to minimize purely political considerations. The Commission is best placed to spell out the exact implications of all the possible scenarios: merging universities, pruning courses, etc., so that the best decisions ensuring cost-effectiveness can be taken within a zonal arrangement. These are not matters to be left in the realm of mere speculation.

At the same time, we have to consider how privately-run universities would fit into the picture we have just drawn. If the assumption is that the publicly-run universities are established after careful consideration of the total needs of the country, it may well be wondered what further purpose privately-run universities are meant to serve. And there is the all-important question of how such universities are to be managed without exploiting the students who go there.

In a democratic society, the idea of privately-run universities, as of privately-run institutions at the lower levels, is certainly a justifiable one. But the danger of the proliferation is there unless a close surveillance is maintained. In my view, the onus is on would-be proprietors of privately-run universities to clearly justify the need for an addition to the existing number of universities. There are, perhaps, three possible grounds for making a successful case.

The first may be that the publicly-run universities are not adequate in number, thus occasioning wastage among the products of the secondary system. The gaps may indeed have been deliberately left by the planners for private sector participation, or may have resulted from unanticipated sudden explosion of numbers of suitable candidates for university education.

A second possibility is that an individual or group of individuals may wish to establish a specialized kind of university.

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Thus a religious body may wish to establish a university aimed principally at producing personnel for its own activities while of course keeping the doors of such a university open to all citizens without any discrimination. Many famous universities in Europe do in fact have a religious foundation. The peculiar religious sensitivities in Nigeria would, however, have to be taken into consideration. Such a university may or may not be limited in the breadth of courses offered and may indeed evolve into an important centre for research. Similarly, an industrialist may wish to open a technologically-oriented university.

The third possibility is that there is disenchantment with the publicly-run universities, as there already is with the publicly-run primary and secondary schools, and an individual or groups of individuals may wish to offer an alternative to those who are willing to pay for it. Such a university would serve as a role-model.

How, in the circumstances, does a government protect its citizens from exploitation? One could simply say that market forces should be allowed to operate. If there is sufficient need and sufficient patronage, privately-run universities will flourish side by side with the publicly-run ones. But the moment people feel that such institutions are not offering value for money or indeed anything better than what is available more cheaply in the public system, such universities may be expected to just wither away. The fees charged at such universities are, therefore, best left to the operation of market forces.

The important fact is that any system stands to gain from variety, provided the law of the land is not being breached in any way. In this particular case, the privately-run ones would, therefore, constantly be under an obligation to justify not only their relevance but also the level of fees being charged. If they play their role well, the entire system stands to benefit from a healthy competition. It should, in particular, be possible for privately-run universities, while being fully responsible for the funding of their undergraduate programmes, to compete for research funds from the NUC.

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Conclusion

After so many years of high visibility, the universities should be allowed to retreat into relative obscurity, but carrying on their functions in a highly conducive atmosphere. To reap the full benefits of a decentralized system such as the one proposed here, it is not necessary to have identical laws governing the universities. Each Council should be able to propose the kind of law which it considers most appropriate for its own institution as, indeed, was the case in the early years of the system in the country.

The fact must be faced that the human resources necessary to operate an optimal university system in the country today has become seriously depleted. While many academics have left the country in order to seek self-fulfilment elsewhere, others have simply side-stepped into the thriving and challenging areas of the country's private sector. But the most frightening development of all is that potential academics—those graduating with First Class or good Second Class Upper Division Honours degrees—are giving a career in academics a wide berth. If the trend continues, the country may have before too long to rely on expatriate staff to run its university system, but even that would be possible only if we can offer salaries acceptable to them. The alternative—too horrible to contemplate—would be for the system to lose all credibility and for parents who can afford it to revert to the old practice of sending their children abroad for a sound university education.

We can avoid this spectre now by undertaking a bold reform of the system along the lines suggested here or better ones emerging from other proposals.

Friday, 21 March, 1977.

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6 REFLECTIONS ON THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM*

I should like, first of all, to express my appreciation to the authorities of Lead City University for inviting me to be part of the university's Foundation Day Ceremonies this year by giving the Foundation Day Lecture. It is worth recalling that this university and Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, of which I have the honour and privilege to be Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, received their licences from the National Universities Commission at the same ceremony in 2005; and so, it would be appropriate for me to convey to you the best wishes of Ajayi Crowther University. I would also like, on behalf of that University, as well as on my own behalf, to congratulate you on what you have been able to achieve in the past six years. The private universities are new on the scene and I hope they will play their full part in the nation's human and physical development and so be a blessing the country.

What I thought I should attempt in this lecture is a consideration of the emerging Nigerian University System, particularly now that it appears practically all the components of that system are in place. I refer to the fact that we now have, in terms of proprietorship, federal, state and private universities; and in terms of typology, conventional universities, universities of technology, universities of agriculture, an Open University and at least one university of education. Incidentally, this typology is instructive and well-motivated, for the areas of national life crying for urgent attention are, indeed, education, agriculture and technological development, while the Open University, aided by the Open and Distance Institutes of the conventional universities, is offering a second chance to many citizens of receiving tertiary education, thus helping to raise the general level of education in the country and accelerating development.

* Convocation Lecture at Lead City University, Ibadan, March 2012

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The Beginnings

The history of university education in the country is, by now, very familiar to an audience such as this, but will bear repetition as a background to what follows in this lecture. That history was, at the beginning, sign posted by commissions set up to ensure that the nation looked before it leapt. I gave an account of this in 1997 in a Convocation Lecture at the University of Uyo (See Chapter 6).

Besetting and Persistent Problems

Regular Academic Calendar

The overriding preoccupation of the publicly owned universities is how to keep a regular academic calendar, but this is only the net effect of other problems within the system. The privately-owned universities have a better record in this respect, but we shall examine shortly why this is so. Meanwhile, it is necessary to find out the cause of this instability in the section of the system and its deleterious effects on students, their parents/sponsors and the country.

It is an assumption in all the other countries of the world except Nigeria that the university session starts in October and ends in May or June. University College Ibadan and later the University of Ibadan shared this assumption, and for some time, the other first generation universities also fell in line. But as the Federal Government found it increasingly difficult to meet its obligations to the universities, mainly in the area of funding, the activities of the Academic Staff Union of Universities became increasingly prominent.

In all ASUU's disputes with the Federal Government, the base line has always been underfunding. As the number of federal universities grew exponentially, allocations to the university system failed to keep pace, and this led to frustration, and finally, disillusionment among the staff of the universities—not just the academic staff, but all categories of staff. Infrastructure became inadequate as well as out-of-date. Student accommodation, in particular, became an open sore, with the result that the students were as restive as the staff. Indeed, the students contributed their own quota to the resultant instability. The general impression was

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that the government did not care too much for the university system; which was very strange, as no development in the country was possible without a robust university system.

But the aspect which almost spelt the death-knell of the system was the miserable level of salaries. As it became impossible for staff to live with any degree of comfort on their salaries, the exodus began of staff to more lucrative occupations—provided within the country by the burgeoning banking and oil sectors, to which has now been added the computer industry, and abroad by other universities in the main. At the same time, the inflow of foreign staff and students dried up. Perhaps the consequences of this single phenomenon have never been carefully contemplated. It obviously lowered the quality of the stock of academics staying on, with the result that, in not a few cases, individuals who would in earlier times never have been considered for an academic post found their way in; and the general disappointment expressed about the quality of the products of the universities is clearly not unconnected with this. The conditions are clearly better today—have been, in fact, for about a decade—but it is not easy to effect a sudden reversal of the trend already set in motion. The days seem to have gone when universities were able to retain their most brilliant students and train them to join the staff. The good news, though, is that the government seems at last, under pressure from ASUU, to be alert to the situation. It is only a pity that such pressure, only very recently, kept the universities closed to the teaching of students for five weeks.

Hopefully, the lesson has at last been learnt that universities are an expensive proposition but are absolutely necessary for the development of the country. The task now is how to have a stable system—one which delivers predictable academic calendars and also enables academic staff to be reunited to the long lost 'long vacation', which in every prospering university system allows the academic staff to attend local and international conferences and recharge their batteries.

Another unfortunate feature of the present situation is that, not surprisingly, there are hardly any foreign components in the student and staff populations of our universities. As Niyi Osundare once poetically put it, the 'universe' has been taken out of Nigerian

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'universities.' There is no world-class university in which this is allowed to happen—witness for example, the intensive drive for recruitment of Nigerian students into foreign universities. One looks back with nostalgia at the cosmopolitan composition of staff and students at University College Ibadan and in the early years of the University of Ibadan.

At the same time, for stability to be ensured, there has to be closer rapport between the government and its agency, the National Universities Commission, on the one hand, and the unions in the universities, particularly the union of academic staff, on the other. Serious efforts need to be made to this end. The unions need to be made to see themselves as partners with the government in this sacred undertaking rather than as adversaries. I am sure there is enough maturity on both sides to bring about this highly desirable state of affairs. Indeed, it would not be absurd to predict that lasting peace will prevail on the campuses only when the government and the unions sing from the same hymn sheet. Disagreements there naturally will be, but they should not be of such intensity as to paralyse the entire system.

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University Autonomy

A major cause of dispute over time relates to university autonomy. Let us recall that University College, Ibadan, and the University of Ibadan in its early years, took the requirement of university autonomy for granted. This was obviously because the institution was patterned after the great universities of Europe. It is, for example, instructive that in the University of Ibadan Act of 1962, the Federal Minister of Education was mentioned only twice. The first mention was for him to grant permission for any portion of land belonging to the University to be alienated. The second was the requirement that whenever the Council of the University passed new statutes, these should be tabled before parliament by the Minister of Education. This, of course, was in the good old era of civilian government in the country.

When the military came into power in 1966, they practically savaged the Act of the University by taking power away from the Council and putting it in the hands of the government. The University, for example, was no longer able to choose its own

Vice-Chancellor, but must send three names to the government, one or none of whom might be appointed by the government. Favouritism sometimes came into play in making such appointments. The practice was adopted by all state-owned universities as well. ASUU waged a relentless war against it; and it was only in the past few months that the government appears to have agreed to restore the right to the governing councils. Meanwhile, even the sanctity of the university Senate was invaded through an enactment of minimum standards, and in the appointment of academic staff.

The minimum standards were themselves to be seen as the handmaiden of the accreditation process, which itself is an admirable idea if it is internally instituted. Besides, there are other, more effective, ways of ensuring standards in the universities, such as through the external examiner system. This was the system on which the University of Ibadan relied exclusively in its heyday. It had the effect of exposing the university to leading scholars from all over the world. These external examiners were able to interact closely with the staff of the home institution, and the university was able to feel that it was part of the universal community of scholars. The system is at the moment only half-heartedly operated in Nigerian universities. External examiners seem not to be involved in assessing the performance of undergraduate students in their final year, and seem to be reserved for the assessment of postgraduate students. Even so, it is nowadays extremely rare to find that external examiners are sourced from outside the country. The system has inevitably lost much of its credibility in the process, and very sadly, the rest of the world is aware of this. A full resuscitation of the system would aid the rebirth of the Nigerian university system.

Funding

Unarguably, the most serious problem facing the universities in Nigeria is, as is well known, that of funding. This has been so for a long time now, but it is important to recall that it has not always been so. In its early years, the University of Ibadan received its annual subvention from the government upfront. The advantages of this are obvious. It made for reliable planning and ensured the regular maintenance of plan. It even allowed for some of the money to be invested. Not least of all, it made for prompt payment

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of salaries. Of course, there was only one university to cater for then, and it would require an elaborate national financial planning to continue the system with the present number of universities. Quarterly and even monthly release of subvention is now the order of the day, worsened by late releases. It is clear that not enough financial planning is done before new universities are opened.

The government may argue that it is doing its best, but the present financial arrangements in the publicly-owned universities leave much to be desired. An obvious way of boosting the revenue of these universities would have been to ask for contributions from the beneficiaries. The government has consistently avoided this recourse, but rather insists on free tuition and an unrealistic accommodation fee, at one time fixed at ninety naira per session! The introduction of moderate tuition and accommodation fees would help the universities' finances while not overburdening the students.

The presence of private universities has in fact shown convincingly that students' sponsors are prepared to pay reasonable fees, provided they have value for money. Indeed, there are parents who pay more than a million naira a session as fees for their wards in the primary and secondary tiers of privately-owned schools. As for the universities, the government may do well to borrow a leaf from the privately-owned universities, where each university decides the fees to be paid by its students. Such fees are then related to the cost of living in the areas where the universities are located and the ability of the Proprietor to provide subsidy.

The relative peace enjoyed by the private universities is due to the fact that, by and large, they are better funded than the state-owned ones. But it should also be noted that both student and staff unions are barred in all of them. This latter feature is obviously debatable, for the students in a university need to be organized and need to experience the processes of a democratic organization in preparation for later life. Equally, the university must relate to its staff in a structured way to avoid confusion. Perhaps what all this calls into question is the desirability of having national unions in either case. Here, there are advantages and disadvantages, and stability in the system may help to minimize the disadvantages.

The federal government, faced with a dire financial situation in the universities, has asked the institutions to concentrate more on

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internally generated revenue. This is quite in order, but is easier said than done. The Nigerian economy has not been buoyant enough to have adequate resources flowing from the private sector into the universities. Moreover, there has to be a gradual transition from total dependence on the government to a reasonable steady state. A small committee of vice-chancellors was set up in 2001 to advise on such a gradual transition. The committee found from the Okigbo Report on the subject that the average unit cost of training university students in the 1979/80 session was N5,869, which, at that time, was the equivalent of $5,846. Today, the Nigerian equivalent, ignoring the massive inflation that has taken place, would be of the order of two million naira. The question that arises is whether it is reasonable to expect the government to continue to bear this cost alone.

The small committee of vice-chancellors in 2001 just referred to in fact recommended that the government should provide subvention to the universities, to start with, to the tune of 70% of their budgets while the institutions generated the remaining 30% internally. The subvention would then decrease gradually until it stabilized at about 30%.

Meanwhile, the government is wisely making additional funds available to the universities through the University Education Tax Fund; and indeed, partly as a result of this, it is evident that government funding of the universities has improved appreciably in recent years. Still, it would be useful for a careful consideration to be given to all the sources from which money can flow to the universities. It bears repetition to say that no first class university can be produced without adequate funding.

A Possible Way Out

In view of the features of the system highlighted above, it is possible to make a number of suggestions for reform. These suggestions were first made fifteen years ago in my Convocation Lecture at the University of Uyo. Since then, I have heard only one reference made to it, and it was not a flattering one at that. Yet I strongly feel that this is a matter of such importance that thinking outside the box should be welcomed. We are perhaps so used to copying other people's systems that anything with a mark of

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originality is dismissed out of hand. These proposals may well in the end turn out to be unworkable, perhaps because they are too idealistic, but the hope then was, and still is, that it would stimulate debate which might lead to an optimal system for the country.

The suggestions here will be limited to two aspects of the emerging structure and organization of the university system. The first has to do with the location and proprietorship of the universities, and the second with the all-important subject of funding.

With respect to the former, the suggestion is that the university system should itself take cognizance of the emerging political system in the country, in which a division into zones has been tacitly accepted. Though some people may argue that the Nigerian Constitution does not provide for zones, their practical value has been recognized not only by the political parties but also by the government itself as part of its concern for federal character. The Constitution, I believe, should be at the service of the people in their search for an optimal form of government, and not constitute an impediment.

Universities should be grouped into zones, borrowing a leaf from the philosophy that inspired the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology. At a time when the developmental potentials of universities are emphasized throughout the world, each group should be made to address the ecology of the zone as well as its manpower requirements. Particularly at the research level, each group in a zone, collectively, should collaborate to solve the pressing problem of the zone. It is clear, for example, which zone should be concentrating on oil and gas, as it is also clear which should be concentrating on agriculture, both at first and at higher degree levels.

Of course there will be some commonalities across the zones. The production of teachers, for example, would necessitate the humanities and natural science being pursued in all universities; and first degrees in areas of need should equally be pursued across the zones; but when it comes to higher degrees, students should be encouraged to go to the zones which specialize in those areas.

There is a double advantage in this proposal. The first is that it would allow for principled efforts to be made at development

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across the country, ensuring that development takes place simultaneously across the country. The other advantage is in the area of nation-building. The constant moving of young Nigerians around the universities will, it is hoped, make for political cohesion and the kind of Nigerian character that was engendered at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, and during the early years of the University of Ibadan.

Private universities should, of course, continue to be encouraged in the spirit of public/private partnership. Some of such universities may want to address some special needs of their proprietors, while others simply seek to do more or less what is available in the state-owned universities. Here, the guidance of the National Universities Commission is of supreme importance so that the developmental efforts of the universities are properly coordinated.

How would proprietorship be handled in such an arrangement? Zoning should not necessarily affect the categorization of universities into Federal, State and Private universities. All that it implies is that there will be greater coordination among them, and indeed, development efforts can be shared out among the universities within each zone. Moreover, it may be considered useful to have zonal offices of the National Universities Commission in the zones to facilitate a greater concentration of attention on the efforts of the universities at the zonal level.

The proposal here regarding funding would be considered by many as perhaps too radical, especially as it may turn out that nothing exactly like this happens anywhere else in the world. The funding problem in the universities is, however, so severe that only a radical proposal can solve it once and for all. The proposal here is that the contributions to the funding of all universities should be shared by the three tiers of government, while a little contribution is made by the beneficiaries themselves. If we go back to the recommendations of the small ad hoc committee of vice-chancellors earlier referred to, we can suggest that all three tiers of government in the country should share the 70% suggested. Each university would source the remaining 30%, from student fees, among other possibilities.

In sharing the 70%, we can say that the proprietor of the particular university should provide half of this, i.e. 35% of the

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university's total budget. This leaves the State government within which the university is located, and the local governments within the State, with 35%. The State should in turn take a little more than half of this, i.e. 25% of the total budget, while all the local governments within the state share the remaining 10%, working out an agreeable sharing formula among themselves, perhaps bearing in mind the local government provenance of the student population within the State. It needs to be pointed out, however, that with State universities, it is the state that provides 35%, while the Federal government provides 25%. All this may sound a little complicated, but in the ICT age, it ought to present no great problem. All it requires is the will. It should also be borne in mind that, with time, as funds from IGR increase, subvention from the various government sources will diminish, to the suggested steady state of 30%, to be shared by all of them.

The above proposal would take care of the publicly-owned universities and would suggest that, like the State-owned universities, federal universities should think of introducing modest tuition fees. The alternative to this, of course, if the Federal government insists on free tuition, is for each university to compute the fees to be paid by the students in the university and ask the Federal government to pay.

Private universities present a slightly different problem. The Federal and State governments may argue, and quite rightly, that private universities are the results of purely voluntary efforts. But to go on from this position to argue that their proprietors should be left to bear the 70% being suggested all by themselves would not be fair or equitable. Rather, it is important for the Federal and State governments, as well as the local governments, to demonstrate that they do have a stake in the production of high-level manpower, regardless of the proprietorship of the universities where such production takes place. Nothing would make the products of the universities everywhere in the country feel more utterly Nigerian, and prepared, after graduation, to serve anywhere in the country, though majority of them would naturally be expected to be employed within the zone in which they attend university. It would, perhaps be fair to make the proprietors of private

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universities pay, to begin with, 50% of the total budget of their universities, while the remaining 20% is shared by the Federal, State and local governments in mutually agreed proportions. The remaining 30% would be internally sourced by the universities themselves, where it is, at any rate, customary to pay fees.

At the same time, support from the private sector for the university system will need to be vigorously canvassed. The University Education Tax Fund is already producing a salutary effect on university campuses. It has helped considerably with the infrastructure of the universities. But perhaps more and more funds should now be devoted to the academic programmes, particularly research. Universities should be made to compete for funds from this source to produce the best results for the country.

It is hoped that what has been said here will, at the very least, give impetus to the search for an optimal university system for our country, so that the 'universe' may be brought back to our 'universities', and 2020 may become a happy reality.

Ayo Banjo
March, 2012

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Section III

Quality Assurance

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7 QUALITY CONTROL IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES+

Quality of Foundation

University education began in Nigeria in 1948 with the opening of University College, Ibadan as an integral part of the University of London. It is significant that although the College opened in a makeshift army barracks, its graduates, from the very beginning, could very well have been produced by any of the Colleges of the University of London in London itself. A few years later, the College moved to its permanent site, a parkland campus with magnificent buildings and state-of-the art infrastructure. It immediately established itself as a university institution to be reckoned with universally.

Two lessons are to be learnt from this beginning of University College, Ibadan. The first is that its quality was guaranteed by an older institution to which it was affiliated; and the second is that the institution began as the College of a world famous university and did not become a full fledged university until some fourteen years later.

It seemed at one point that the College might provide a model for the subsequent founding of universities in Nigeria: Jos, Port Harcourt and Ilorin started off as Colleges of the University of Ibadan and had the opportunity of being nurtured by Ibadan before gaining full university status However, the subsequent history of the founding of universities in the country (there are now 118 altogether) did not follow this pattern.

It is not being suggested, of course, that Ibadan is the only viable model of development of universities. In many other cases,

+ Paper presented November, 2011

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senior academics went out from Ibadan and other universities to give leadership in the establishment of new institutions. But this has not always been the case, especially since the decade 2001-2010 when, in that period alone, as many as 38 private universities were established in the country, and the expansion shows no sign of abating. This expansion is taking place against the background of widely reported shortage of suitable academics even in the existing universities. It is also taking place against the background of disenchantment with university teaching among the brightest products of the system, and constant wranglings between the government and the association of academic staff of Nigerian universities. It is clear that there is not adequate mentoring going on in the new universities by the older ones. This calls to question the quality, from the beginning, of some of the institutions.

It is one thing for universities to be able to formulate impressive statements of vision and mission for their universities, but whether they are able effectively to deliver on these statements is quite another matter.

There is an important role here for the National Universities Commission to play. The idea of allowing the private sector to participate in the proprietorship of universities is a laudable one, though the current practice requires some fine-tuning. However, applications for the establishment of private universities—and indeed of all new universities for that matter, whether private, State or Federal—should be very carefully vetted by the Commission before recommending to the government for approval or non-approval. Once approval is granted, the Commission should immediately come to the aid of the new university by recommending a special relationship with one of the established universities for the first four years—i.e. until the new university produces its first crop of graduates. With appropriate advice from the NUC, the new institution should choose the older university it would like to relate to. This way, it can at least be guaranteed that the new university is helped to find its feet and solve its teething problems without too much pain.

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Quality of Staffing

One of the crucial points that the National Universities Commission will have given careful consideration to is the all-important question of staffing. Right from its inception in 1088, the university idea has shown resilience in being adaptable to suit different environments. Thus, the early universities in Southern Europe (e.g. Germany and Britain) had certain distinctive features. Some were governed by the Masters (i.e. the academic staff), while others were administered by the students themselves. But they were all united in their search for excellence. The problem posed today in the Nigerian situation is how to ensure quality staffing for the rapidly increasing number of universities. One option, of course, is to strictly control numbers and face the consequences that that option generates. But if the number of universities is considered manageable, how do we spread the available staff over the large number of universities without depleting quality? This problem requires deep, and not just casual, consideration.

One approach to the problem adopted by the NUC is to limit the number of Faculties a new university may start with—usually two. While that lessens the pressure on the new university, it gives rise to a number of other questions. Should the NUC, or the university itself, decide what those two Faculties may be? It is understandable that a new university, unless it has enormous resources at its disposal, would avoid at the beginning the establishment of capital-intensive disciplines like Medicine and Engineering. The preferred choice of Faculties in fact tends to be the Humanities and Science, which then puts pressure on existing universities from where suitable staff are sourced. Thus, the trend has produced a knock-on effect on the entire system.

It is pertinent to recall that when the first in successive waves of seven universities was being launched in the 1970's, the University of Ibadan foresaw this problem and sent a resolution of its Senate to the Federal government recommending that Ibadan, and perhaps other 'first generation' universities, should begin to move in the direction of becoming essentially postgraduate universities. Unfortunately, that recommendation was ignored. Ibadan is only just beginning to skew its admissions in favour of postgraduate students, and intensive efforts have now become necessary.

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Another option, which many people may consider bizarre, is to allow the entire system to operate as a loose network which permits academics to hold appointments in more than one university. There are logistical problems about this, to be sure, which are by no means insurmountable, given determination and thorough planning. But the advantage is that every university will at least have the benefit of interaction with quality staff. It is rumoured that something like multiple appointment in fact does go on unofficially already. Perhaps it is time to look at the practice critically, and if considered necessary, decriminalize it.

It is unfortunate that for a long period of time, the level of salaries in Nigerian universities has proved a disincentive for the employment of non-Nigerian academics. The crucial fact should, however, not in the process be lost sight of that the university has traditionally been regarded as a cosmopolitan institution. At the moment, there is a near-total, if not complete, absence of non-Nigerian academics in many Nigerian universities. This has prompted Niyi Osundare, the Nigerian poet, to remark that in Nigerian universities, the 'universe' has been taken out of the 'university'. The sooner the situation is redressed, the better for the health of the entire system

It should also be observed that the current retirement age of 65 for academics is working in favour of the new universities. It enables retired staff, in many cases professors, to take up leadership positions in the new universities where they can render invaluable service on contract for at least another five years.

Quality of Admission Process

Given a solid foundation and the provision of quality staff, attention needs to be turned next to the quality of intakes. Admissions are outside the purview of the NUC, which is, therefore, unable, however indirectly, to influence the quality of students being admitted into universities. There is unanimity in the country today that the admission process into the universities is, to put it mildly, suspect. Dubious ways have been found by candidates, sometimes surprisingly aided by their parents, to gain admission. This phenomenon had its origins in the proliferation of

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universities which began in the 1970's, which led to the establishment of the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB).

Unfortunately, JAMB has today become a highly controversial institution in the country. Part of the problem lies with the underlying concept by the originators of the Board which, in the first place, conferred the authority to admit students into the universities on the Board. Damage limitation had to be put in place from the very beginning by the able leadership of the Board at inception. Led by Professor Oladipo Akinkugbe, the Board decided, in spite of the law setting it up, to involve the universities in the process of admissions, to the point where it could be said that, like in all self-respecting universities in the world, the actual admissions were being conducted by the universities themselves; and that practice has survived. JAMB has concentrated more on its clearing-house functions, but sill conducts examinations which all those seeking admission into Nigerian universities must take. To that extent, it strongly influences admissions into universities and even occasionally invokes the law setting it up to insist that certain candidates should be offered admission.

Things got worse, however, when the universities found the results of the examinations conducted by JAMB neither reliable nor relevant. Serious abuse had crept into the conduct of the examinations, and this has been demonstrated on many occasions. Unable to tolerate the situation any longer, the vice-chancellors rightly decided to save the university system by instituting what are now known as post-JAMB examinations, which are being conducted by each university. Perhaps not unexpectedly, this commendable action of the vice-chancellors has stirred up controversy.

The controversy arose from different vested interests. Those who had profited from the previous unsatisfactory system saw that their children and wards now had to really work hard to enter universities. Not being able to state the basis of their objections publicly, some of them have resorted to vilifying the universities by claiming that they were commercializing the admissions process. A cap was accordingly placed on what the universities

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could charge for their own examinations. Now, some officials of JAMB, avoiding the crux of the matter, are waving the law setting them up and claiming that they are the only body empowered statutorily to admit students to the universities. This is an embarrassing line for the Board to adopt in the face of the mounting evidence of the failure of the examinations conducted by it.

Finally, the National Assembly has waded in and is reportedly threatening, since it possesses awesome powers, to stop the universities from continuing with the post-JAMB examinations. One wonders why the National Assembly finds it necessary to intervene in this matter. But if the answer is that its members are trying to protect the members of their constituencies, it has to be said that the Assembly should have done a thorough investigation before reportedly issuing threats.

It is more important for the National Assembly to defend the credibility of the university system before considering the personal convenience of its constituents. Since the function of the Assembly is to legislate, it should start by examining the law setting up JAMB, to determine the wisdom or otherwise of asking an external agency to admit students to the universities. On top of that, they should take judicial notice of the failure of JAMB to ensure that only the best candidates among the applicants do get admissions. The Assembly should then proceed to amend the law setting up JAMB. That would be the greatest service that the Assembly can render to the university system, and ultimately to the country, in this matter. The universities themselves should clearly be in control of admissions to the universities. It is the only way to ensure and maintain the quality of admissions to the universities, as is the practice in other parts of the democratic world.

Perhaps it is time to face this problem squarely. Shorn of its responsibility for conducting entrance examinations for the universities and the other responsibility for admitting students to the universities, the Board would be left with the task of serving purely as a clearing house to minimize—or ideally eliminate—any wastage arising from multiple offers of admissions. This role is, however, best performed under the aegis of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors, rather than as a parastatal in the Federal

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Ministry of Education. The linkage with the individual admissions offices in the universities would be better facilitated, and there would be huge savings in expenditure.

It should be remembered that the university system, such as it was, had operated—and operated much better—before the emergence of JAMB. How was this possible? At the University of Ibadan, for example, there were two routes to admission. One was by direct entry with the requisite 'A' level qualifications. These qualifications were weighted and ensured fairness and transparency. The other route was through an entrance examination open to the best holders of 'O' levels. The university was able to determine the number and quality of candidates to be short-listed for this examination, and the results inspired the confidence of all and sundry. This method is available for adoption, particularly at a time when thought is being given to the resuscitation of sixth forms and 'A' levels in the country.

Not the least of the points in favour of 'A' levels as the main source of entry to universities is that it is bound to boost the quality of the entrants, in contrast to the present system in which very large numbers of candidates not suitable for university education try their luck with the JAMB examinations and thereafter resort to a gross abuse of the process in order to secure admission. And high quality entrants, we must remember, ensure high quality products.

Quality of Curriculum

Attention in quality control tends to be concentrated in this country on course offerings. But as I have tried to show above, other factors do contribute to the overall quality of a university—the quality of foundation; the quality of staff; and the quality of students. Every university worth its salt aims for the very highest standards, but it is important to consider how it does this. Every university of repute, in keeping with the tradition of universities, relies entirely on its own internal mechanisms to uphold the very high academic standards that it has set for itself. The senate of the university is crucial in this respect. Indeed, it would be surprising if there was any university anywhere in the world which did not place the responsibility for the regulation and upkeep of academic standards on the Senate of the university. The history of university

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education in this country also reveals that the so-called first generation universities in Nigeria acted in accordance with this assumption. Course contents were approved by the senate after close scrutiny by one or more of its committees. Moreover, the Senate was in communion with the rest of the academic world through the highly valued system of external examiners. It is difficult to imagine what other agency of quality assurance is needed after this, but a peep into the history of university education from the 1970's—in many ways the deciding decade—is quite revealing.

Many recent trends in the national life of Nigeria are traceable to the profound influence of the military from the second half of the 1960's, but more strikingly since the end of the civil war in 1970, when the military seriously settled down to the business of governing the country, no doubt a strange terrain to them. Not surprisingly, they approached the task in the only way they had been trained to approach all tasks—structurally in a unitary and unified manner, with authority flowing from the highest point to the lowest. The federal structure of the country was on the brink of being abrogated, but although in the end the structure was saved, and indeed curiously many more states were created, there was hardly any substantial devolution of powers; and the rulers in the states, even after they had all become civilians, got used to being supplicants of the authorities at the centre. Even after the return of civilian rule, the legacy of the military has remained very largely in place. The unitary and bureaucratic view of governance has remained with the country.

Faced, therefore, with an increasing number of universities, which is their own making, the government decided that some central authority was necessary, not simply to offer advice, but to ensure that the decisions of government were faithfully implemented. This was how the NUC and, later, JAMB, came into being. In fairness to the government of the time, it proclaimed that the commission was to act as a buffer between the government and the universities, which was music to the ears of the academics in the universities. But it has always been difficult for the commission to perform this critical role, basically because the government persisted in looking at it as a department of government—in fact, as an inspectorate division of the Ministry of

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Education—and because the kind of relative autonomy envisaged for the NUC was clearly antithetical to a military—and militarized temperament.

By this time, of course, the country had had a fairly long experience of supervising education at the primary and secondary levels. The feeling must then have developed that the universities were just another tier of the educational system. Already at each of the lower tiers, there was a national curriculum stating work expected to be covered and spelling out the discrete items and their sequencing throughout the school year. Indeed, in the old days, notes of lessons had to be submitted by primary school teachers to their headmasters for vetting. The idea was to ensure that teachers at the primary and secondary levels were doing what they were supposed to be doing; and what they were supposed to be doing was handed down to them by the ministries of education and monitored by inspectors of education.

The question boils down to how much the government believes the universities to be different from the primary and secondary schools. It is clear that universities cannot be treated simply as another tier. For one thing, the students are much more mature; and for another, the staff are very highly qualified—in fact, constituting a corps of the most highly academically qualified manpower in the country.

Yet something had to be done to ensure standards amidst the proliferation of universities. But we should remember that if the necessary steps had been taken regarding quality of foundation and quality of staffing, there ought to be no problem. What we do know is that universities have been opened without appropriate prior planning, and without the assurance of adequate quality staffing. Therefore, the government has had to rely on two mechanisms which it hopes can stem the tide of deterioration in the universities: accreditation of courses, and the legislation of minimum standards. It is necessary to examine how effective these two mechanisms are.

To carry out this task, the NUC has had to borrow a leaf from the inspectorate divisions of the ministries of education. Accreditation panels traverse the country, trying to assess the quality of courses being offered in the universities and also, often belatedly, taking into account the adequacy of staffing and

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infrastructure. But the panels have to know the standards against which they are assessing performance in individual universities, hence the formulation of minimum standards—a kind of national curriculum.

University Accreditation

Do universities need continually updated accreditation? The answer is an unqualified yes, for every university has to ensure that it is upholding the standards expected of it. Besides, now that universities offer a variety of professional courses, some mechanism has to be found for ensuring that the training in the universities is in tune with the demands of the various professions. In a way, this continual updating, especially with regard to the purely academic programmes, had been ensured in the past in a less dramatic fashion in the universities through the use of external examiners. This practice ensures that every year, there is an inflow of some of the best scholars from around the world into the universities to attest the quality of the work going on. Those who were in the university system when this practice was at its best will confirm that it produced a salutary effect. For upwards of a week, the external examiners interacted with the staff in the various departments, offering comments on the quality of work and making suggestions. This certainly ensured the international currency of the degrees offered in the universities. At a time when not many academics have the opportunity of regularly updating themselves by attending international conferences, the external examiner system would today also offer invaluable help to staff in keeping abreast of developments and remaining in step with best practices.

Now the external examiner system would appear to have fallen into disuse except at the postgraduate level; and even there, it is rare to have scholars from outside the country serving in that role.

In contrast, how does the accreditation system currently in practice work? A team is sent out from the NUC to evaluate the prevailing standards in the offering of courses by all the departments in each Nigerian university. This is a four-yearly cycle, and the accreditation panel is duly briefed by the NUC before setting out and given the parameters for evaluation. The accreditation exercise usually takes about a week, and ends with

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individual courses receiving full accreditation, interim accreditation or outright denial of accreditation. Courses with interim accreditation are allowed to try for full accreditation two years later while courses with denied accreditation cannot have students admitted to them with immediate effect, which means in effect that such courses are scrapped.

Only the NUC can say how satisfactory this practice has been in meeting the objectives set out for it, but some criticisms have been voiced both by the universities and by observers. The first relates, naturally, to the quality of the members of the accreditation panels. It is not in every case that the members of the panel command the respect of the host universities. They are, therefore, no substitutes for the traditional external examiners who are chosen by the universities themselves and are able to interact meaningfully with their hosts.

It is, of course, true that the members of accreditation panels are chosen from within the university system; but they are chosen in the spirit of external inspectors, and intra-disciplinary rivalries and jealousies cannot be completely ruled out. On the whole, the emphasis is more on fault-finding than on offering useful advice. Another disturbing trend that has been reported is that at the wrap-up sessions which the panel holds with the officials of the host university, the panel is not always frank. The host university is lured into a false sense of security, only to find when the results are published that they have done far worse than they had been led to expect. It is in fact not unheard of for some universities to challenge in public the verdict on their universities.

One suggestion to offer here is that the NUC should consider going back to offering robust support for the system of external examiners instead of pursuing the accreditation route. That would produce the results that both the NUC and the universities desire. The problem that the government may possibly have with this idea is that it would appear to diminish its assertion of a proprietor's authority over the institutions. In any case, in relation to the governance of a university, this is clearly a mistaken idea; and one must deprecate the assertion once credited to a high government official in relation to the universities that 'he who pays the piper dictates the tune.' He may well dictate the tune in other areas of

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university governance, but certainly not in academic matters, which are the preserve of the senate of a university. A reputable university does not require external coercion to make it aim for the highest standards.

If for other reasons it is felt that the practice of accreditation should continue, then perhaps the NUC should consider farming out this part of its responsibilities to the country's Academies, in particular the Academies of Letters, Science, Education and Social Sciences. The Academies would then report to the NUC, which in turn would advise the universities and their proprietors accordingly. The Academies' choice of panel members is likely to be impeccable, and it could be part of the remit of the new panels to interact as much as possible with the host universities and be generous with advice.

It is important to bear in mind that a critical factor influencing accreditation is funding. Every university has lofty visions and missions but may be seriously hampered by inadequate funding, now exacerbated by the serious shortage of academics. The NUC, as the repository of all information relating to Nigerian Universities, should consider it an important part of its pre-occupations to let the proprietors of universities (including the Federal and State governments) know the financial implications (in hard figures) of founding and running a university, and persuade them to fulfill their obligations to the institutions.

Minimum Standards

The promulgation of minimum standards is NUC's response to the possibility of falling academic standards as a result of the proliferation of universities. But the measure is no doubt inspired by the legacy of the military era promoting centralization and strengthening bureaucracy, as has been pointed out. But this practice flies in the face of what a university stands for, and erodes the powers of the senate of a university as the custodian of academic standards. Because of this, it is doubtful if these standards are being enforced in the universities apart, perhaps, from providing the template against which accreditation panels do their work. To enforce them, one would need full-time inspection and supervision of every university in the country—hardly a befitting or even desirable enterprise.

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It is fortunate that the position of Executive Secretary of the NUC has for some time now been filled by senior professors from the universities. For this, the Board of the NUC deserves the nation's thanks. As was done from the beginning with JAMB, the Executive Secretaries have, in varying degrees, blunted the sharp edges of the working of minimal standards in the universities. But presumably, there is nothing in the NUC law to force the Board to reserve the post of Executive Secretary only for senior university professors, nor indeed is it automatic that every senior academic so appointed will protect the genuine interests of the universities.

Universities all over the world are rated according to the quality of their products, usually over a long period of time, and this is why the oldest universities in every country tend to be the most highly rated, because they have had a long time working on being excellent. Such universities are left free, without undue external regimentation, to evolve a distinct character, and this includes being able to develop the courses in the way they consider best. There is, in fact, little value in making all universities conform to the same curriculum. For one thing, this dampens the spirit of healthy rivalry and stifles innovation.

The Role of the NUC

The NUC does have an important role to play in maintaining high standards in Nigerian universities, but it has to be an advisory, rather than a legislative or coercive one. The Commission should be every university's best friend, the place for them to turn to for support, advice and encouragement; and this role it can play in a variety of ways. But the most important change necessary at the moment is to enable the Commission to play this role by giving it the necessary autonomy to serve as a credible buffer between the government and the universities. The Commission should be in a position to give encouragement to individual universities within the system, while at the same time offering the best advice to the government. It is just possible that if it had been allowed to play this role, the recurrent wrangling between the government and the union of academics could have been avoided, and that union might have been encouraged to take a less combative stance against the government. At the moment, the union assumes that the NUC is just a department of government, and, therefore, part of the problem.

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But the greatest support that the NUC can offer the universities is in the area of funding. One problem that faces the university system in Nigeria is that, until very recently, all the universities were publicly owned. This led to the institutions being looked upon as parastatals of a sort. This contrasts with the development in Europe, for example, where the first universities were established through Papal Bulls. There, the universities were free of interference from the government from the very beginning and were not unduly interfered with by the Church either. In Nigeria, the developmental role that universities can play is paramount in the consideration of the government, and the NUC is regarded simply as the agency through which the government ensures that the institutions perform that important role.

The NUC was modelled at the beginning on the University Grants Committee in Britain. As its name indicates, that body's main role was to ensure that grants from the government were properly channelled to the universities even though the institutions were not owned by the government. This role is even more strongly emphasized by the change of the name of the committee to Higher Education Funding Council. How the Council goes about its remit cannot be gone into in any detail here, but it is not just a conduit pipe transmitting government funds to the universities (and other tertiary institutions). It plays a major part in advising the government on the required levels of funding. More importantly, it promotes healthy rivalry among the institutions by making them compete for some of the funds.

As it is at present, the NUC is acutely aware of severe underfunding of the publicly-owned universities but seems powerless to do anything about it. A lot of problems would be solved within the university system if it is ensured that every university operates a realistic budget, and if proprietors can be made aware of the extent of their responsibility for denied accreditation in the institutions.

Finally, it should be remembered that in addition to having its courses regularly accredited, every university, whether publicly or privately owned, has to have a visitation once every five years. The NUC also plays a major part in this exercise and actually composes the visitation panels. This promotes a sense of accountability in the universities and enables the NUC to update its own knowledge of

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every university. But for the publicly-owned universities, the White Paper on the visitation reports is issued by the Federal Ministry of Education, and there is a growing tendency in recent years of universities simply ignoring the White Paper, except where punitive measures are recommended. Indeed, the visitation exercise has also increasingly tended to be judicial investigations of allegations against individuals.

It is recognized that all proprietors should be keenly interested in what the visitation report says about their university, but nothing ever seems to be done about the poor funding which results in poor performance by the universities. The law of every private university provides for a visitation every five years as in the public system, but it is too early to see if the NUC has any role to play here, although it asks that a copy of the visitation report should be forwarded to it. Perhaps it should have a way of ensuring that the proprietors take appropriate action on the reports.

Quality is what universities are all about. But a holistic view of quality has to be taken along the lines suggested above. It is not very helpful concentrating attention on the quality of courses while ignoring the other parameters of quality; and it is not very helpful to demand quality in the face of severe underfunding, or in the absence of a body like the NUC being empowered to play its roles of empowerment of the universities on the one hand, and sound advice to the government on the other; roles that it can only adequately play by being effectively a buffer between the university system and the government.

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8 TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ACADEMICS*

At a time when the Nigerian landscape is covered more and more by a mosaic of universities, the need for adequate staffing naturally arises. As 'adequate' can be construed both in quantitative and qualitative terms, we may justifiably ask: Where are these academics to teach in the universities coming from, and what kind of training do they require? These are the two questions that I wish to address briefly in this paper.

The federal government's decision to liberalize the proprietorship of universities in conformity with its policy of public-private partnership was generally welcomed in the country, though it has to be said that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) was perhaps the lone voice in raising the twin questions that concern us here. The general feeling in the rest of the country, which was quite understandable, was that the country was grossly under-supplied with universities in view of the urgency of social and economic development. Besides, there was a rising army of products from the secondary schools, many of whom were going to waste or, worse still, being sucked into anti-social activities. But it has to be admitted that the prospective private proprietors of the universities did not give full consideration to the question of the supply of academic manpower to their institutions. Luckily for them, however, the first generation universities were, at the same time, turning out senior academics who had reached retirement age. These retired academics were seized with both hands by the new private universities, and one very good result of this is that talent is being spread more evenly throughout all the universities. It remains to be seen, though, what the rumoured raising of retirement age for academics from sixty-five to seventy will do to this development.

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* Paper Presented at the 24th Conference of the Association of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (AVCNU), University of Ilorin, 1 to 4 June, 2009.

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The long-term solution is, surely, capacity building by the new universities themselves, for it is clear that even the older universities do suffer from shortage of staff and would be only too glad to have their senior Professors stay with them till the age of seventy. Some of them may even consider contract appointments for such staff beyond the age of seventy. So the dearth of academics is likely to get worse, at least on the short run.

In a way, what is happening in the new universities is not strange. University College Ibadan opened in 1948 with over ninety percent expatriate staff. But the institution then embarked on an aggressive capacity building with the generous assistance of such foreign agencies as Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. Today, the picture has been reversed, though it is possible to say that the indigenization of academic staff has now been overdone. While the preponderant number of staff is expected to be indigenous, a university must welcome scholars from other countries and cultures to be a proper university.

How can the shortfalls in the number of academics be remedied and pro-active action taken to ensure stability of staff in the entire university system? The panacea was first suggested by the University of Ibadan more than thirty years ago. At that time, the university proposed to the government that Ibadan should be built up into primarily a post-graduate institution. This was at a time when the total number of universities in the country was still less than twenty. The reasoning was that the new universities which were being established in the 1970's and 1980's would need to have their staffing needs provided for them before they were able to establish robust postgraduate programmes themselves. If action had been taken at that time, the present crisis could have been ameliorated. It is however good news that the University of Ibadan has now gone ahead to introduce an enrolment quota of 60% graduates to 40% undergraduates.

But this is unfortunately too little too late. In order to fully confront the crisis, it is now necessary for all the first generation universities to join Ibadan in pursuing this policy. It needs to be clarified, however, that the suggestion is not that other universities apart from the six first generation ones should confine themselves

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permanently to undergraduate programmes. It does not mean, either, that postgraduate training abroad is excluded. It is rather that new universities, perhaps solely for prestige reasons, should not proceed in undue haste to set up postgraduate programmes which, given the manpower and material requirements, are not likely to be viable. Universities which feel strong enough should, by all means, participate in postgraduate programmes. For a country as large as Nigeria, no effort can be too much, and we should even be able to admit students from abroad to our postgraduate programmes. Besides, Professors in the new universities would want, naturally, to continue their research efforts, in search of self-fulfilment, and it is only natural that there should be students around to be trained as a spin off. But we are in a crisis, and efforts should be concentrated in those universities which have the competence and resources to produce manpower of the highest calibre for the university system.

At the same time, it may be mentioned that one of the options considered by the University of Ibadan thirty years ago was that of making the university exclusively a postgraduate institution. The idea was rejected because majority opinion felt that the university had a duty to go on producing graduates for the country as a way of continuing to influence standards, as well as providing some of the student inputs into its own postgraduate programmes.

We may now proceed to examine exactly the kind of training required for intending new entrants into the academic profession. Scholarship and research have always been the hallmarks of a university. Whether we go all the way back to Plato's Academy, or to the mediaeval emergence of the university idea in Bologna, then Paris, then Oxford, the university has originally been a place where scholars attracted students in a master-disciple fashion. In mediaeval times, indeed, the disciples followed their maters as they moved from one institution to another. But later, the university became a highly structured institution. At the same time, the utilitarian potentials of a university started to be exploited, and the mandra was no longer knowledge just for the sake of knowledge, with the admission of Medicine and the Physical Sciences to the university curriculum.

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An academic is a scholar by definition, and the only real attribute a prospective university teacher needs is evidence of a high intellect which makes his students look up to him and be inspired by him. The question is how to find a reliable way of identifying people with high intellect for recruitment. The NUC's recent pronouncements suggest that a Ph.D. is a necessary and sufficient indicator, but this proposition needs to be carefully examined. Most of the critics of NUC's position base their objections on the impracticability, or at least excessive harshness, of the new order, especially when a deadline was given for easing out all non-holders of Ph.D. from the entire university system. One would have thought that what was more important was for all those teachers without a Ph.D. in universities to show evidence that they are engaged in the pursuit of a Ph.D. qualification. Those who do not make satisfactory progress with their search for a doctorate may then be asked to leave the system. It is possible that the NUC order in fact allows or compels all those affected to have completed their programmes by the deadline. But there is the problem of what to do with some disciplines now taught in universities by fairly senior members of staff, such as Accounting and Insurance, in which a Ph.D. is a rare qualification.

But how reliable is a Ph.D. as an indicator of the kind of intellect required in a university teacher? A Ph.D. holder can be assumed to be master—sometimes even the world's greatest authority—in a small area of a discipline. It is assumed that he has extended the frontiers of knowledge in that particular area. In that sense, no one can be better qualified to be a teacher in a university. But it needs to be remembered that the Ph.D. is a relatively late-comer in university programmes. In the British tradition, for example, the oldest universities operated for centuries without staff who held the Ph.D. Yet the scholarship of many of them was superlative as shown by their seminal publications in the Humanities and spectacular advances in the Science disciplines.

The problem, however, is that with the explosion in numbers of universities in the world, and particularly in the past thirty years in Nigeria, access to the Ph.D. degree has become wider, with the result that the quality of Ph.D. degrees has become less uniform.

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One reason for this in Nigeria is that it is realized that Ph.D. holders are in high demand to teach in the universities (and also increasingly for jobs in industry), and therefore, unfortunately, admission standards to Ph.D. programmes have tended to be lowered. There is also the phenomenon of mounting pressure from the ever-increasing first-degree products of universities, many of whom apply for admission to higher degree programmes in the universities simply in lieu of employment. It is necessary to bear this fact in mind because it indicates that not all applicants necessarily have an academic career in mind or are suited to it.

But this trend is going on at a time when expectations from the universities are rising phenomenally world-wide, in an age when increasing premium is placed on the creation of new knowledge. It is important, therefore, that holders of a Ph.D. who end up as university teachers are specially screened. The screening used to be there, but one regrettable trend in the system at the moment is that access to a higher degree, and particularly the Ph.D., is not limited, as the regulations usually demand, to applicants with a First Class or Second Class Upper Honours degree. Yet no university would agree, in spite of mounting admission pressures, to compromise the admission requirements (six Credits, including English) for undergraduate courses. If the reason for the relaxation of the Ph.D. admission qualifications in the past has been that there was a dearth of First Class or Upper Second candidates, surely now with ninety-seven universities, that reason can no longer be valid, unless there is something very seriously wrong with standards in the entire university system. Even when a university, for very good reasons, admits a student to a terminal Master's degree, such a student fairly easily finds a way of ending up with a Ph.D.

The universities simply have to stick to their own guidelines and not be easily swayed by special pleas. There are rare exceptions, of course, but generally speaking, a good first degree, rather than necessarily a Ph.D., is the best preparation for a teaching career in a university. A Ph.D. only reinforces the promise already held out by the first degree. Indeed, before the Ph.D. became almost the *de rigueur* qualification for university teaching in British universities, a don at Oxford was reported to

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have said that after his First Class Honours degree from that university, he considered it beneath his dignity to seek a Ph.D.! That may sound rather snobbish, but it does contain a tiny grain of truth.

A few years ago, the suggestion was made that perhaps a teaching diploma should be made mandatory for all university teachers. This obviously raised the question of whether academics in universities are primarily scholars or teachers. Most academics would claim that they are primarily scholars. But the suggestion must have been prompted by the perceived shortcomings in the products of the universities. These shortcomings could be due, however, either to an inferior intake of students or poor instruction by the academics. Some people must have felt that the latter was as much the case as the former. Those opposing the suggestion, however, drew attention to a number of facts, apart from the attitudinal one on the part of academics already referred to. They made two strong points. The first was that pupils in primary schools are children; those in secondary schools are adolescents; but those in universities are young adults. In universities, students are treated as adults who have unfettered access to their lecturers and are, therefore, treated as individuals who know what their problems are and individually seek solutions. The other strong point made, arising from the first, was that requiring lecturers to be trained teachers might result in spoon-feeding university students and producing graduates who have not been trained to think independently for themselves.

The current practice in universities does indeed incline to the latter view, and the strongest evidence for this is that, in a lecturer's progress from Lecturer to Professor, assessments of his ability are based solely on scholarship and research, and not at all on teaching ability which, in any case, it was claimed, cannot be objectively measured.

Subjecting prospective academics to a one-year teacher-training programme after Ph.D. would, indeed, be wasteful. On the other hand, there is no doubt that those who teach in universities should be familiar at least with the increasing use of information technology in enhancing the quality of teaching in universities. What is required, however, is not a year-long Diploma course, but

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short long-vacation courses, which will, among other things, enable university lecturers to keep up with what modern technology has to offer, to make teaching at the university level more effective, and perhaps even more interesting.

These short courses can perhaps be organized as a yearly event under the auspices of the Association of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities. They would serve to close the yawning gap between Nigerian universities and their counterparts in the developed world where the use of modern technology as teaching aid is already quite widespread.

More urgently, however, we need, at least for now, to concentrate higher degree programmes in universities which are best equipped to offer them, in order to produce world-class academics, and we at the same time should ensure a high quality for higher degrees, and particularly the Ph.D., by limiting them to those who are best qualified to undertake them.

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9 OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING: AN IMPERATIVE TOOL FOR EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA[+]

Introduction

I should like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the Vice-Chancellor of this University, Professor A.B. Sofoluwe, and to Professor Funke Lawal and the Distance Learning Institute of the University of Lagos, for asking me to discuss the significance of Open and Distance Learning for the educational development of this country, and consequently its economic development. A country like Nigeria is eager to develop, and it is a settled fact that there cannot be a national development without education being its precursor as well as its concomitant element.

If you would allow me to begin my address on a further personal note, I recall that one of my earliest memories was finding heaps and heaps of booklets getting brown with age in my father's study, each bearing the inscription of Wolsey Hall, Oxford. I kept wondering about this until I was old enough to be told that, long before my birth, my father had studied with Wolsey Hall while preparing, as an external candidate for an Honours degree in Philosophy of the University of London. I believe one of my father's contemporaries who took a similar route to an external degree of the University of London was Mr. Alvan Ikoku, a notable educationist of his time. Many more Nigerians may have since then benefited from the unique services of Wolsey College, and I suspect they have all cumulatively played significant parts in nudging the country forward developmentally. Wolsey Hall has indeed made its salutary presence felt in different parts of the world; and today, it proudly claims that one of its most outstanding

[+] Presented at the University of Lagos

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products is Nelson Mandela, no less. He had studied with Wolsey Hall for his external degree in Law of the University of London while he was a prisoner on Robben Island.

It is possible that Wolsey Hall lost its attraction for Nigerians wishing through their own personal initiative to improve their level of education, and consequently their social and economic standing, with the arrival of university education in Nigeria in 1948, when University College Ibadan was established. Thereafter, the number of universities grew, slowly at first, but later in torrents from the 1970's onwards. The last ten years in particular have witnessed diversification of proprietorship of universities, with the addition of privately owned universities to the publicly owned ones by the Federal and State governments. The result is that the total number of universities in the country today stands at one hundred and eighteen.

Meanwhile, other developments have been taking place in other parts of the world, particularly the developed countries. As an example, the number of universities in the United Kingdom has shot up dramatically as former polytechnics were turned into universities. It is alleged that Britain was playing catch-up with the United States of America in this respect. Whether this is so or not, London alone is now home to several universities, while the other large cities in Britain can now boast of two or more universities each.

This means that currently, there is, on the one hand, a strong attraction for the university system of education among the citizens of the world generally and, on the other, a determination by governments throughout the world to give a more central place to university education. Meanwhile, the university itself, as an institution, has been undergoing a redefinition down the ages. From the classical idea of the university symbolized by Oxford and Cambridge in England, and latterly by University College Ibadan in its early years, universities are now seen, no more as ivory towers, but as veritable engines of development; and large enrolments have become the order of the day.

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The University Idea

We may pause briefly to take a peep into the history of the university institution since inception, in order to put the present situation in perspective. The origins of the Western European idea of a university are traced to the establishment of the university at Bologna in the eleventh century. Other universities sprang up in mediaeval times in France, Oxford, Cambridge, St. Andrews and Glasgow, to name a few. Some of the universities were run by the Masters, whom the students followed from one university to another; and others by the students themselves. The Humanities, particularly Philosophy, dominated the curriculum, although it has to be remembered that philosophy was much wider in scope then than it is now. Indeed, it covered much of what today are mathematics and physics. There is still at least one of the older universities in Britain where Physics is referred to as 'Natural Philosophy'. Law made an early appearance, and Medicine came later. The emphasis was on developing the mind and character of the student. That was the classical idea of a university, which is still echoed today when universities in Nigeria declare, perhaps not very truthfully, that they are awarding their degrees for 'character and learning'. This was largely knowledge for its own sake, which earned the universities the sobriquet of 'ivory tower'

All this was appropriate for the mediaeval age which, however, very definitely came to an end with the industrial revolution in the eighteenth century. The physical sciences had already begun to assert themselves, and the purpose of the university had had to undergo a modification. Societies in Europe became increasingly preoccupied with the creation and accumulation of wealth, for which the physical and social sciences became very important. More subjects, therefore, entered the university curriculum, and the utilitarian value of university education became increasingly stressed. Municipal universities soon sprang up all over Britain, for example, all aimed principally at promoting the economic development of the cities. The growth was even brisker in the United States of America. By the time universities spread throughout that country in the nineteenth century, the developmental role of universities had become not only accepted but strongly emphasized. Through the establishment of Land Grant Colleges

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and Universities, the Federal Government of the United States ensured that funds were made available to each state to establish at least one college or university in the state. Some of them strongly emphasized agriculture, thus laying the foundation for today's food sufficiency in the country. Others, such as California and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, emphasized disciplines which could boost economic development in other areas and have today become some of the world's leading universities. Thus it was ensured that the universities were relevant from the very beginning in the United States.

The Nigerian University System

The development of the university system has been different in Nigeria.. At the beginning, the Regions (West, East, North and later, Midwest) took advantage of education being on the concurrent list and established their own universities. But the Federal Government later thought it should exclusively run the universities, and so took over the University of Ife, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and Ahmadu Bello University. It then went further in the 1970s and 1980s to create more federal universities in other parts of the country. This policy of establishing one university in each of the States has been pursued up till the present time. As more States have been created, federal universities have been sited in them.

But this policy would appear to have been complicated by two developments. The first is that the States have woken up once again to their rights under the country's constitution to establish their own universities. To the extent that any justification has been offered for this development, it has been presented as the need for each State to boost manpower development in its own part of the country. As will be indicated later, this appears to be manpower development for its own sake, which is by no means an undesirable idea, but it is unfortunately not properly linked with specific areas of economic development, with the result, today, that there are armies of unemployed graduates in the country. Of particular note is the fact that industrial development has been almost completely neglected as the *raison d'etre* for creating modern universities.

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From the position in the 1960s when the federal government aimed at running all the universities in the country, the country now has to cope, as we have seen, with the re-introduction of State universities and the vigorous growth of privately owned universities.

In spite of these developments, there is still a large wastage among the products of secondary schools; but it is necessary to examine the cause of that wastage. The results of the School Certificate examinations in recent years have indicated an appalling level of performance by the candidates. Even among those who have *prima facie* obtained the required number of credits for university admission, many fail to scale through the JAMB examination. And finally, those who apparently did do well in JAMB do not all perform well after admission in the universities. This, as we know, has led to the introduction of the so-called 'post JME tests' performed by each university itself, and which have surprisingly sparked off controversy even in high places.

If the quality of the majority of secondary school leavers leaves much to be desired, a great deal of worry is also currently being expressed about the quality of the universities themselves. One may say that part of the reason for this is that, until recently, perhaps a sizeable number of undeserving students have gained admission; but the universities themselves cannot be entirely absolved of responsibility as funding and staffing have become increasingly difficult in the institutions. One now commonly hears the universities being accused of producing graduates who are unemployable.

To cope with access, however, a number of universities, like the University of Lagos, are making university education possible through distance learning. One can in fact trace the origins of distance learning to the extra-mural departments which used to be very strong and effective in the 'first generation' universities. At a time when Ibadan was the only university college, and later university, its extra-mural department sustained a network which covered the entire country, though almost all the courses offered were at the sub-degree level. Also, to the extent that tutors went

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out to the various centres to teach, it could be a misnomer to describe this as an example of distance learning. The important point is that the university college/university did make its services available to students of varying ages and situations in life who did not have to come physically to the institution to pursue their courses.

The modern distance learning institutes add to the efforts of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in tackling the problem of access, and it is expected that the institutes are in close contact with NOUN in fine-tuning the channels of communication with their students.

Given a population of about 160 million, the country obviously still needs more universities, or more correctly, more access to university education. Meanwhile, there is the urgent necessity to develop the country in a world which is increasingly hostile to developing countries, a world in which, in spite of the much-trumpeted global village, every country has to look after its own interests, as contemporary events are making very clear. Speaking impressionistically, and without having to check our position in the economic league of nations, Nigeria is a very poor country. It is also an inequitable country, in which mind-boggling opulence among a very tiny proportion of the population exists cheek by jowl with unbelievable poverty among the great majority. The history of the developed countries of the world shows however that national development is driven by the growth of the middle class. The growth of the middle class, in turn, is propelled by the spread of a sound educational system.

Part of the reason for the country's present very slow rate of development is that, at a time, about thirty years ago, when the country was becoming increasingly wealthy as a result of the exploitation of mineral oil, it was advised by international organizations that the money should be invested in primary, and possibly secondary, education, rather than in university or tertiary education. Of course, it was clear that this was very bad advice, for how can you develop primary and secondary education without a robust university system? Unfortunately, the government of the time bought this advice, and so we are today where we are. In any case, there is very little to show for the huge sums of money that

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have purportedly been spent on primary and secondary education, and this is due in large measure to the poor quality of personnel running these tiers of education.

The idea of graduates teaching in primary schools would seem strange to many Nigerians; yet in other countries there are graduates specially trained for this tier of education. It is the duty of the universities to ensure good quality in the personnel at the lower rungs. The task is so enormous in this sector alone that even the 118 universities cannot be expected to cope effectively. They require the participation of the Open University and the distance learning institutes. The great advantage of the distance learning mode is that in many, perhaps even most cases, the beneficiaries are already in jobs, so that university education is bound to improve their efficiency rather than making them prospective job-seekers.

With the distance learning institutes complementing the efforts of the conventional universities, we can expect not only a rise in efficiency in jobs across the country, including the business of governance itself, but also a general rise in enlightenment (and may one dare add, morality) in the country. We would do well to recall that development started in earnest in Europe form the period of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, when the middle class began to expand apace and creativity was boosted. If we need a population that can competently think through the problems of the country, and who through their training are sufficiently creative in exploiting the many potentials of the country, we need a very large body of graduates, as has been found, for example, in Europe and America. It has to be admitted that the quality of the workforce in the country at present is generally dismally below expectation, and we must recognize that an incompetent workforce provides a fertile ground for corruption, the demon that currently holds the country captive. University education aims at training the intellect and refining character. The larger the number of persons in a country that have had the benefit of this kind of training, the better for the country's efficiency and morality.

In the Nigerian context where the demand for a minimum wage of N18,000.00 (the equivalent of about four dollars a day) is

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strangely controversial, it may be asked how the country will manage to pay the wages of the very large number of graduates required to turn the country around and make it work efficiently. One obvious answer is that, with that number of graduates and other high-level manpower, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) is bound to rise phenomenally, ensuring a decent standard of living for all. The GDP for the country as recorded for 2010 was 202,576 million American dollars. This placed the country in the 44th position among the 190 countries of the world. This compares with 14,528,550 million for the United States, 5,468,797 million for Japan and 2,250,209 for the United Kingdom. This shows that Nigeria still has a long way to go to catch up with the richest countries of the world. The resources, however, are there. What is required is a well-educated, well-motivated work force to turn the potentials into reality.

Education and the Millinneum Development Goals

Having discussed the importance of a highly enlightened citizenry for the development of a nation, we may now examine the goals of development which the Nigerian government has set out for itself, and this can be found in the millennium development goals which, along with other nations of the world, the country has signed up to.

There are, in all, eight goals incorporating 18 targets. Leaving aside the targets, these goals are as follows:

Goal 1:Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
Goal 2:Achieve universal primary education
Goal 3:Promote gender equality and empower women
Goal 4:Reduce child mortality
Goal 5:Improve maternal health
Goal 6:Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
Goal 7:Ensure environmental sustainability
Goal 8:Develop a global partnership for development

It is instructive that Nigeria undertook to achieve all these goals by 2015. It is even more instructive that from various reports, the country is not likely to meet that deadline. But this is hardly surprising. Looking at the goals themselves, one can say that they

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express only pious hopes, which some may argue is in the nature of resolutions at international conferences. The goals do not constitute a working agenda for development. For anything concrete to be done about those goals, Nigeria should have designed a **process** of development with verifiable milestones.

For example, what is the effect of saying, as Goal 1 does, that poverty and hunger should be eradicated? Any meaningful response to this would require a quantification of the problem. What really, apart from intelligent guesses, is the extent of hunger and poverty in the country? Surely, they are all pervading. But there is a difference even between 95% and 80%. After quantifying the problem, we can then meaningfully think of solutions. If the problem has to be overcome, shall we say, in twenty years, then we set up verifiable milestones. Those milestones may be the years 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015. It has to be seen that something is being done, and the media would be rendering a good service to the country by making it its business to verify all claims that are made.

We may begin by asking whether the country actually need be as poverty-stricken as it is. Many would argue that it need not. For one thing, there is outrageous inequality of distribution of the country's resources, with a small segment of people, mostly in political positions and in the new El Dorado of oil and banking businesses, enjoying an inordinate share of the country's wealth. To make matters worse, it is not at all clear that those who enjoy these advantages even pay adequate tax. Redistribution of resources can start from there, and then more money can be devoted to education, which is the only sure avenue for social mobility. The argument is not that those who work very hard should not be fully compensated for their efforts; but that there is a difference between adequate compensation and extravagant compensation, as is currently realized even in the most developed countries of the world.

A sterile argument has been going on for some time now in the country as to whether the country should devote 26% of its revenue, as purportedly advised by UNESCO, to education. But the country does not really need UNESCO's advice on this matter. The government of Western Region in the 1950's did not seek any

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external body's advice before spending more than that percentage on education, nor did General Rawlings in Ghana more recently. The bottom line for national development is the development of the human capital. And no development of the human capital is possible without a vibrant university and higher education system.

Goal 2 is obviously relevant in this connection. The country has been fighting an epic battle with universal primary education which started in the 1950's in Western Region with very hopeful signs. But it seems thereafter that the more money is thrown at the problem, the less returns the country has obtained. The provision of this Goal is, therefore, only a reminder of the problem which for various reasons has defeated the country for a long time. This is, in an important sense, an organizational problem. It is difficult to justify the federal government seeking to control free primary education. If this had been the case in the 1950's Western Region would not have been able to register the success that it did with the programme. The presence of gigantic sums of money in Abuja would seem to have attracted the wrong kinds of people who were given contracts but nether bothered to deliver. To run a successful programme of universal education, we need a virile local government system, not a system in the pockets of the state governments. All we now get are accusations and counter-accusations as to how the huge sums of money allocated to education have disappeared. Competent and well-educated citizens must take an interest in the running of the local governments because this is where the lot of the ordinary people can be improved. Appropriate legislation may be called for here to ensure the right kind of personnel at the helm of affairs at the local government level.

We can then quantify the problem. For example, each local government will decide how many more classrooms and teachers are required to achieve Goal 2. Then milestones are set up: how many more classrooms and teachers are required on a yearly basis between now and 2020, which is our own chosen year of destiny. Again, the media should agree to be the watchdog of the population, making sure that the agreed goals are met.

The development of a virile tertiary education system would ensure, on the one hand, that the kind of personnel required for

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running the local government are readily available, and at the same time that the staff to run colleges in which teachers are produced for this level of education are also readily available. Once again, attention to university education would pay off.

Goals 3 to 5 have to do with the welfare of women, which predictably suffers in every poor and underdeveloped country. What is required in Goal 3 is that there must be a way of measuring the progress being made in the admission of girls at all tiers of education. Admittedly, without reliable census figures it will be difficult to measure exactly what progress is being made in this area. It does seem, impressionistically, however, that the record of admission of women to the nation's universities is satisfactory. Indeed, in course of time, there may well be more female than male undergraduates, which would probably reflect the proportions of the sexes within the population. The long-term effect of this is already becoming evident, with more and more women distinguishing themselves in prominent positions in government and business. With regard to Goal 4, the expectation is that, with continuous improvement in the educational status of women, child mortality will be drastically reduced. Women would know how to take good care of themselves in pregnancy and would pay due attention to their nutritional needs. It is necessary to remind ourselves that a better educated society is a more prosperous society able to provide the basic necessities of life. This also goes for Goal 5, which deals with maternal health. A society of well educated, well-informed citizens is inevitably a healthier country than a society of poor and ignorant citizens.

It is right for attention to be called to maternal health, but an opportunity should also be taken of stressing the need to improve health services generally in the country. This means building more hospitals and making services in them affordable. If the millennium goals were a serious programme for development, we should know by now the rate at which the number of hospitals in the country has been increasing in preparation for the arrival of 2020, since the 2015 envisaged in the millennium goals document is clearly out of the question. It is not too late to start serious planning.

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With Goal 6 we come to some of the burning issues of the day. It cannot be said that nothing is being done in the country to combat HIV/AIDS and malaria, thanks very largely to external funding. But we would do well to reflect that HIV/AIDS and malaria thrive most virulently in countries where there is acute poverty and a very low level of education. Without adequate education, people cannot understand the real nature of the disease and must, therefore, rely on popular, sometimes misguided, beliefs about the condition. At the same time, acute poverty makes it difficult, if not impossible, for people to look after themselves without massive assistance from inside and outside the country. There is, it is true, considerable activity, but the planning underlying those activities, if there is any, is not made clear to the public. We need to see a clear road-map to the eradication of these scourges, and an attentive media to report exactly what progress is being made.

It is obvious that not enough basic research is being done in the country about these and other health conditions; but rather, we seem happy to adopt the research done in other countries and eagerly apply them here. The reason for this is obvious. No country, it is true, can be completely self-sufficient in research, but there is a certain minimum that every country should aim at, if only for security reasons. Unfortunately, the research capacity of Nigerian universities has dwindled with the years. We know very little about the people who inhabit this country, how many they are, and how many languages they speak, in precise terms; about the nutritional value of what they eat; about simple inventions from the raw materials that we have that can make life more tolerable and more productive for us. A specific example is malaria, on which the most basic research is done outside this country, and even in countries which do not suffer from the disease. If the millennium goal is to be met, we need to see the way in which the research capacity in the country is to be boosted, with verifiable milestones. Funding is always a constraint, but misplaced priorities are also a significant problem. The implications of this for a robust tertiary system of education are obvious.

A clear plan to meet Goal 7 does not seem to be in place. Sustainability of the environment is one of the big worries of this

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age, with national self interests standing in the way of a joint global action. Nigeria also needs to articulate its own national interests, and a clear plan should be put in place to ensure that we preserve our own corner of the world for posterity. Obviously, the country has to watch out for stronger countries which seek to preserve the sustainability of their own environment at the expense of the weaker nations.

Goal 8 is one which deserves careful examination, for it harbours the possibility, as does Goal 7, of stronger nations taking advantage of weaker ones. What sort of partnership can we have between very weak nations and very strong ones? Partnership is best based on equality, rather than on altruism, and so Nigeria's first responsibility is to reduce the yawning gap separating it from its stronger would-be partners. For this purpose, the country has to look more inwards than it has done thus far, for it cannot be safely assumed that Nigeria's development is necessarily compatible with the development of other countries. The country has to decide exactly what sort of partnership it requires and on what terms.

This really brings us to the crux of the matter. The kind of goals that Nigeria needs is one which clearly signposts the country's determined march from a weak, raw material producing nation to a strong manufacturing one. If such a set of goals can be successfully executed, everything else will fall in place. There will be more money to spend on education, as a result of which the latent mental energies of Nigerians throughout the country will be released, making development an on-going, endless process. This is a very large area which cannot be dealt with here, but we need the most efficient phasing and sequencing of projects designed to raise the country's GDP on a continuous basis—how the mineral resources of the country can be maximally exploited with Nigerians in the driving seat; the order in which industries are to be established with a view to improving, again on a continuous basis, the standard of living in the depressed rural areas, so that all Nigerians can make their own contributions to the nation's development process. There are enough experts in the country to see to the design of this grand plan, and it may not be the same as what passes for national planning at the moment.

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Education: The Overriding Goal

In case it is not clear from what has been said so far, let me repeat that no meaningful or lasting development is possible without close attention to education. This is a fact clearly realized in every part of the world, with the result that even highly developed nations are seeking to spend ever more money on education and improve their human capital. It is now commonplace to hear people remark that this is the knowledge age. If the possession of a secondary school education currently defines the educated man in many parts of the world, countries which are alert to their responsibilities now aim at giving practically all their citizens tertiary education.

The same spirit is abroad in Nigeria, where the founding of universities has been liberalized, so that the country now has, at the last count, 118 universities, 45 of which are privately-owned; and the number is growing. This number is still comparatively small, given the population of the country which is now estimated to be about 160 million. Given appropriate reforms at the primary and secondary levels, and a more reliable system of selection and admission, the country should be able to support 300 universities which would give value for money.

Meanwhile, we have the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) and the Distance Learning Institutes or Centres of the universities to cover the existing large areas of need, with resultant increase in self-esteem and productivity on the part of the beneficiaries. Many Nigerians have been given a second chance of acquiring university education through the same institutions, which are able to offer admission to large numbers of students who are able to follow their courses at a more leisurely pace than the conventional students in the universities. These institutions are by no means a temporary measure, but should be part of the university system catering for the special needs of their clientele.

The Distance Learning Institute of the University of Lagos clearly illustrates the point. It was part of the original concept of the university itself and came into being in the same year that the university was established, in 1962. Lagos was already the commercial centre of Nigeria and, with an eye strictly on rele-

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vance, the mandate of the establishment which was ultimately to be christened Distance Learning Institute of the University of Lagos, was clear, as stated in the Institute's Prospectus:

> The provision of facilities for part-time studies in such fields as Business Studies, Accounting, Law and Education through correspondence and distance learning techniques.

That makes this Institute unique among similar establishments in the other universities in the country. I have every reason to believe that it has been discharging its mandate most creditably, thus contributing to the educational development in the country, and ultimately to the development of the country itself.

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SECTION IV

University Governance

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10 CHALLENGES IN UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA*

I was at first taken aback when I was approached by Professor Idowu Olayinka with a request to address this assembly of petroleum explorationists. It is true that I am a regular consumer of the end-products of their labours, but addressing the experts in the field, I thought, was a different matter. However, I was soon relieved to discover that this Keynote Address is intended to be in the field of university governance, in which I am a little more comfortable. But that was not the end of my dilemma. What, I wondered, is the relevance of university governance at a conference whose theme is "Enhancing Skill-Based Learning and Professionalism in Geoscience Education in Nigeria?" Perhaps at first blush not so obvious, but it seems to me that the organizers of this forum have rightly come to the conclusion that the well-being of their profession is inextricably linked with the well-being of the university system; and for this realization, I heartily congratulate them.

It has to be said that not many professionals recognize the fact that excellence in their profession is ultimately contingent on excellence in the university system. Indeed, there has even been a sad period of our national history when the government allowed itself to be persuaded that money spent on the universities was mostly money wasted, and that the country should be investing in primary education instead. But what kind of primary education is that which does not rely on well-run universities to produce good teacher-trainers who in turn would turn out competent staff for the primary schools? I do not think that we have as yet lived down the

* Presented at the 12th Leadership Forum of the Nigerian Association of Petroleum Explorationists-University Assistance Programme, University of Ibadan, 15-17 March, 2013

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consequences of such absurd counselling by an international agency. The universities determine the tone of a country's entire education system, and ultimately the tone and pace of its national development.

University governance is traditionally discussed in terms of a typology of unicameral, bicameral, tricameral and the so-called hybrid models. These terms are sufficiently self-explicit, and to us in this country who are used to the bicameral model, it may seem strange that there are universities which are unicameral, implying that the duties of university Council and Senate are vested in a single body; or universities which operate a tricameral model in which, in addition to the governing Council and Senate, there is also a body known as the university Educational Council, whose main function is to oversee the election of Chancellors and Rectors. The hybrid model, as one would expect, reflects the incorporation of features of the other models into what is essentially a unicameral model.

The beauty of the bicameral model, with which we are familiar in this country, is that it neatly divides the responsibilities of a university into the academic, for which the Senate is responsible, and the management of finance and property, which is the function of the university Council. But more important is the fact that both Senate and Council operate through a committee system, on which the overall efficiency of a university is dependent, and some of the committees necessarily have joint Council and Senate membership. For example, in matters of the appointment of Vice-Chancellor, and the award of honorary degrees, there are joint committees of Council and Senate involved, but such committees report to Council.

Practice differs even among Nigerian universities. In some universities, for example, the Appointments and Promotions Committees are committees mandatorily reporting after every meeting to Council, which must take all decisions, whereas at Ibadan, for example, the Council has delegated its powers in this respect to the committees themselves, whose decisions are final, even though it is recognized in all universities that the Council is the employer of all university staff. Provided the committees operate in accordance with the provisions of the university law setting them up, it is unlikely for any serious problems to arise.

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The Vice-Chancellor, as the executive head of the university, is of course the most important agent for efficiency in the institution. As Chairman of Senate, he gives leadership in determining the academic standards of the university and in ensuring the welfare of staff and students. At the same time, his importance on Council is reflected in the fact that he sits next to the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman at meetings of Council and is undoubtedly influential in the conduct of Council meetings. It would be useful, therefore, to consider the governance of a university in terms of the burdens that this key individual is called upon to bear, especially in contemporary Nigeria.

The first, and certainly most onerous, burden is that of finding enough funds to run the university. This particular burden has been much talked about in the past twenty years or so in the country without any bold or innovative attempt to solve the problem involved, which is a systemic one. The federal government has continued to create more universities without correspondingly increasing the allocation to this sector of education. Obviously, it is not in a position to go on doing this forever, and the assumption to question is whether the federal government should continue to offer near-free education in all its universities, when the financial situation of the country hardly justifies this.

For one thing, the emergence of private universities has demonstrated that students' sponsors are prepared to pay substantial fees for their wards' tertiary education—indeed, many parents have even been doing this for their children in primary and secondary schools. Free tuition in federal universities may be an attractive ideological stance, but it increasingly makes less financial good sense. The simple solution is that, even in federal universities, the financial burden should be shared by the government as proprietors, and all the other beneficiaries. I define the beneficiaries as the federal government, the State governments, the local councils and the students themselves. I have suggested (Banjo 2012) a manner in which all tiers of government could contribute in agreed proportions to the running of all universities, whether public or private. Scholarships and bursaries can, additionally, be offered imaginatively to ensure that competent but indigent students are not excluded. In many developed parts of the

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world, the practice is to make students take loans to finance their university education; but many would argue that this country is not yet sufficiently developed for this.

The second burden is that of ensuring that the very highest academic standards are maintained. The constraint of finance is here immediately apparent, but a university should never lose sight of its responsibility for the very highest standards of teaching, learning and research. In this connection, a university is as good as its academic staff. It is they who ensure the highest standards of teaching, learning and research, as well as the admission of students with a demonstrated aptitude for serious academic work. Here, the Senate and its committees are in focus. By presiding at the meetings of the Appointments and Promotions Committee and of the Staff Disciplinary Committee, which are committees of Council, the Vice-Chancellor ensures that only those with a proven record, or an unmistakable promise, of a successful academic career are employed and that the ranks of academics at the university are scrupulously kept from any kind of pollution. At the same time, by presiding over the business of the Development Committee of Senate, the Vice-Chancellor is able to keep in view an orderly growth of the university's actual and projected contributions, nationally and internationally, to the growth and dissemination of knowledge.

Part of the burden here is that of satisfying the growing insistence on relevance. In some respects this opens up the necessity for the university to work in collaboration with the private sector to ensure that the products of the university are adequate in number and relevance to the world of work. Associations like yours obviously have a role to play in this respect, and indeed I suspect that it is this realization that has led to our assembling here today. Until the very recent past, Nigerian universities had not managed their external relations with the private sector as seriously as they should, but there are clear indications now that things are changing.

Finally, it is important to consider the burden that the Vice-Chancellor bears in relation to staff and student welfare, on which the peace of the institution largely depends. If the Vice-Chancellor bears those burdens earlier mentioned internally, the manner of his

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bearing the burden of staff and student welfare is unavoidably borne in full glare of the public. Indeed, for many onlookers from outside the university itself, the success of university governance is determined mainly by the way that the executive head is able to keep the members of staff happy in and out of the workplace, and how he manages to keep the students contented in and out of classrooms and laboratories.

Every Vice-Chancellor naturally aims for the ideal situation in which there is peace and contentment on campus, but a number of factors that he has to contend with may make it difficult for him to realize this ideal. Perhaps the most important of these factors is the unionization of staff and students.

Student unionism is an accepted integral part of university culture everywhere in the world. Student unions make it possible for students to acquire the desirable qualities of democratic self-reliance and leadership. Allowing students much scope in running their collective affairs, and giving them a voice where considered necessary in the larger governance of the institution, are necessary steps in achieving peace in that very excitable segment of the university population.

There seems to be no consensus on the extent to which the students as a body should be allowed to participate in the governance of a university. Certainly the Student Union has to be guided by the university authorities, but it should, at the same time, be given enough freedom to be creative in responding to the requirements of its members, and should certainly be allowed to collect union dues directly to the union's coffers rather than through the university bursary, knowing that a union that fails to secure the financial support of its members is a discredited union.

There have been perennial debates over which of the committees of Council and Senate should have student representation. I would personally find it difficult to justify the presence of students on either Council or Senate but, as has long been the practice here at Ibadan, students certainly ought to be represented on the Student Disciplinary Committee and the Student Welfare Board. They can also be represented on ad hoc committees specially set up to solve specific student problems.

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But the dimension of student unionism that poses an even more complex problem is the fact that problems may not originate from within a particular campus but may be imported into it. The reason, of course, is that the union at any public university is a branch of the national union of students, and a dispute and breakdown at one university can lead to a sympathy strike which grounds the entire university system. This is a feature of publicly-owned universities which calls for an imaginative solution. Private universities, while encouraging unionism within their campuses, disallow affiliation to the national union, precisely for reasons of stability.

The situation is even more bewildering with regard to staff unionism, for there are, usually, not one but as many as three unions which may sometimes be hostile to one another. The basis of the hostilities, usually, is the perceived preference given in the scheme of things to academic staff and their union over the senior non-teaching staff and their union. The privileges relating to study leave, sabbatical leave etc, which are obviously *sine qua non* to the career of an academic, are now being claimed by the members of the other unions. The latest demand by these two unions is to enjoy the same retirement age as the academics. I am sure all these are matters that can be rationally resolved but are potential flashpoints for a very busy Vice-Chancellor to grapple with.

Like the student unions, staff unions in public universities are branches of a national union, with the kind of problems discussed above also applying. Again, the private universities do not allow their staff unions to be affiliated to the national union though, it must be admitted, any benefits successfully claimed by the national union immediately provokes the demand for similar benefits in the private universities.

The basic problem is the extent to which each university is allowed to be different from the other universities. Ideally, the Council of each university should be able to determine the conditions of service for all the categories of its staff. The private universities, indeed, act independently of one another, but it may be claimed that this is because they have different proprietors. A trend to be commended is that of the federal government giving greater freedom of action to the Council of each of its universities,

including the right to appoint the Vice-Chancellor. Federal universities do not have to be carbon copies of one another or operate an identical university law but, like the private universities, should be empowered to be distinct and add something unique to the entire mosaic of our university system.

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11 ON GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES IN UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION[+]

Introduction

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to the officers and members of the Association of Nigerian University Professional Administrators for this opportunity of attending this year's conference of the Association and presenting a Keynote Address. I cannot fail to recognize the symbolism of my presence. By inviting someone who is better known as an academic to play this role at your conference, you are underscoring the fact that the university is one unified body, and that all the sectors of the university are profoundly interested in one another's well-being and progress, in an effort to deliver the excellence which the institution of the university stands for.

I am, indeed, no stranger to ANUPA. I recall that during the first incarnation of the Association - that is, before the rebirth which resulted in your 1999 conference here at this university, I was introduced to the activities of what I believe was the University of Ibadan branch of the Association by the late Taiwo Okusanya. I recall that my reaction to the revelation of an association of university administrators was in two parts. First, I wondered whether this was a splinter group from the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities, which was at that time better known; but then I was struck by the seriousness of ANUPA as an association dedicated to professional excellence rather than conditions of service. In fact, it seemed to me then, and still does now, that ANUPA is more in the mould of learned societies identified with universities, and our meeting here this morning is further proof of that.

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[+] Keynote Address at the Association of Nigerian Universities Professional Administrators National Conference, University of Ibadan, 24-27 November, 2013.

In addressing the Registry staff of a sister university recently, I suggested a revision of the widely held definition of a university as a community of scholars or academics because it tends to marginalize the so-called non-academic members of the community. While advocating the categorization of the staff of a university as teaching and non-teaching, instead of the more usual one of academic and non-academic, I then suggested that the university is simply a community of scholarly people. Again, our meeting here this morning is further proof of that.

The Pursuit of Excellence

Excellence is the hallmark of a community of scholarly people, and it is clear that ANUPA is dedicated to administrative excellence in a university. It is hardly surprising therefore that your conference this year is devoted to a consideration of emerging issues and global best practices in university administration. I am sure that such an assembly as this would be the last to require a definition of a university, but since one of the papers expected at this conference has to do with "globalization and universities in Nigeria", it may be worth our while to draw attention to the fact that the word 'university' contains, or at least strongly implies, the word 'universe'.

Universities, from the beginnings in Bologna in 1088, have always extended their sights above local particularities in the composition of the courses that they designed and the nationalities of the scholars. The original Masters, as academics were known in the early days, in fact wandered from place to place. That was how from Bologna, some of them eventually arrived in Paris, and from Paris to Oxford, with many of their students in tow. The utilitarian possibilities of a university education gained prominence only during and after the industrial revolution in eighteenth-century Europe. But even after the desirability of universities aiding industrial development had been realized, universities still remained true to the universality implied in their name.

Students today may not follow their professors as the latter migrate from one country to another; but the fact of that migration stares us in the face today in Nigeria, emphasizing the fact that a

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university throws its doors open to scholars from all parts of the world, and that a Nigerian academic from Ibadan does not feel like fish out of water when he finds that he has to practise his profession at Oxford or Harvard.

University Professional Administration

There probably was a time when university administration was not regarded as a profession in the highly technical sense. Anyone with a good degree which qualifies them to work in a scholarly community got a job in the Registry and, aided by their intelligence and education, soon found out what was expected of them and turned out to be very good university administrators. There are instances of some of such people carrying on research privately in their discipline; and they may even eventually cross over from the administrative to the teaching cadre in the university. All this goes to emphasize the high intellectual quality expected of all the so-called senior staff of a university.

Admittedly, it is not easy for university administrators to migrate with the same degree of ease as university teaching staff. I suspect that the reason for this is that university administrators have not evolved the same kind of universal standards as the teaching staff. Indeed, the management of universities may differ somewhat from country to country; and sometimes even from place to place within the same country. But the divisions of the Registry appear universal—student affairs, examinations and records, appointments and promotions, student admissions, the servicing of Council and Senate and their various committees, etc; and surely, an administrator from one country can within reasonable time make adjustments if they have to migrate. The fact remains, however, that it is a universal feature of university Registries all over the world that they are much less racially or culturally mixed than the teaching sector.

In the British system, on which the Nigerian university system is based, professional university administrators are under the Registrar. I doubt that universities, such as in the United States, which have Vice-Presidents (Administration) can claim that such Vice-Presidents are professional university administrators, any

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more than, in our system, Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Administration) would like to be regarded as professional administrators. The professional line of university administrators is headed by the Registrar.

The generally accepted definition of a university Registrar, as provided for example on the internet, is as follows, and it gives us a universal basis for what obtains in every university across the world:

> The University Registrar provides leadership to plan, organize and manage all the activities related to records and regulation... including serving as the official authorized keeper of student records.

Professional university administrators have the responsibility for enabling the Registrar to carry out these duties efficiently. More than that, every professional university administrator is a potential Registrar. The implication of this is that in recruiting university administrators, only those who have the makings of a future Registrar should be recruited. This quality control is essential for the well-being of a Registry.

As the above quotation indicates, the activities that go on in a university Registry are "planning, organizing and managing all the activities related to records and registration". The question that arises is: How do you ensure that university administrators are versed in these areas of activity?

The Training of University Professional Administrators

Apart, perhaps, from courses in higher educational management which may be offered at the undergraduate level in B.Ed courses, there is hardly any way of ensuring that any fresh graduate is an expert in university administration. But this is neither surprising nor odd. Most management courses, and in particular university management courses, are best offered at the postgraduate level. All that the rookie university administrator requires is a sound first degree to entitle him or her to a place in a scholarly community. It is even desirable that the first degrees of the Registry staff reflect the various disciplines available in the university.

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Management courses are best pursued by people who already have some experience in management. It seems to me that the best way of getting good university administrators is by sending them for in-service training. A number of universities offer a Diploma in Higher Education Management, but for the rest, specialization can take place at either Masters or Doctorate level, although a doctorate degree normally points the way to a teaching position at the university.

But whether or not a member of the Registry staff has qualifications in higher education management, it is desirable that he or she has continuous exposure to best practices throughout his or her career, through study leave. It is incumbent on universities to facilitate this by arranging visits for the Registry staff to see what goes on in some of the best universities in the world. In this way, the universality of the teaching departments of universities can be extended to the administrative sector. This is all the more important because of the rapid changes now taking place in information and management technology.

These changes have important implications for the way that the university Registry is organized and how business is conducted there. It is therefore not surprising that one of the papers to be presented at this conference is entitled "Bureaucracy and Information Technology in the 21st Century". I am not an expert in this area and am pleased to note that a very competent expert has been assigned to speak on the subject. However, I would like to make one or two observations.

The current revolution will undoubtedly lead to a reduction in the Registry staff, but this will be mostly in the category of the so-called junior staff, since most of their jobs will be computerized. At the same time, however, all university professional administrators will have to be at home with the computer, which will take over the more routine aspects of the making, keeping and retrieving records. This development is already well established in other parts of the world, notably Europe and America, and the adoption of best practices demands that the practice in Nigeria should be at par with these other universities.

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As a result of the optimum use of the relevant technology, efficiency will be enhanced in all areas of Registry activities, not least in the registration of students and in issuing transcripts, which one hopes can now be ready as soon as students complete their courses at the university, and without their having to travel hundreds of miles to collect them from the Registry.

A good university deserves a corps of good administrators. Just as the teaching staff constantly update themselves and search for excellence, so the professional administrators in the university should seek, through training and re-training, to keep up with global best practices.

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12 REFLECTIONS ON UNIVERSITY REGISTRY WORKFORCE*

Introduction

I wish to begin by expressing my thanks to the Registrar and the Registry staff of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, for the privilege of delivering the first in the series of Registry Lectures of the University. I am particularly glad at the opportunity because it enables me to participate in an exercise which recognizes that activities such as this should not be confined to the academic sector of a university. Rather, they call to question such an arbitrary complete dichotomy between academic and non-academic members of staff of a university community. Sometimes, indeed, the dichotomy is said to be between academic and non-teaching staff, and still sometimes, between academic staff and support staff.

Perhaps we should consider the implications of these three variants. Many senior Registry staff have misgivings about being classified as 'non-academic staff'. It is not enough, they would argue, to say that this is normal university usage, or that the terms are defined by the Laws of the universities. The fact remains that the term, 'non-academic', especially to someone outside the university system, is ambiguous. Apart from being taken to refer to staff who are not engaged in strictly academic duties, it can also be supposed to refer to the educational standing of the people so referred to. The term, 'support staff', may even be objected to more strongly by people who may argue that it reduces the importance of the Registry. The basis of this nomenclature, obviously, is that teaching, research and public service are the central concerns of a university, and that these activities are the

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raison d'etre of the teaching staff. Other sectors of a university, according to this argument, are there to support the academics in carrying out their assignments. Again, there may be a non-derogatory sense in which this is true, but some people may consider that it unnecessarily consigns the Registry to an inferior status, which is hardly the intention of the Laws setting up universities. As I shall try to show later, the classification which is not only the most acceptable but also the most accurate in modern times, is 'teaching and non-teaching staff'.

The Nature of a University Registry

The operations of a university Registry have necessarily grown in complexity over the centuries. We can imagine that at the inception of the university tradition in Europe at Bolgna (1088), Paris (1200) and Oxford (1214) there was no unit designated as the Registry. Enrolments were small and the Masters looked after the students and performed whatever rudimentary administration was necessary. Indeed, the students followed their Masters as the latter moved from one university to another. With the growth of student enrolments, however, a bureaucracy developed, and the administration of universities increasingly became professional.

The head of the Registry is, of course, the Registrar; and a review of the Registrar's job descriptions on the internet provides the following definition:

> The university Registrar provides leadership to plan, organize and manage all the activities related to records and registration... including serving as the official authorized keeper of student records.

It is evident that the work of the Registry has progressed far beyond mere clerical functions, and since a university is an elitist institution, it has become necessary that only individuals of impeccable academic standing are recruited to the senior cadre of the sector. It is therefore hardly surprising that, over the years, the line of demarcation between the academic and the so-called non-academic staff has become blurred. Increasingly, individuals have to have a Master's degree to stand a chance of recruitment into a

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Registry. Indeed, some holders of doctorate degrees have opted to work in the Registry rather than in the academic departments. At the same time, there have been lateral movements from the Registry to the academic departments. Even at the very top, the history of the University of Ibadan reveals that the third Principal of the institution in its College days, John Parry, moved over from the position of Registrar of the University of Cambridge to take up the appointment. A university has thus increasingly become not just a community of scholars, indicating only the teaching and research staff, but a community of scholarly people. This reinforces the preference for the use of 'non-teaching staff' instead of either 'non-academic staff' or 'support staff.'

Current Trends in University Administration

It will have been noticed that the word 'records' is emphasized in the specification of a Registrar's job given above. No doubt, the storage and retrieval of records is at the heart of a Registry's activities. Registry staff service meetings all the time, record the minutes and are expected to retrieve records on demand. The ability to do this almost effortlessly marks out a good Registry from an indifferent one. However, today, ICT has been pressed into service in most, if not all, Registries. This means that storage and retrieval of records are greatly facilitated. So also is the analysis of various data.

Nevertheless, the human factor in the operations of a Registry should not be discounted or devalued. ICT is, after all, as useful as the user makes it. In any case, the quality and reliability of records can only be guaranteed by human beings. Indeed, traditionally, most of the stars of a university Registry are individuals who can be trusted to provide flawless minutes of meetings, and to retrieve such records promptly on demand. ICT eliminates much drudgery from the Registry staff's operations but challenges them to be even more efficient than before. In addition, the staff have to acquire ICT skills and excel in them.

It is important to note that one inevitable consequence of the growing reliance on ICT is a cutback in staff strength in the Registry, leaving only the most competent staff. The impact of this will be felt throughout the university. Vice-Chancellors will access

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data from their desktops, as many of them are already doing. Other staff will similarly be able to transact business with their laptops, as is also already the case in some Nigerian universities. The category of staff to be most adversely affected, unfortunately, is the junior staff, but it is hoped that socio-economic developments in the country will eventually prevent wastage and unemployment.

Apart from making, storing and retrieving records, the Registry provides a crucial interface between the university and the general public. Enquiries about a university are usually addressed to the Registry. The promptness and courtesy with which enquiries are handled go a long way in determining the public image of a university. This is even more crucial in face-to-face interactions. The Public Relations Unit of a university, of course, has specific responsibilities in this area; but in reality, every member of the Registry should consider themselves a Public Relations Officer of the university in so far as their schedule brings them in touch with the general public or with the specific publics that they have to relate to.

A specific public that the Registry has to relate to is made up of intending students of the university and their parents or sponsors. Ensuring an efficient and transparent admission process is one of the most sacred functions of a university Registry. You will recall that, at the moment, the public has little confidence in the admission procedures into Nigerian universities in general. This is a grave problem which goes back to the conduct of the School Certificate Examination at the end of secondary education, a procedure riddled with disorganization and lack of transparency, which is further confounded at the JAMB examinations level. Then at the final stage, at universities, there are rumours of collusion between JAMB, students' parents or sponsors and university officials. Nobody is ever sure where the responsibility lies, but at last the universities have taken steps to break the cycle by instituting the post-JAMB tests. This makes Nigerian universities take responsibility for the students that they admit, which is the practice in all other universities in the world. One is bound to examine the motives of those, even in high places, who are opposed to these tests.

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For the universities themselves, the post-JAMB tests constitute an additional onerous responsibility. It is up to the schedule officers at the Registry to verify the genuineness of the credentials submitted by candidates admitted to the tests, and to ensure transparency. Meanwhile, the continuing value of the JAMB examinations themselves should be thoroughly examined, to see if reforms can be effected to make the examinations more predictive and the scores more reliable; or whether this hurdle between the School Certificate examination and university admissions needs to be removed. An alternative model would be to allow universities to shortlist candidates from their school certificate examinations results and then administer a test on them. The University of Ibadan did this in its earlier years, and it seemed to have worked perfectly. Admittedly, much larger numbers of candidates now have to be handled; but then, ICT can be pressed into further service here.

It is important for the Registry to maintain an *esprit de corps,* and this can be dependent on the relationship at the top between the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar. It is a curious fact that apparently in many Nigerian universities, relations are strained between the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar, with the Registry staff being tempted to take opposing sides. I recall the observation once made to me by a Nigerian who had headed a review of the university system. He had visited all the universities then in existence in the country at the time and said that in not a single university had he found the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar working harmoniously. In fact, he said that hatred would best describe the relationship in most cases. This reminded me of the epic animosity between the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, Kenneth Dike, and the first Registrar, Nathaniel Adamolekun. I wonder whether this is a peculiar Nigerian malady. The unfortunate situation at Ibadan polarized not just the Registry but the entire university.

Obviously, the persistent situation must be caused by a confusion of roles, although one would have thought that every university Law was clear on this. The Registrar's span of supervision is second only to that of the Vice-Chancellor. But the Vice-Chancellor is the Executive Head of the university, while the

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Registrar is responsible to him for the day-to-day administration of the institution, even though they are both Principal Officers. The problem seems to be the extent of freedom of action the Registrar is allowed in the discharge of his/her duties without first consulting the Vice-Chancellor. As a head of Department—and a Principal Officer to boot—the Registrar clearly does have such freedom which is not defined in the Law. Tradition and good intentions are meant to supplement the Law in this regard. The common complaint is that, on the one hand, the Registrar arrogates more powers to himself/herself than he/she is entitled to; and on the other, the Vice-Chancellor is dictatorial and usurps the functions of the Registrar.

Apart from the main Registry, Registry staffs are to be found in Deans' offices, departmental offices, and in every other unit. There are Registry staffs even in the Vice-Chancellor's office. This means that the area of friction between the two officers is quite considerable, and constant interaction is therefore desirable. But we must remember that the Vice-Chancellor is the academic and administrative head of the university. One notable area of friction is, precisely, the deployment of senior administrative staff in the university. Since this is a very sensitive matter, the Registrar would be well advised to, at least, inform the Vice-Chancellor before deployments are made public; and in the process of the annual deployment exercise, it would not be a bad idea to sound out even the heads of unit to be affected. All this would save the Vice-Chancellor from the awkward position, in the event of protests (usually arising from claims of supersession) of overruling the Registrar publicly. An extreme case would be the deployment of administrative staff of the Vice-Chancellor's office without prior consultations with him! All in all, the Registrar would do well to keep the Vice-Chancellor in the loop of the administrative affairs of the university.

On the other hand, Vice-Chancellors would do well to realize that universities are democratic, rule-governed institutions without room for any kind of dictatorship. Areas clearly identified as being in the Registrar's remit should not be encroached upon on the claim that the buck stops at the Vice-Chancellor's desk.

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The Registry has a primary responsibility for students, as the job-specifications earlier quoted clearly indicate; and we can illustrate with just two specific points at which the handling of students' requests and enquiries are crucial—the beginning and the end of a student's career. Students are generally confused and mystified by the process of registration and need the support and understanding of Registry staff. However great the pressure, Registry staff are expected to go the extra mile to show friendship and patience. Registration online is already possible at some universities, and this should bring about greater efficiency and less tedium. But still, the human factor should not entirely be lost sight of. Registry staff should, in fact, realize that students' first impressions of the university are formed through their experience at the Registry during registration.

The other illustrative point has to do with the unnecessarily tedious process of obtaining transcripts. All too often, harrowing stories are told by former students who are frustrated by attempts to obtain transcripts. Sometimes, offers of admission for higher studies at other universities are lost through this experience. Former students often have to travel several miles to their alma mater for their transcripts and may have to spend several days before they succeed. Former students who are already abroad and urgently need to have their transcripts sent to the universities where their applications are pending perhaps experience the greatest frustration. The love that such alumni should have for their alma mater is weakened in the process, and they may in fact harbour a negative attitude to the institution for the rest of their lives.

Surely, it ought to be possible for this whole process to be simplified and fast-tracked, realizing that the future of the individuals involved is at stake. It ought to be possible for transcripts to be offered within twenty-four hours of application, and no one should have to appear personally to collect it.

Welfare of Registry Staff

As we know, the way that Nigerian universities are organized, there is classification into 'junior' and 'senior' staff. Moreover, we

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know that there are junior staff in the administrative and technical sectors, but not in the academic sector. Inevitably, comparisons are made between conditions of service of senior staff across the board. Crucial to these comparisons is the notion of parity, presuming a standard of equivalents. In practical terms, this involves the setting up of equivalents across the sectors, so that it can be determined which particular grade in the academic sector, for example, is equivalent to which particular grade in the administrative or technical sector. This is a highly technical matter that I am not qualified to pronounce on, and one which a number of reviews of the university system have addressed. These include the Udoji review and the Cookey review; but I doubt if the last word has been heard on the matter.

However, it appears that there are also now demands for parity, not just between individuals in the three sectors who have been adjudged equivalents in status, but in terms of the same set of benefits being available to staff in all three sectors. We may illustrate with some examples.

Fifty years ago, it would have been unheard of for a senior administrative member of staff in the Registry at the University of Ibadan to apply for sabbatical leave. At that time, it was assumed that only academics in the teaching departments and the library could enjoy such facility. But later, the understanding gained ground that the core business of a university is to promote the growth of knowledge through research, and that research should be allowed to flourish in the university without any form of discrimination. Already, there was a critical mass of senior administrators who were qualified to engage in research. Sabbaticals have therefore been made available to senior administrative staff. But it has to be realized that in this matter, teaching staff will always be favoured. The reason for this is that, traditionally, sabbaticals are granted so that the recipient (usually a member of the teaching staff) can gain a greater insight into developments in their area of specialization, so that they can become better teachers and research supervisors, and also so that they can publish and make progress in their careers. In contrast, the progress of a senior administrator does not depend on publications, or on a record of supervision of research. The good thing is that in all universities in this country

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today, it has been accepted that sabbaticals are not the exclusive preserve of the teaching staff. So, some parity has been achieved in that particular area.

About twenty years ago, the government decided that Registrars, Librarians and Bursars should, like Vice-Chancellors, be given fixed tenures instead of being allowed to be in office till retirement. The argument seemed to be that if the Vice-Chancellor, the only other Principal Officer, was on fixed tenure, the same should apply to all the other Principal Officers. But surely, the reasoning is flawed. Vice-Chancellors in this country had always been on fixed tenure because vice-chancellorship, like deanship, is not a profession and had always been an elective post. The academic career terminates at professorship, and Vice-Chancellors are happy to return to their proper profession after a stint in the Vice-Chancellor's office. In contrast, the administrative career terminates at Registrar-ship, to which every senior administrator has a right to aspire through advancement.

When Vice-Chancellors complete their terms, they go back to their more enduring post of Professor. In contrast, what does a Registrar who completes his/her term at the age of fifty do after being made to step down from office? Little wonder that Registrars tend to retire completely from the university on completing their terms. The alternative would be, perhaps, to accept a sinecure position and endure an ambiguous relationship with the new Registrar while waiting to reach the retirement age. What it amounts to is the compulsory retirement of a Registrar at the end of his/her tenure, in spite of the fact that he/she got the job in the first place because he/she was considered the best candidate. That could be a great loss to a university.

There is also the resulting undesirable stampede every five years for the post of Registrar, with the instability that this may bring. Perhaps for this particular reason, Registrars are now allowed up to two terms. But, for the reasons advanced above, there can be no doubt that the best arrangement is one which allows Registrars to be in office till retirement age. The Law of each university surely prescribes how to deal with erring Registrars.

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The most recent efforts to bridge the gap between senior administrators and academics relates to the retirement age prescribed for the two categories of university staff. ASUU, thirteen years ago, fought for the retirement age of university academics to be raised to seventy. It had previously been raised from sixty to sixty-five. Senior administrators had fought to catch up with the academics when the retirement age for the latter was sixty five; but before they won that battle, ASUU had managed to get its members' retirement age moved to seventy. As things now stand there is still disparity, and it is perhaps a question of time before the senior administrators demand parity all over again.

It has to be said that the academics' union is more virile than any other union in the system. It has led the way in demanding for, and obtaining, better conditions for all university staff. The huge increase in the salaries of university staff across the board in 2001, for example, was due mainly to the efforts of ASUU.

Senior administrators belong, perhaps only in theory, to the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU). Significantly, this body does not call itself a union, and in practical terms, its affairs would appear to be dominated by the senior technical staff of universities. There is, incidentally, the Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU), which is confined to the junior staff in the universities. Apparently, the original intention of NASU was to be a counter to ASUU, a body which would embody all non-teaching staff in universities; but the awkwardness of putting senior and junior staff together in the same union was quickly realized. The technologists have similarly distanced themselves from NASU, to which they, in theory, should belong. A suggestion has once been made that each university should have just one union, within which there would be segments or divisions catering for the various interests within the workforce. This may sound Utopian, but it would reduce, if not eliminate, the rivalries going on among the various unions.

Thus we see that the Registry staffs are not as homogeneous as the academic staff. The result is that while the senior administrators are comparing their situation with that of the academics, they also have to cope with the desire of the junior staff not to be left far behind.

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The decision of SSANU to be recognized as an association rather than a union is significant. In the early days at the University of Ibadan, the academic staff went under the name of Association of University Teachers (AUT). Later, more radical elements in their ranks considered the association too tame and led the association into full-scale unionism. The change of orientation led to the change of name. Such radicalism is not to be found in the ranks of senior administrators, which is responsible for the remark made earlier that the senior administrative staff would appear only in theory to be members of SSANU. There is a culture at the University of Ibadan, which may have spread to all the other universities, that persons in line of succession to the Registrar's post cannot involve themselves in any form of trade unionism. Obviously, the intention is to maintain stability and loyalty within the Registry. It is also possibly because, as keepers of records, Registry staff should not be put in a position to deploy confidential information in fighting their employers. In any case, there are people who would say that a sense of decorum should prevent senior administrators from going on strike. Belonging to an association is a different matter.

But the desired stability is breached from time to time when junior staff of the Registry, under the aegis of NASU, go on strike, which they are tempted to do perhaps more often than other unions. Work is consequently paralyzed, not only within the Registry, but throughout the university. In any case, they are, unlike their senior colleagues, not expected to have access to any embarrassing classified information. The present situation is that senior administrative staff seem to be satisfied with pursuing their demands in a dignified manner, without any recourse to rocking the boat.

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Concluding Remarks

University administration is getting increasingly complex, and there is constant demand on the Registry to adapt. Student enrolments in universities have gone up steadily in recent years, and the disciplines have become increasingly complex in numbers as well as in variety. Yet the Registry is called upon to oil the

wheel of operations, so that calm is maintained. ICT will increasingly help the staff to perform their duties efficiently, but it is also important to ensure for them conditions of service commensurate with their responsibilities. At the same time, they should be encouraged to feel that they are part and parcel of a scholarly community, free to make their contributions to the research output of their universities, and eager at all times to bring a touch of excellence to all their assignments.

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SECTION V

The Humanities and National Development

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13 THE MISSION OF THE HUMANITIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY[+]

Introduction

It gives me great personal pleasure to be here today to deliver this year's Faculty of Arts Lecture of your University. This is also my first visit, and so I should like to congratulate your University on the progress and development that have taken place here since its inception. It is hardly surprising that such progress should have been made. Your former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adamu Baikie, is an outstanding scholar and veteran university administrator, and the university was lucky to have him at its formative stages. His successor and present incumbent, Professor Shamsudeen Amali, has been known to me for the better part of forty years. I had known him before and after he entered the University of Ibadan; have kept track of his progress during his postgraduate years in the United States of America; saw him rise to the position of Deputy Vice-chancellor at the University of Jos; and had the pleasure of being Pro-Chancellor for most of his years as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin. I am sure that he is giving the University the benefit of his rich experience.

Increasingly, the role that the university system has to play in the genuine development of this country is being recognized. Hitherto, lip-service had been the vogue, but with the stark reality of unemployable graduates staring us in the face, and repeated publications of the country's universities' lamentable showing in the ranks even of African universities, the message has indeed begun to sink in. It is however still not yet time for jubilation until earnest promises of reform are actually translated into concrete action, for wherever we turn, the inadequacies of our university system are evident.

[+] Faculty of Arts Lecture, Nassarawa State University, Keffi, 15 November, 2010.

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The intention in this lecture is to try and demonstrate the preeminent place of the Humanities in the operations of a university, but it is necessary to provide a background. The university, world-wide, would seem to have been constantly re-defined, to the extent that practically any subject under the sun can now be pursued at the university level—and, of course, a Ph.D. awarded in it. The idea of a disinterested pursuit of knowledge has been abandoned in the face of daunting developmental challenges, while it has to be admitted that ideas of democracy have found their way into the organization of courses in universities. The trend of diversifying the courses available at university level was started in the United States of America and would seem to have achieved world-wide acceptance. This, incidentally, is generating a new set of problems in the Nigerian setting. A cursory look at the list of denials of accreditation recently published by the National Universities Commission reveals that courses in Accountancy and Business Studies feature prominently in virtually all the institutions listed. The obvious explanation is the absence of good teachers, and for as long as the National Universities Commission insists that every teacher at the university level must hold a Ph.D, for so long will the problems persist, until a creative solution is found and implemented.

This is by no means the only area in which creative solutions to local university problems would be beneficial. In terms of the organization of the total university system, one solution was proposed in a Convocation Lecture to the University of Uyo in 1997 (Banjo 1997). Unfortunately, this has generated hardly any debate. Yet we must cultivate the habit of working out the solutions to our problems instead of simply shopping round for prototypes.

In spite of the diversification of offerings, most, if not all, universities claim to offer a liberal education to their students. And this harks back to the origins of the university in Plato's Academy in the fifth century B.C. where enquiries were freely engaged in; and these enquiries turned out to be humanistic and philosophical. This was the foundation on which the university tradition in Europe was built—from Bologna to Oxford, to Cambridge, to London, to Ibadan, and to other Nigerian universities. If there is anything that distinguishes a university from even the best

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technical institution, it is this concern for a liberal education aimed at the refinement of the human mind. And it should be borne in mind that modern universities are concerned with both the Humanities and Science. In spite of this, the aim of every university, at least the conventional universities—is to offer every student the opportunity of the kind of refinement which is concentrated in the Humanities. Nigerian universities try to keep up this tradition by compelling all students to take a course of general studies. And it is important to note that the students take these courses together, irrespective of their disciplines, to bridge the gulf artificially created between science and the humanities.

The Nature of the Humanities

The humanities have been aptly defined as follows in Wikipedia:

> The humanities are academic disciplines which study the human condition, using methods that are largely analytic, critical, or speculative, as distinguished from the mainly empirical approaches of the natural and social sciences.

We may note, in passing, that the difference between the methodology of the humanities and that of science is one of degree rather than of kind. It is the goals that differ widely. We may say that the aim of every conventional university is to make the student, however briefly, contemplate the human condition, and this is what the General Studies programme is designed to do in a nutshell.

Further emphasizing the importance of the humanities, the Rockefeller Commission on the Humanities, in *The Humanities in American Life (1980)* states:

> Through the Humanities, we reflect on the fundamental question: What does it mean to be human? The humanities offer clues but never a complete answer. They reveal how people have tried to make moral, spiritual and intellectual sense of a world in which irrationality, despair, loneliness and death are as conspicuous as birth, friendship, hope and reason.

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But what does a university gain by having a Faculty of Arts or Humanities? In the first place, the Faculty of Arts/Humanities is the unit in any university which provides continuity with the university's early Greek origins. In this way, it constantly reminds the university of its true mission and adds value to whatever practical skills the university may offer its students. Ironically, however, in modern times, this function of the Faculty is being underrated because its relevance is assessed in starkly utilitarian terms and in the quantifiable contribution it makes to national economic development. Thus the discipline of History, for example, has all but disappeared at the primary and secondary levels of the education system and has had to add on such crutches as "...and international relations" to make it attractive both to students and the proprietors of universities. This is indeed a sad development, since the products of the History and Classics Departments in this country have in fact made enormous contributions to national development by demonstrating how such studies have made them versatile in later life and by showing the inestimable value of a thoroughly disciplined mind. On the other hand, training in skills which is pursued to the total exclusion of human development is, in the end, counterproductive. This is what, it would appear, this country has been trying to do in the last half-century. The result is that human development problems have been looming even larger, manifesting themselves in all forms of corruption and a pervading lack of integrity. For this reason, the government owes it a duty to the country to ensure that the influence of the humanities, carefully nurtured in the universities, permeates every facet of the national life. It is all too clear now that the lack of human development lies at the root of all the other failures of development in the country.

The Ideal University

Let us remind ourselves of what the universities in fact exist for. We can do worse than refer to the seminal paper by that nineteenth century English thinker, John Henry Newman, titled "The Idea of a University" (1907). In the Preface to that paper, Newman writes as follows:

> When the intellect has been properly trained and formed to have a connected view or grasp of things, it will display its powers with more or less effect

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> according to its particular quality and capacity in the individual. In the case of most men it makes itself felt in the good sense, sobriety of thought, reasonableness, candour, self-command, and steadiness of view, which characterize it. In some it will have developed habits of business, power of influencing others and sagacity. In others it will elicit the talent of philosophical speculation, and lead the mind forward to eminence in this or that intellectual department. In all it will be a faculty of entering with comparative ease into any subject of thought, and of taking up with aptitude any science or profession. All this it will be and do in a measure, even when the mental formation be made after a model…

Newman's later argument is that it is the responsibility of the university to train the intellect in such a way as to achieve the results described above. According to him, the intellect should be "properly trained and formed to have a connected view or grasp of things". Knowledge, in other words, is interconnected, even though modern specializations may obscure this fact, and the discipline which captures this interconnectedness is philosophy, which was the preoccupation of Plato's Academy. Modern science is an outgrowth of this philosophical enquiry, and there are indeed universities in the world where Physics is pursued under the rubric of Natural Philosophy, while the relationship between Philosophy (particularly logic) and Mathematics is obvious. The more deeply any discipline is pursued, the more it approaches a philosophical enquiry, and it is surely no accident that the highest degree that any student in a university can work for, whatever his discipline, is Doctor of Philosophy—Ph.D. Even in the medical disciplines, the Ph.D. is rated higher than an M.D. (Doctor of Medicine). The Ph.D. degree unambiguously represents the interconnectedness of all knowledge.

Newman suggests that every intellect should be developed "according to its particular quality and capacity", thus allowing for individual differences. When this has been done, the result, for most men, is "good sense, sobriety of thought, reasonableness,

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candour, self-command, and steadiness of view". These are the desirable attributes of the products of a university, whatever discipline they may have followed. The intellect, having been so developed, will then be deployed in various ways in different individuals. "In some", Newman says, "it will have developed habits of business, power of influencing others and sagacity. In others, it will elicit the talent of philosophical speculation and lead the mind forward to eminence in this or that intellectual department". But in every case—and this is very important—"*it will be a faculty of entering with comparative ease into any subject of thought, and taking up with aptitude any science or profession*" (Italics mine).

Newman's words have implications, not only for the university, but for the whole education system, for it follows that the whole system should be devoted to the development of the intellect in the way that he describes. At the university level, the intellect, in addition to being further developed, is allowed to lead the individual into the line for which he or she is particularly suited.

There are some problems, however, in implementing Newman's ideas. The first, as already mentioned, is that it requires an appropriate orientation of the entire education system, because by the time the individual arrives at the university he may have been forced to take a decision as to which of the disciplines to follow. In addition, of course, the university itself is crucial in the full development of the intellect because the implication is that even after a decision has been made, the process of further development of the intellect has to be continued. The manner in which courses are taught would be crucial in this respect, as will the totality of the ambience and influences available in and out of classrooms.

Obviously, it will be found that some students have made wrong choices, either because the intellect has not been sufficiently developed to allow the right choice to be made, or because pressure is brought to bear on the individual to follow a particular discipline. This results in under-performance on the part of the individual, and a measure of failure for the university system.

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The Unique Place of the Faculty of Arts

There is an important message for a Faculty of Arts in all this. It will have been noticed that the suggestion is that the intellect should be developed for its own sake in every individual so as to allow for the best choice to be made later, one which takes full advantage of the individual's unique potential. It can be claimed that in any university, it is the Faculty of Arts that provides a unique opportunity for the further development of the intellect for its own sake. Some would claim that this means that it is the place where non-utilitarian training of the intellect is engaged in. But let us examine this claim in the light of what we have been saying. Prior to recent developments, the Faculty of Arts was one of the two Faculties where students enter without already having a clear idea what career to take up on graduation, except engaging, in turn, in the training of the intellect in the lower rungs of the education system. This is why the primary and secondary schools are run in the main by Arts and Science graduates, and the contributions of the Arts graduate may well be considered more crucial, for we regard the primary and secondary levels as where, among other things, the culture of the society in its most refined form is to be inculcated in pupils. By the same reasoning, since the university graduate is expected to exemplify the finest refinement, the Faculty of Arts may be regarded as the agency through which that refinement is, for the most part, transmitted.

The Faculty of Arts is the domain of linguistic, historical, philosophical and religious enquiries. Man, and his predicament and development over the centuries in the world, are the objects of the study of the undergraduate in the Faculty of Arts. No other Faculty is concerned with such a comprehensive study of man. The spinoff of this preoccupation on character is obvious; and therefore when a university certifies a graduating student as having satisfied the university in character and learning (and note, *not* in learning and character) it in fact relies on its Faculty of Arts to provide much of the informal training in character. This the Faculty does by the debates and lectures that it organizes university-wide. But infinitely more important is the role of the theatrical performances staged under its auspices.

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One defining characteristic of man is language. It is in the Faculty of Arts that this phenomenon is traced from its origins in antiquity, its geographical and social varieties examined and its most effective use cultivated; and this is done both in a Department of Linguistics and the different languagė departments. Notice how this single discipline relates to other disciplines in the same Faculty of Arts. I have referred to the *history* of language and of specific languages, and to *geographical* varieties of language and languages. Thus, in the study of language, history and geography are pressed into service, while in the study of social varieties, the Faculty of Arts joins hands with the Faculty of the Social Sciences. With psycholinguistics it also reaches out to the Faculty of Education. Thus the interconnectedness of disciplines which Newman speaks of is pursued, and the graduate of Arts, in ideal circumstances, is educated in the most profound meaning of the word.

We may also illustrate with Philosophy which, as we have seen, may be considered the mother of all disciplines. Apart from all university enquiries ultimately ending, as already indicated, with a Ph.D., most broad disciplines within the university have their own particular branches of philosophy; hence philosophy of science, philosophy of language, philosophy of Education, philosophy of religion etc. This means that a philosopher based in the Faculty of Arts may be interested in one or more of these branches of philosophy.

In spite of all this, why does a Faculty of Arts increasingly have to justify its existence in a university system? The answer lies in the consequences of the 18th century industrial revolution in Europe which has shifted attention from the study of man as an end in itself to the study of his physical environment in the quest for creating wealth and comfort for him. Increasingly, any enquiry that does not contribute directly and ostensibly to this new quest is looked upon as a luxury. This has ultimately resulted in a world dominated by greed, selfishness and other vices, and by a diminution of human moral refinement. Contrary to Newman's proposition that a fully developed intellect would naturally incline towards its unique talent, the finest intellects today are increasingly induced to pursue the sciences because the rewards are attractive.

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This trend in Nigeria, with its inchoate university system, can be, and is already being, counterproductive; and it is clear that at the moment, the country is more in need of human development than of physical development. The injunction to universities to admit undergraduates in a 60:40 ratio has not delivered the envisaged magic, and in fact there are hordes of jobless science graduates in the country contributing nothing to the country's development. One mitigating factor, in the case of Europe, is that the industrial revolution occurred after centuries of the tradition of humanistic preoccupation there; but even there, the neglect of the humanities is beginning to take its toll, and that is why, for example, immigration has become such an issue on that continent. Nigeria, on the other hand, would appear to have fallen between two stools. There is a neglect of the humanities, and at the same time, an unsatisfactory pursuit of science since many, or even most, science students in universities are attracted there for the wrong reasons and do lack adequate preparation.

By all means, a country has a duty to develop its natural resources and provide a comfortable life-style for its citizens; but this goal should not be pursed as an end in itself. The end should be the moral and aesthetic development of the citizen who has had his intellect fully developed before acquiring any professional skill, and who consequently lives in a happy and contented state.

It is not yet too late to pay greater attention to Newman's idea of a university and, consequently, recognize that in any conventional university, such as Nasarawa State University, the Faculty of Arts is, or should be, the heartbeat of the institution.

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14 SOME HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE NIGERIAN CONDITION*

There is, as we are all aware, a preoccupation in contemporary times with the idea of the African Renaissance, originally associated with Thabo Mbeki of South Africa but taken up by scholars across the continent who are concerned to see a return to African values after a period of colonization, and in the middle of neo-colonization and a threatened absorption of the rest of the world into the culture of Europe and America under the banner of a global village. Thus, for example, the Nigerian Academy of Letters, alive to its responsibilities, has expectedly dwelt on the basic theme of humanism in its last two Convocation Ceremonies. The first reminded us that "Development is about People", and I would recommend for your reading Professor Emeritus Ayo Bamgbose's Presidential Address on that occasion, and the Convocation Lecture by Professor Emeritus J.F. Ade-Ajayi, once the Vice-Chancellor of this university. The second occasion dwelt specifically on the theme of African renaissance. The link, I hardly need say, is obvious. If development is about people, then we must of necessity seek to define who the people are and seek to empower them by making them draw inspiration from their very roots. The linguistic dimensions of this enterprise were discussed in a masterly fashion by none other than Professor Emeritus Adeboye Babalola who, again I am pleased to note, was once a Dean of the Faculty of Arts of this university, our hosts on this occasion. Let us hope therefore that the intellectual underpinning of this renaissance is now being seriously examined in this country. And if the renaissance is to really and truly get underway, the universities, and in particular the Faculties of Arts, have to provide the leadership and inspiration.

* Presented at Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos.

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If the social scientists admittedly have the prerogative of expressing informed opinion on political events, the other kind of scientists—the natural or physical scientists—are given rapt attention when they tell us what we must do to be technologically, and therefore economically, developed. But note that spectacular technological development is, for example, doing little, if anything, to put an end to racism and other forms of discrimination in the most highly developed societies in the world. Rather, it seems to be further fuelling it. Moreover, technological development globally is giving rise to new anxieties about the very future of this planet. What is the future of the planet if every part of the globe were to be as technologically developed as Europe and the United States of America? What happens in that eventuality to the stock of this planet's resources? What kind of specialization is likely to be forced on the various regions of the world, the inhabitants of some of which, at present, are little more than passive observers of the activities of the great multinationals that will hold sway in the Village? Even if the whole globe were to be highly, but hardly ever equally, developed as a result of these activities, is world peace, based on equity, fairness and compassion also automatically guaranteed?

These and many other similar anxieties cannot be met without recourse to ideas generated by humanists and to a concern for the human condition. We can indeed go so far as to say that only a revival of humanism can save the world at large from premature extinction, and only a return to humanistic values can give any real meaning to the much-promoted global village, or to the problems of harmonious co-existence in the plural societies of the United States of America, the Balkans, Ivory Coast and Nigeria, to name but a few examples, or to the religious pluralism in the Middle East and Nigeria.

If man is to be rightly placed at the centre of development, then we need to ask whether the end is to enhance his happiness or heighten his pleasures on this planet. Without venturing into the philosophical debate, which surrounds this question, I presume that most people would agree that happiness is superior to pleasure, and that no amount of pleasure can necessarily add up to happiness. I

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suggest that technological development has brought about a great deal of pleasure in many parts of the world, and particularly to the highly developed societies. But whether it has made them necessarily happy is a debatable point. The reason is simple: technological development cannot be an end in itself, but is useful only to the extent that it serves the end of human happiness and development. I do not necessarily imply a dichotomy between human development and human happiness, for I do not see how, other things being equal, a man could be truly happy—as distinct from being merely contented—without being developed to the limit of his capability. Conversely, it would be an odd man who was fully developed without being happy. And as for the distinction between pleasure and happiness, we must notice that the great philosophers talk about the greatest happiness—*not the greatest pleasures*—of the greatest member.

The idea of humanism in the context of education came from fifteenth century Italy—the century most closely identified with the renaissance movement in Europe—and was, according to *Chambers's Encyclopaedia (1969),* "directed at inspiring examples of personal quests after truth and goodness". It ended up as any system of thought which set out to exalt or defend man in his relations with God, with nature and with society and advocated a return to classical models. We are familiar with Alexander Pope's affirmation in the eighteenth century of the centrality of man and of self-knowledge in his famous lines in "The Essay on Man": "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan. The proper study of Mankind is Man".

Faculties of Arts in universities throughout the world are heirs to this humanist tradition, and it is necessary to examine what exactly it entails in a Nigerian university at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In a sense, an examination of the offerings of courses in our universities provides part of the answer. The typical Faculty of Arts offers courses in languages, literature, philosophy, history, religion and the fine arts. These are courses that are man-centred. Unlike the physical sciences, which study natural phenomena, these subjects are concerned with the study of man and mankind. Language is central to that study, and we shall return to it later. Let me just say for now that without it, the study of the

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other subjects would be impossible. History helps to orientate man and enables him to appreciate all the influences that have combined to make him the sort of person he is, usually as a member of a particular community. As we can see, the very concept of renaissance has an obvious historical dimension. Philosophy emphasizes the fact of man as a pre-eminently thinking individual—*cogito ergo sum*—seeking to make sense of the concepts by which he lives and subjecting beliefs to scrutiny and questioning. Religion helps man to seek an understanding of the Deity and to strive towards a happy relation to Him. Literature helps him to explore this and other worlds, while the fine arts open for him the opportunity of creativity and of appreciating beauty.

While all these courses are available in every conventional university in this country, much criticism has been expressed about their contents as well as about their efficacy in bringing about the kind of human development that is expected of them. It is widely claimed that, true to their origins, the humanistic studies in Nigerian universities do not sufficiently confront the Nigerian condition and have therefore largely failed to offer an accurate study of the Nigerian human being whether in isolation or in social context. To prove this point, it is pointed out that the most widely studied language in Nigerian universities is the English language; the most widely studied literature is also in that language even when the authors in some cases are Nigerian or African; the philosophy studied is largely Western Philosophy, meaning philosophy originating from Europe or America. The teaching of History has perhaps made greater progress than other disciplines, but even so, as Afigbo reminded us recently, there is still a lot of room for improvement. The dominant theatre in the country is of necessity in the English medium, though the theme is almost always Nigerian.

I believe that the universities are doing their best in the circumstances and within their limited resources to make their curricula relevant, and certainly no Nigerian scholar in any of them would deny that his ultimate concern is with the quality of the Nigerian individual as a human being.

There is, in our situation, always the constraint of language. English is the language of all instruction at the university level.

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There are those who claim that an inevitable distortion is introduced into the study of the African situation when the language of enquiry is not an endogenous one. There is certainly no denying the fact that the ideal situation is one in which the medium of instruction and of research in the Nigerian universities is an indigenous national language of the country. But a realistic approach to the situation clearly indicates that this is an ideal that is not likely to be realized for a long time to come.

The situation is a lot worse when we move lower down to the secondary and even primary tiers of education where the English language looms very large in the curriculum either as a subject of study or both as a subject of study and the medium in which the other subjects are taught. The trouble here has to do not just with the authenticity of the material in the language in which it is presented but also with the capacity of the pupils to assimilate that material in that language—not to mention the ability of the teachers to use the language effectively as a medium of instruction. But while granting that there are intrinsically serious problems here, it is very clear that the situation could be a lot better if the teaching of English within the entire educational system were taken more seriously. Not enough attention is paid to the language in spite of its importance not only within the educational system but also in the national life. The result is that employers and the general public alike have increasingly adversely commented upon the performance in English of even the products of Faculties of Arts of Nigerian universities. Being a bilingual is nothing to be apologetic about in this day and age, and the linguistic deficits of the average Nigerian is a cause for alarm as it severely limits not only his understanding of what is happening around him but also his own potential for creativity. The importance of an optimal language policy to promote the unity and well-being of the country is briefly touched upon below, but it must be said that that policy must, for the time being, continue to give an important place to the English language while every effort is made to strengthen the indigenous languages. English is no longer a foreign language in Nigeria, but a second language that is being actively indigenized. It is the language in which, for better or worse, most creative thinking is done in the country today.

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After forty years of independence, Nigeria has still not discovered the magic formula for a happy and prosperous polity. I am sure that other speakers at this conference who are more competent to do so will address the economic dimensions, so I shall confine myself to some of the social and political aspects of the Nigerian condition. The incessant cry of marginalization indicates that sections of the community rightly or wrongly do not feel that their interests are being sufficiently taken care of, and the traditional sources of friction, which in recent times seem to have been exacerbated by the return to civilian democracy, are pluralisms in ethnicity and religion. It can be argued that this represents a dismal failure of the country's educational system during the last forty years as it has failed to produce authentic Nigerians out of the welter of ethnic and religious groups. Exhortations are not enough to weld together a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country of over one hundred million inhabitants. I am not competent to suggest a political structure which might do the trick, but any structures which do not pay enough attention to the individuals and groups who make up the country are not likely to bring about the desired effect.

Let us now briefly return to the question of language. I doubt that anybody can tell us exactly how many languages are spoken in this country as first, second or third language, together with the profiles of the speakers—and that is part of the bigger problem of our lack of self-knowledge as a nation. What linguistically holds the country together is English, which is an imported language, and one must add that it holds the country together rather tenuously, for perhaps less than ten per cent of the population speak the language at all, and perhaps less than five percent speak it competently.

It is not, however, as if past rulers of this country had been unaware that it would be well-nigh impossible to forge unity among disparate groups making up a country in the absence of a linguistic rallying force. So in 1977 and then 1981 we had the promulgations of the national language policy in education. Twenty years later, no life has yet been breathed into that law.

Even the nationally-recognized three major languages have hardly spread beyond their traditional borders, while the speakers of the minority languages still feel threatened with linguistic

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extinction. Nothing has been done to get any two Nigerians from any two randomly chosen parts of the country to speak spontaneously with each other except, in a tiny minority of cases, through some halting form of English which makes the interlocutors feel alienated.

Moreover, the 1979 constitution made provisions for the use of the three major languages as additional official languages in the legislature at the centre, with similar provisions for the State legislatures. The necessary preparations to make these provisions operable have however not been made, and so no practical effect has been given to them, at least at the centre. It is hoped that renewed efforts will now be made within the new Universal Basic Education scheme to do two important things in the field of language: to enable Nigerians from all parts of the country to speak with ease with one another, and to give every Nigerian a language that he can do creative thinking in, whether or not that language is indigenous.

We are now accustomed to being told that the unity of this country is not negotiable. Everybody of course agrees that this country, with its size and population, is a blessing both to us and to the continent of Africa. But these assets have to be worked on to produce a strong and happy nation, and the national track record in this respect is frankly very disappointing. We have tended to imitate countries which are already much more successful than ourselves and mistaken the trappings of success for the reality. We have an elite which hankers after pleasures rather than happiness, and the rest of the country, even in the middle of grinding poverty, have taken the cue from their leaders. We shall return to this theme later, but what worries most right-thinking Nigerians today is the prominence of ethnic and religious antagonisms. Expectedly, various forms of solutions have in the last four decades been advocated, from the brief experimentation with unitary government in the sixties, to a federation with a strong centre during the last thirty years, and now more recently, to suggestions for a looser form of federation—even confederation has been mentioned. The impression created is that we simply have to reach inside a bag of possibilities and pick the winning ticket, and everything will magically fall into place. Of course it has not, and will not, unless we do something about it and get our priorities right.

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There are indeed various examples of successful federal arrangements in different parts of the world—in the United States of America, which we have decided to imitate but only superficially, and Switzerland, to name two examples. But each of these countries is unique in its history and cultures, and neither of them presents a model that Nigeria can be cloned from. We have to accept that there is no viable alternative to working out our own salvation, as other countries have done.

Two extreme possibilities are open to a group of disparate groups wishing to come together as a nation. One model is that of a melting pot, in which the various groups are encouraged—even sometimes forced—to give up their individual characters for a national character. The trouble is that this national character may turn out to be identical with the character of the most dominant group in the arrangement. This naturally breeds resentment among the other groups, and instability in the polity. This, I suppose, is at least part of the reason why the unitary experiment had to fail in this country. Quite rightly, nobody is advocating a return to it.

The alternative model is that of the salad bowl, in which all the groups coming together retain their identities and produce a richer, stronger and more colourful whole. Most Nigerians would immediately agree that this is the appropriate model to adopt in this country. It is, moreover, the model that a humanist would advocate, for to him, no culture is superior to another, and on no account should any group of people be compelled to give up their culture and be assimilated into another. But this model also has its own problems. If all cultures are equal, and by implication all languages are equally important, how do you solve the national language problem? Some may think that this is only a clever way of introducing the melting pot model, because they believe it will lead to the extinction of all the languages except the chosen national one.

Truly, we cannot have two hundred national languages in Nigeria, in the sense that every Nigerian is able to speak each of those languages. Some kind of structure has to be introduced in consonance with the reality of our situation, but in such a way that no language is killed off but rather each is assigned a role in the

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life of its mother tongue speakers. The national language policy on education already alluded to above seems to be seeking to tackle the problem in the right way. Still, some may feel that it is unfair to make every Nigerian speak the three major languages in addition to their own mother tongue. This, however, is nothing unique to Nigeria. India, for example, operates a policy in which English and Hindi are the official languages while the regional languages are assigned roles in their various areas. With the creation of States in this country, regional languages are also emerging in the country in addition to the designated three major languages, and the media is happily, promoting them.

An appropriate answer to the national language question has far-reaching implications for the unity of the country, and it is quite possibly the anxiety to get it right that explains government inaction so far. But humanism has even more to offer in this regard. A great deal of the fear and mistrust is due to ignorance of the nature of the groups which make up the country. Apart from proclaiming the equality of cultures, the humanist would suggest that the groups are quite possibly not as foreign to one another as might have been thought. Any Nigerian who has travelled across the country knows that his experience is different from what might be the case if he were to travel across Europe or China. Two factors in this regard seem to be at work. The groups are culturally related (some more so than others) and there is genetic relationship among the languages (again, more so among some languages than others). For example, most of the languages in the southern parts of the country can be traced back to a common ancestor, and most of those in the North to two or three common ancestors. But in addition to genetic relationships, there is also the factor of influence. Many of the languages—and as a consequence, culture—have, over time, influenced one another, so that you may now have Hausa loan words in Yoruba, and vice versa—a factor which operates both vertically and diagonally across the country.

What is lacking is good humanist education in our educational system, one which brings home to Nigerians early in life the fact that the differences among the various groups in the country are often exaggerated. This would, among other things, pull the rug

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from under the feet of politicians who try to capitalize on ethnic differences. But it is important to stress that merely preaching to people that there is little or no difference basically between one group and another is quite different from demonstrating the fact over a number of years to young Nigerians so that they grow up in the right frame of mind. In the humanities, there is work to be done here, particularly for the linguists, the historians and the philosophers. Professor Afigbo has suggested one way in which the History syllabus can be restructured throughout the educational system with this end in view, and similar ideas, leading to the provision of appropriate curricula and text books, need to be generated by other humanistic scholars.

In the sphere of religions, there is, interestingly enough, no quarrel among the practitioners of the traditional African religions. Rather, it is the two major imported religions that have tended to be polarized. To the humanist, this need not be so at all, for ignorance and prejudice seem to be at the bottom of the hostilities. For one thing, the two religions do have quite a bit in common, and what is required is a way of letting the adherents knows this from a fairly early age. For the rest, the kind of liberal education that humanism advocates should inculcate tolerance on both sides.

This finally brings us to the level of the individual, for group attitudes are, after all, determined by individuals. If the individual is to be the end of all development efforts, this means that the most important activity for any government is education. The suggestion, obviously, is not that a country should concentrate on producing Arts graduates to the exclusion of graduates of other disciplines. Rather, the recommendation is that all Nigerian children should have a sound liberal education at the primary and secondary levels, a sound infrastructure on which various professional formations can be built. At the same time, scholars in the universities should continue to extend the frontiers of our knowledge of Nigerians as individuals, as members of their various ethnic groups, and finally as citizens of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. Nation states are going out of fashion, and everywhere, larger groupings are being formed. The problems of Nigeria are eventually going to be shared by these groupings. For

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example, the European Union now has to work out a language policy that is acceptable to all the member-States, but then they are perhaps more fortunate in the sense that there has for centuries been a feeling of cultural affinity among the countries of Europe.

Developing physical structures without first developing the individuals is like casting pearls before swine, and we can see this in the way that beautiful edifices quickly degenerate in this country into slums, and how public spaces are swiftly converted into rubbish dumps. We see it also in the almost total lack of consideration for one another by motorists, and how petrol shortages—brought about in the first place by highly anti-social individuals—quickly produce rowdy scenes at the petrol stations. It can even be seen in the ease with which workers in sensitive areas of welfare and the economy go on strike without any compassion for those who may suffer or even die because of such actions, and in the easy recourse, in times of personal difficulty, to the primordial cocoon of the individual's ethnic group. A love of beauty and order, a concern for truth and a disposition for compassion—all these are the products of a liberal education founded firmly on humanism. Without actively cultivating these attributes in the individual, national development may well prove to be a mirage and the people who make up this multi-ethnic and multi-religious community may remain perpetually at war among themselves. Before applying for membership of the global village, let us first of all build a Nigerian village of happy, decent and compassionate individuals, not selfish, pleasure-seeking bullies.

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15 THE WAGES OF OBSESSIVE MATERIALISM[+]

"The greatest happiness of the greatest number" is the Utilitarian philosophy associated with the name of the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1806-1873). By this philosophy, an action is considered good if it increases pleasure, and bad if it increases pain. Contemporary politicians explicitly or implicitly, or perhaps just supposedly, make this the guiding principle of governance, but its weakness was highlighted by another British philosopher, Thomas Carlyle (1875-1881) who described Bentham's proposal as "pig philosophy" because, according to him, "it appeared to base the goal of ethics on the swinish pleasures of the multitude".

John Stuart Mill, for his own part, in attempting to refine Bentham's philosophy, postulated a distinction between higher pleasures and lower pleasures. He put it graphically by saying "Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied". For him, the lower pleasures were pleasures of the flesh, whereas the higher pleasures were pleasures of the intellect.

Immanuel Kant's *Categorical Imperative*, however, offers us a more acceptable alternative. Kant 'universalises' morality. According to Roger Jones:

> What Kant means … is that the way that we judge an action to be moral is to universalize it: if I want to know if telling a lie on a particular occasion is justifiable, I must try to imagine what would happen if everyone was to lie. Kant thinks that any rational being would agree that a world in which there is no lying is preferable to one in which lying was common; in a society in which lying was common no one could trust the word of anyone else.

[+] Nigerian Academy of Letters Convocation Lecture, delivered in 2007

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Thus it would be necessary to combine Kant's *Categorical Imperative* with John Stuart Mill's refinement of Bentham's Utilitarianism to arrive at a moral guide in the governance of any country. The extent to which governments, particularly in developing countries, are strongly moved by ethical considerations is in doubt, but Bentham's Utilitarianism is obviously a vote-catcher, if even as an unfulfilled promise.

It is correctly assumed that the chief function of a government is to enable every citizen to improve his lot in life. To this end, the government is supposed to care for the material as well as spiritual well-being of the citizens. But since material well-being is obviously more easily measurable than spiritual well-being, most governments feel that they should be concerned with only material well-being, leaving spiritual matters, in any case, in the hands of religious organizations. We all know what Nigerians mean when they talk about 'the dividends of democracy'. They are obviously not clamouring for more Churches and Mosques to be opened. Indeed, new Churches are opened everyday in the country, with results that are truly baffling. As for governments, it is fashionable for them to describe their States as secular States, emphasizing the separation of politics or governance, and religion. Recent events in Turkey remind us of the passion that the prospects of the mixture of politics with religion can generate.

The laws of a country are, hopefully, based on ethical foundations. No country that we know of rewards individuals for committing murder or robbing their fellow citizens; but the State does not consider it its business to inquire into the morality of the citizen's action provided the laws of the land have been at least technically observed. All too often in the developing world, the State is more concerned for its citizens to be happy than for them to be good. And it concentrates, not on the pleasures of the intellect, but on those of the flesh.

If the government considers individuals' morality to be none of its business, it is legitimate to ask what the agency, to which that responsibility has been remitted, is doing about it. There are countries where religion helps citizens not only to be legally correct but also morally upright. Indeed, citizens in such countries are encouraged to concentrate on the morality of their actions, in

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the sure belief that by doing so, they are unlikely to infringe any serious laws. We shall later consider the role that religion is playing in the Nigerian predicament.

In Nigeria, if the government does not go out of its way to produce good citizens, we may enquire with what success it has been producing happy citizens, even employing the narrow definition of happiness which assumes that material comfort is the sole basis of happiness. The provision of certain creature comforts is inevitable for the happiness of the citizens of a country. Citizens require a roof over their heads; they require a steady supply of energy, without which living in the twenty-first century is well-nigh unbearable; they require security; they need an abundant supply of water; and they need the assurance of an income which makes them live a decent life, however that is defined.

If these conditions for modern living are not provided by the government, the citizens, not surprisingly, embark on self-help. If the situation is serious enough, the provision of these necessities on a private basis becomes the passion that rules the citizens' life. Inevitably, accumulation of sufficient wealth to enable the citizen to keep his head above water takes precedence over everything else. Materialism comes to rule the citizen's life, pushing into the periphery any concern for strict moral behavior. Thus the roots of obsessive materialism in the modern day have to be traced very clearly to the inability of a government to ensure the minimum material comforts for the citizen. The resulting disequilibrium between materialism and morality is further aggravated by a rat race in which conspicuous consumption becomes glorified, further intensifying the spiral of obsessive materialism.

Materialism is a phenomenon that every society in the world has to cope with, and it is, naturally, exacerbated by the amount of wealth in the society and the methods of distribution of that wealth. Mediaeval Europe had little problem with materialism because the accumulation of wealth was not particularly a preoccupation. This is still the case in many parts of Africa and other parts of the developing world. But with industrialization in Europe and the discovery of mineral wealth in parts of Africa, materialism has come to assume a global village being promoted by people who want to have for themselves as much of the wealth of the entire world as possible.

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A personality test on the internet provides the following among other main indices of materialism:

(1) wealth seeking–i.e. the individual wants as much of the available wealth for himself or herself;
(2) preferring extravagance - i.e. the individual wants to show off the amount of wealth they have succeeded in accumulating because they equate wealth with human worth;
(3) selfish i.e. having no social conscience;
(4) seeking status and power relative to peers - this refers to the competition and rivalry that goes on among people known in Nigeria as 'money bags';
(5) regarding looking good as more important than comfort - i.e. preoccupation with appearance rather than reality;
(6) manipulative - i.e. engaging in wheeling and dealing;
(7) experiencing a need for applause - which, of course in reality, betrays an inferiority complex;
(8) keen to win awards - evidence of a deep feeling of insecurity;
(9) prefers instant gratification - which betrays a lack of profundity.

These indices are, of course, not to be regarded as absolutes, but each of them can be calibrated perhaps into a three-way grading. Anyone possessing any of these traits to an appreciable degree can be regarded as being obsessively materialistic.

There are those, of course, who argue that obsessive materialism is the basis of capitalist democracy which has been imported into Nigeria, and find little wrong with it. Such people have, in admiration, commented on the dynamism of the Nigerian people, saying what wonderful go-getters they are. There have, to be sure, been experiments in socialism, in which materialism is reduced to the minimum and the government takes off the responsibility for providing the basic and modest material comforts of life from off the shoulders of the citizens. But these have become unfashionable since the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the much-lauded free enterprise does encourage

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obsessive materialism even in countries which are admired by the developing countries, and the situation may get out of hand, as it appears to be doing in Nigeria at the moment.

But why do many rulers in the developing countries indulge in a shameless acquisition of wealth at the expense of their people, who are impoverished by their leaders' greed? It cannot be said that these leaders indulge in this behavior in order to provide adequate material comforts for themselves. If anything, their countries ensure that they live in absolute luxury at no expense to themselves. So there have to be additional explanations for obsessive materialism among the elite, and particularly the rulers, in developing countries. One explanation is offered by Jibril in his classic lecture delivered to our Academy in 2003 (Jibril 2005:67), who cites Takaya (1997), who in turn cites Ali Mazrui as positing the theory of 'monarchical tendencies', which, according to Mazrui, explains why African leaders "regard themselves as modern replacements of traditional rulers". Indeed, most rulers in Africa see themselves as reincarnations of the heroic powerful ethnic lord of a bygone age who really was lord of all that he surveyed, including the public treasury. Illusion of grandeur might be a more appropriate name for this affliction; but society, sadly, pays the price.

There is also the nouveau riche syndrome, which of course is by no means peculiar to developing countries. The nouveaux riches would appear to be haunted by the memories of a poverty-stricken upbringing and the mortal fear of a relapse. They therefore feverishly accumulate wealth, enough not just to last their own life time, but those of their children and grand-children as well. They, of course, usually suffer from poor or indifferent education.

Counting the cost of obsessive materialism can be rather depressing. Corruption, which in different degrees seems to be an inescapable feature of capitalist democracy everywhere, becomes enlarged in developing countries such as Nigeria because there is little curb on the rapacity of the nouveaux riches, and no safety net for the genuinely indigent. It has been remarked, with justification, that corruption has been structured into every facet of Nigerian life. But it is not often emphasized that it is not a vice indulged in only by the high and mighty but also by the lowly citizens who apparently must be corrupt in order to survive. The gateman at

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offices, the security man in public and private places, the policeman on the street—all fight to keep the wolf from the door by corruptly exploiting their fellow citizens. A Nigerian parliamentarian was once quoted to have said that the giving of gifts—a.k.a - bribes—was an important feature of traditional African culture which should not be interfered with. Indeed, Nigerians would appear to be making a fetish of corruption resulting from obsessive materialism, for when economic necessity is added to cultural endorsement, it is indeed a Herculean task to try and stop it.

Obsessive materialism also promotes unwholesome social stratification. We are told that the middle class is in the process of being restored in Nigeria. But the difference between the emerging middle class and the one which preceded it is very clear. The previous middle class consisted mainly of civil servants and teachers who were content with the moderate wages that they received. Now their ranks are being swamped by the new middle class in the private sector where full rein is given to materialism. The private sector is creaming off the best brains available in the country and there is a steady drift from public and educational establishments of people who want the best for themselves and their families. Perhaps it is even a misnomer to refer to this as the middle class since there is really no class above it. The stratification therefore is between this class and the rest of the country, most of whom earn only a fraction of the salaries in the private sector dominated by big business. This new class is being given every encouragement by the government in its desire to hand over the commanding heights of the economy to the private sector. This development is breeding social discontent and social antagonisms while stimulating higher degrees of obsessive materialism among the rest of society who, after all, do operate in the same economy. One prominent result of this is the unending demand for better salaries among the professional class who are struggling to hang on to the lower bands of the new middle class. They are what Jibril (2005) would refer to as the sub-elite. The quiet rivalry between them and the elite proper is the source of much instability in the country because demands for better wages are all too often accompanied by industrial action.

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But the place where many Nigerians would love to be is the National Assembly where, it would appear, our rulers live in a world of their own. Much investment is made in terms of bribery and even forgery, to be there. The pay is good, totally unrelated to what goes on elsewhere in the country, and the severance pay at the end of a leisurely tenure of four years is unbelievable. *The Vanguard* of Monday, 28 May, 2007 carried this story:

> Governor Chimaroke Nnamani of Enugu State has released mouth-watering packages for members of the state House of Assembly whom he described as 'conscientious sons and daughters' who boldly held their own stead in the course of the last segment of his administration.
>
> These packages (sic), which include the monetization of official residences and cars of the Honourable Members, as well as allocation of huge plots of land in the highbrow Independence Layout, Enugu, had the added monetary gestures of severance and other due allowances, among other provisions.

But perhaps this is even nothing compared with the huge expenditure, according to Jibril (op. cit.:85) in the first year of a parliamentarian's tenure. A careful computation by Jibril of expenditure from legitimate and other earnings brings the total figure to N83 million per parliamentarian for the first year alone.

No one who observes contemporary Nigerian manners, and pays particular attention to the Nigerian newspapers, can fail to have noticed a sickening display of sycophancy which pervades social intercourse in Nigeria. Why is this so? Apologists might say that it is a carry-over from the culture of respect for age and position which is present in perhaps all the ethnic nationalities in the country. But there is an important difference. Deference for age and position is exhibited in the local cultures in a dignified and formulaic manner, except perhaps in dealing with natural rulers, in which case there is deliberate theatre. And in any case, no material reward is expected in return for such deference. Rather, it is all in an effort to keep the ruler in good mood and thus provide a form of social lubrication.

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On the other hand, sycophancy in recent years has reached a shameless level, with individuals, patently harbouring clear and unmistakable motives, taking whole pages of newspapers to fawn over those from whom material reward is obviously expected because of their positions in society. This phenomenon has resulted in a general lack of respect for merit, for it you flatter those who supposedly matter sufficiently you can reach positions which you do not deserve while keeping out those who deserve them. The ultimate goal, of course, is the accumulation of wealth by any means imaginable. The resultant enthronement of mediocrity cannot be expected to aid the development of the country but rather gives further impetus to corruption.

There is great lamentation, honest or feigned, in the country about the falling standards of education in the country, and the gloomy picture was constantly painted by the last Minister of Education, who appeared genuinely outraged by the situation. But why should anyone put themselves through the strain of studying hard to emerge at the end with a good degree when there are less painful short-cuts to the accumulation of wealth, the assumed goal of human existence? As can be expected, this revulsion for sound education is more prevalent among those male students who are sure they can make their way to the top through a combination of cheating, corruption and sycophancy. So unerringly is the future of the country being mortgaged.

What is happening to education should be a cause for great concern to everyone in the country. Reports from secondary schools speak of finely developed methods of cheating in the school certificate examinations, with cell phones now being pressed into service to relay answers surreptitiously to candidates in examination halls. Why cell phones should be allowed in examination halls in the first place beats one's imagination. It simply shows the scant regard in which transparency is held generally in the country. Jubril (op. ct.) reports that:

> In 2004…the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) had to cancel the results of some 116,000 candidates who were involved in examination malpractice.

The figures have probably gone up in the last two years.

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Then many of those who fail the examinations in spite of strenuous attempts to cheat at that level turn up at the universities with fake results sold to them by some officials of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board. These results are bought, we are told, on behalf of the students by their parents, no less! And an even more bewildering revelation is that such parents sometimes find collaborators in some universities which, themselves, should be looking for the very best candidates for admission.

The reason for this is the craze for certificates in the country as an aid to securing undeserved jobs. It is believed that, as a result, there are very many forged certificates in circulation in the country, even, as we have found, among the country's rulers. The scam has now been sent a notch higher by people who overnight adopt the title of 'Doctor'—presumably of philosophy—or even 'Professor', and hotels in the country lend their premises, obviously for a fee, to the staging of fake graduation ceremonies where doctorate degrees—including higher doctorates—are freely sold. There appear to be no limits to the extent to which some people will go to get where they do not deserve to be, in an effort not to be left behind in the rat race. In the process, scholarship is made a mockery of.

Anyone who owns an email address must find that they are besieged on a daily basis by people at pains to swindle them, and the persistence of this scam suggests that there are people gullible enough, or more correctly, desperate enough—to be taken in by it. Names of Ministers and high government officials are falsely but freely used to deceive the unwary gambler, without any consideration for what this does to the image of the country which, in any case, is already regarded as one of the most corrupt in the world. The standard gambit, unimaginatively repeated in mail after mail, is the story of a person, quite often a female, who has access to millions of dollars which only they know about, and which they are prepared to share with their correspondent if the latter would be so kind as to furnish the writer with the details of their bank accounts. I wonder how many Nigerians have fallen for this cheap trick.

Another wage of obsessive materialism, of the disequilibrium between morality and materialism in human conduct in Nigeria, is

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the traffic in human beings. Again, this is not a Nigerian original idea, but the ruthlessness with which it is pursued boggles the mind. *The Vanguard* of Wednesday, 30 May, 2007 carried the following story. I crave your indulgence to quote it in full and unedited to preserve its flavor:

> A human-trafficking syndicate with the kingpins in Libya has been uncovered at Uro-Irri community area of Delta State.
>
> Trouble started for the Syndicate when the family of the girl in question, Miss Oregbor, a secondary school dropout, aged between 25-27 years from Idheze community, who was trafficked to Libya, confronted the contact men who were resident in the town.
>
> She was said to have been taken to Libya by the syndicate without the knowledge of her fiancé who had been taking care of her and her sick father.
>
> Few months after the girl left the shores of Nigeria, the two contact men received some monetary compensation from the kingpins of the syndicate with which they purchased motorcycles and started moulding blocks for their respective buildings.
>
> A concerned native, Gowon Adebe, who smelt a rat all along, got information that she was trafficked by the syndicate and in conjunction with the family members of the girl, they confronted the middle men, who demanded for (sic) N1 million, being their expenses in trafficking the girl abroad before they would work for her return back to the country.
>
> He reportedly petitioned the police in Delta State and the two suspects were picked up. They allegedly conferred their role in the human trafficking syndicate and entered an undertaking that they would produce her in two weeks time but they failed to deliver.
>
> According to Adebe: "When I contacted them, the two entered an undertaking with me that they were going to

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> ensure the return of the girl and that I should give them one week, so after one week, I called them and they told me that because they spent so much money on the girl, I should provide N1million if I am so much interested on the girl's return.
>
> They asked why am interested in the matter, that after all, the girl in question is not my relation but if I so desire her return, I should provide the money.
>
> I told them human trafficking is an offence and an abomination in Isoko, and I will not close my eyes because I have children and I don't want such a thing to happen to any member of my family or my town.

All this is redolent of the trans-Atlantic slave trade of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but even the slavers of that era did not make monetary demands on the slaves' relations! But also, there is a picture of abject poverty evoked by the story. As soon as the slavers collected the money, they proceeded immediately to buy motor cycles and began the foundations of the buildings of their personal homes. It portrays what human beings would do to solve their existential problems in a society that they believe does not care for them. How, by the way, did the slavers expect rustic villagers in a remote region of Nigeria to come up with N1million?

There have, to be sure, been spirited attempts to defend what has here been referred to as obsessive materialism, and one of the best known is that by Andrew Carnegie in his thought-provoking article, entitled, appropriately, *Wealth* (Carnegie 1889). Carnegie in the very first sentence of the article (p. 1) provides his solution to the problem posed by wealth.

> The problem of our age', he declares solemnly, 'is the proper administration of wealth, so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and the poor in harmonious relationship.

Notice that Carnegie is not concerned with the eradication of poverty, but with ways of making the rich and the poor live

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together harmoniously. Carnegie believes that the disparity in society is brought about by the 'law of competition', which he believes, is 'not only beneficial, but essential for the future progress of the race.'

Carnegie reserves some scathing remarks for those he termed 'socialists and anarchists', the two terms presumably referring to the same group of people as far as Carnegie is concerned. He says (p.7):

> The socialist or Anarchist who seeks to overturn the present conditions is to be regarded as attacking the foundation upon which civilization itself rests, for civilization took its start from the day that the capable, industrious workman said to his incompetent and lazy fellow, "if thou dost now sow, thou shall not reap," and thus ended the primitive Communism by separating the drones from the bees. One who studies this subject will soon be brought face to face with the conclusion that upon the sacredness of property civilization itself depends - the right of the labourer to his hundred dollars in the savings bank, and equally the legal right of the millionaire to his millions. To those who propose to substitute Communism for this intense individualism the answer therefore is: The race has tried that. All progress from that barbarous day to the present has resulted from its displacement. Not evil, but good, has come to the race from the accumulation of wealth by those who have the ability and energy that produce it.

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There could not have been a better manifesto for capitalism, and for the obsessive materialism that goes along with it. Carnegie adds, for good measure:

> ...the law of accumulation of wealth, and the law of Competition...are the highest result of human experience, the soil in which society so far has produced the best fruit. Unequally or unjustly, perhaps, as these laws sometimes operate, and imperfect as they appear to the idealist, they are,

> nevertheless, like the highest type of man, the best, and most valuable of all that humanity has yet accomplished.

Carnegie was writing, of course, before the rise of communism in Easter Europe, but it is doubtful if his views would have been altered by the rise and spectacular fall of that system.

We may wonder just how much all this is applicable to the present situation in Nigeria. Is the accumulation of enormous wealth in the hands of those who possess it in the country today, a result of fair competition? The wealthy people of America in Carnegie's day were really gifted industrialists and talented businessmen who literally created their wealth. I do not think that lucky winners of sweepstakes would have properly qualified, though undoubtedly there must have been a few, who in any case squandered the windfall as fast as it came their way. Public officers do not come under this category either, and this is still true today: American congressmen do not belong in the same league as Bill Gates. But in Nigeria, Assemblymen and politicians tend to be among the wealthiest in the country, not just because of the comparatively large remunerations that they receive but, more importantly, because of the access that they have to contracts and sundry windfalls. This is little different from winning sweepstakes, and this accounts for the alarming reckless spending that goes on in the country. This results in inflation, and the rest of society has, perforce, to be in turn obsessively materialistic to cope. Whatever competition there is, is largely unfair competition. The Nigerian bee is of a different species from the American one referred to by Carnegie.

We may wonder why this is so; and the answer is provided in Carnegie's article. There is a firm religious underpinning to the American society. It is worth quoting him once again (p. 18):

> The highest life is probably to be reached, not by such imitation of the life of Christ as Count Tolstoy gives us, but while animated by Christ's spirit, by recognizing the changed conditions of this age, and adopting modes of expressing this spirit suitable to the

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> changed conditions under which we live; still labouring for the good of our fellows, which was the essence of His life and teaching, but labouring in a different manner.

In essence, for Carnegie, nothing has really changed since mediaeval times: the relation between the rich and the poor, for him, is analogous to the relationship between the lord and his serf. The only difference is that the poor of today (or, more accurately, of Carnegie's day) are better off materially than the mediaeval serf. The lord took care of his serf as he was enjoined to do by his religion; and similarly the modern wealthy man must look after the poor, especially those working for him. It is easy to see how strongly this philosophy holds in the United States of America, producing, apart from Carnegie himself, such other notable wealthy individuals as Rockefeller, Ford, Bill Gates and McArthur, among many others; and it is possible to argue that this philosophy has been substantially responsible for the phenomenal success of their country. We may note that, from giving succour to the poor in their own country, they have even gone out to reach the poor world.

I referred earlier to the role of religion, which would have been expected to exert similar moderating and compassionate influence on wealthy individuals in Nigeria. Morality, after all, is expected to be the particular forte of religions. Observers in recent years have commented on the state of religion in the country, and their comments have seldom been flattering. If we may take Christianity as an example, there has, to be sure, been phenomenal growth in the physical building of Churches across the country, and a visitor to the country may be forgiven for assuming that Nigeria is a very religious country. Church signboards can be seen in most cities within a few meters of one another and, judging by these signboards, there may well be more Christian sects and denominations in the country than anywhere else in the whole world. But all this, to what effect? It has misled a recent international poll into awarding the palm to Nigeria in the sphere of religion. The country is indeed replete with Bishops, some of them self-appointed, and

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there are pastors and evangelists galore. In terms of membership, the evidence is equally impressive. There are, in particular, legions of self-proclaimed 'born again' Christians. Indeed, it has been remarked that religion is one of the fastest-growing businesses in the country.

All this raises the question of an appropriate definition of religion. Should it really be a 'business'? Or has obsessive materialism found its way even to the sacred precincts of places of worship?

Of course, there has always been a business side to religion. Since mediaeval times, the Church in Europe has owned landed property and even financial institutions. But the question is what it has traditionally done with the wealth thus accumulated. As we know, it has been used principally for the expansion of Christianity throughout the world; and Nigeria itself has been a beneficiary of this policy. The personnel themselves have had little access to the wealth and, in the Roman Catholic Church, for example, the priests even receive no salaries and live a very simple life.

At the same time, the Church has, traditionally, maintained the focus on making men and women better human beings by urging them to live by the doctrines of the Faith, which has been summarized as follows:

> The first commandment is this: ...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.

The other major religion in Nigeria, Islam, subscribes to the same ideal. There, praying seven times a day and the giving of alms are two major pillars of the religion.

With respect to Christianity, a great change has come about in recent years following, particularly, developments in the United States of America. The business side of religion has come to the fore, and genuine attempts to save souls by making men and women better human beings are in danger of being subverted by the raising of funds and other materialistic pursuits. Individuals

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now establish Churches, just as one would establish a business, and a new strain of Christianity referred to as prosperity Christianity is taking hold on the imagination, not only of its preachers, but, more ominously, of the congregation. The Scripture is being re-interpreted to say that God in fact intends everyone to be wealthy, and the impression is created in some cases that if you are not wealthy, it must be that you are not a good Christian. Of course, the preachers themselves are the very picture of prosperity. The flock is being led to forget the parable of the Rich Fool, and thus obsessive materialism receives the blessing of the church. Theatricality by preachers, all too often, is substituted for piety, and the impression grows that, unlike in the past, religion is now made to sustain business, instead of business being made to sustain religion. Denominations measure their success, not in terms of the quality of Christians they produce, but of the number of physical structures thy have managed to put up, even with money from questionable sources.

The Church receives the generous offerings of its wealthy members, whom it treats deferentially, even when it is known that the source of such wealth is suspect. Those who are yet to be wealthy are promised miracles to fulfil their hearts' desires. Meanwhile, what happens to what should be the congregation's preoccupation with human goodness? It is replaced by what admittedly is an impressive knowledge of the Bible. But it is doubtful if souls are saved simply by the ability to quote the Bible with great facility and declare oneself 'born again'. What this breeds is hypocrisy, not true religion. The in-thing is to serve both God and Mammon, with the latter having the upper hand.

Fortunately, not all the Churches in the country present this disturbing image. There are still Churches which are faithful to their stewardship, which are concerned with relating the teachings of the Church to the problems of the daily living of the members of their congregations. But the voices of the preachers in such Churches are increasingly drowned by the strident proclamations of the prosperity preachers. The danger is that more and more Churches may become dazzled by the material success of the prosperity preachers, and tempted to conform, if only to prevent

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being deserted by their own congregations. This is a matter that the respected Christian Association of Nigeria should ponder most prayerfully.

Another agency which should play a vital role in the moderation of obsessive materialism is the education system. A good education system cannot be expected to produce a bad society; but unfortunately, it is equally true that a bad society cannot produce a good education system either. The culture that obtains in schools cannot be expected to be radically different from that which prevails in the larger society. But a progressive society does take care that the coming generations are better than the existing ones.

The primary and secondary levels are particularly important. If society fails to impart the right moral values in children at this stage, it is not likely that the children will pick them up elsewhere. Religion may, to some extent, come to the rescue. This indeed is why, historically, schools were founded and administered by religious bodies, and the story is no different in this country. But later in Europe, in the nineteenth century, governments came to regard the education of children as one of their major responsibilities, and the majority of schools came to be run by the State. But since, in Europe, the State itself—and particularly the ruling classes—was already imbued with Christian values, the education of children continued to be conducted in the most responsible manner, and there was adequate supervision.

Similarly, in Nigeria, the first schools were founded by the two religious bodies in the country—Christian and Islamic. And when the colonial government decided, partly in response to the fashion in Europe, and partly for its own selfish reasons, to take responsibility for education, it did so rather cautiously, allowing the religious bodies to carry on as proprietors but supporting them with grants in aid. That way, the moral content of education was not jeopardized. Access was admittedly very limited, but those who managed to go to school received good education. Trouble started when the various governments, in the Second Republic, decided to expand access, which in itself was a laudable idea. But the deterioration that followed the consequent take-over of all schools by the governments, in both the intellectual and moral tone of schools, is now well documented and well known. Yet it is taking

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a lot of persuading to get some governments to return to the previous mode of running schools. If the new private/public policy of school proprietorship will result in such a return, it would be a welcome development, at least until such a time as society proves itself worthy of exclusively running the institutions.

It is, however, unfortunate that even the religious organizations that did such a good job in the past seem to have lost the zeal to operate schools. Some of them have reluctantly taken back secondary schools when given the opportunity to do so, usually as the result of the persistent efforts of the old boys and girls of such schools, but it does not seem that primary schools are being taken back in any large numbers, if at all. Yet this is the crucial tier for rebuilding the moral tone of the entire society. The initiative in this area would appear now to be left, for good or ill, to private individual proprietors. The religious bodies' priorities would appear to lie elsewhere. And yet, it would be very sad indeed if education has lost its former high priority in the preoccupations of religious bodies, perhaps yielding pride of place to more materialistic endeavours.

Another important possible moderating influence on obsessive materialism is the effect of role models whether in historical or contemporary perspectives. India had Mahatma Gandhi; Singapore had Lee Kwan Yew; Tanzania had Julius Nyerere; South Africa had Nelson Mandela; and some other countries similarly had leaders who by their personal example captured the imagination of their countrymen, and indeed of the whole world, and transformed the moral fibre of their countries. Unfortunately in Nigeria, there is hardly any commanding figure that can be held up as a shining example of sobriety, as one who is prepared to render sacrificial service to the fatherland. This is not surprising, as Nigeria pampers its leaders with material comforts, smothering them with adulation in the hope of material reward. Perhaps this is what people mean when they say that Nigeria is still waiting for the Messiah.

Yet, as Jibril (op. cit.) remarks with justification, the three founding fathers of the country, with all their faults, approximated more closely to the ideal than contemporary leaders. The dreadful combination of mineral oil and military governance of the country would appear to have installed an era of giddy materialism in the country in which the leaders lead the way. Never has it been more

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clearly and energetically demonstrated that the labourer is worthy of his hire—indeed, more than worthy. There is no originality in the remark that the problems that plague Nigeria are largely leadership problems.

Surely, no country in the modern world can survive without the requisite doses of materialism; but at the same time, it is doubtful if a country can survive if it lives for nothing but materialism. In a world dominated by Gross Domestic Product and similar indices of development, a government has to pay due attention to the comforts of its citizens; but this need not be made an end in itself. The end should rather be the cultivation of more refined citizens in search of higher ideals. If we may return, in closing, to Carnegie, he lived in a country where the government ensured free and fair competition; where, by and large, every citizen was encouraged to develop his or her potential to the limit. It was in this kind of environment that Carnegie was able to make his immense wealth in the steel industry and experienced self-fulfilment. His particular forte was the creation of wealth, and society allowed him to develop his potential legitimately and to the fullest. But the accumulation of wealth did not make Carnegie less of a moral human being. He believed strongly that his wealth was held in trust for society at large, and that his surplus should be ploughed back to society in areas where it was likely to be most productive. He felt that in this way, the general level of well-being in society would be raised, and he particularly emphasized the pleasures of the intellect rather than of the body. It is perhaps appropriate to give him the last word in this lecture (Carnegie 1889:24):

> ....the man who dies leaving behind him millions of available wealth, which was his to administer during life, will pass away "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung", no matter to what uses he leaves the dross which he cannot take with him. Of such as these the public verdict will then be: "The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced".

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16 PUBLIC-PRIVATE-PARTNERSHIP IN A NATIONAL MORAL CRISIS*

I accepted with great delight the invitation from Junior Chambers International (JCI) of the University of Ibadan to deliver this year's Forum Lecture for two reasons which may be obvious to many people assembled here. When the University of Ibadan LOM of JCI was inaugurated in 1984, I was just into the second year of my tenure as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan. It struck me as a good idea, but then we live in a world in which many a good idea dies almost as soon as it is born. I was already aware of one or two student organizations entirely managed by the students themselves and doing remarkably well. I thought this might be such another organization. I hoped it would be.

Four years later, the existence of JCI of the University of Ibadan was brought to my attention once again, and this was when the group conceived the excellent idea of holding an annual Public Forum in honour of their mentor, Chief Tunde Oshobi. It was obvious to me that this was indeed a well-focused organization. But still, commendable as the idea was, it remained to be seen whether the originators had the staying power to keep it going. Time would tell, I thought. But meanwhile, I thought the group deserved the encouragement of the Vice-Chancellor, and this I expressed to them at the debut of the Annual Forums in 1988. I told them that university education did not consist solely in hours spent in classrooms, libraries and laboratories, but rather in the student making himself or herself hospitable to the total experience that the university offered, and this even included being sensitive to what went on outside the walls of the university as well, in the tradition of town and gown interaction. It was evident that the kind of experience that the JCI of the university was opening up itself to

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could only richly complement whatever else they were getting, formally or informally, from the university. Moreover, an additional attraction of this particular project was the formal channel provided through a mentor.

And this brings me to the other reason why I readily accepted the invitation to address this audience today. I have known Chief Tunde Oshobi for a good number of years. He had graduated from the English Department of the University of Ibadan the year before I took up a lectureship in the same Department. I must say that Chief Oshobi became famous almost as soon as he graduated. Obviously, he had put to good use the exposure to a fine education that he had had access to at King's College, Lagos, and the University of Ibadan. Immediately after graduating from the Department of English in 1965, he was appointed Secretary to the Western Nigeria Government Broadcasting Corporation, and ten years later, had risen to the post of Director of Administration of the same Corporation. Not surprisingly, he voluntarily resigned from Public Service after one year in that last post. He had, no doubt, become aware of his own leadership and administrative talent and opted to exploit the wider opportunities of the Private Sector. In 1976 he became Chairman and Chief Executive of Petersen Limited, an industrial and general entrepreneurship establishment. Thus he joined the distinguished group of alumni of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ibadan who have succeeded spectacularly in the private sector. This is surely a tribute to the kind of broad and rich education that the Faculty offered its students even before specialized training in leadership and administration became fashionable. At the same time, Chief Oshobi has distinguished himself in various positions of responsibility in the public and private sectors, including being the representative of Oyo State on the Federal Character Commission. He is, indeed, a worthy model for JCI of the University of Ibadan, and I am happy to join that organization in honouring him on his seventieth birthday.

Let us see what JCI stands for, in order to see how neatly Chief Oshobi fits into it. When JCI was inaugurated in 1944 in Mexico City, it declared: "We must take collective action to improve

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ourselves and the world around us". For the 200,000 members scattered across 5000 local organizations in more than 100 countries, the slogan is; "Be Better". The idealism of the organization is perfectly understandable in a world beset with divisions at national, regional and ethnic levels. And at home in Nigeria, there can be no denying the fact that the JCI has its work cut out for it. Apart from the fact that the divisions at the global level have their miniature representations in the country, there are more complicating problems of the moral texture of the Nigerian society.

It has been increasingly realized that the development of a country cannot be left solely to the government in the public sector. Indeed, historically, the private sector predates the public sector, and the view currently widely held in Europe and America is that the public sector is there to enable the private sector to get on with the job. The clash between the two sectors in the United States over the Health Reform Bill is still fresh in our memory. In those parts of the world, the government is regarded with a certain amount of suspicion, as an institution with the potential of robbing the individual of their human rights and freedom of action.

The picture would appear to be quite the reverse in Nigeria and other developing countries which seem willing and happy to hand over their entire lives to the public sector. Of course, there are cogent economic and developmental reasons for this disposition, and it is only recently that the civil society in the developing countries has been waking up to the issues, not only of human rights, but also of the social responsibility of the private sector to civil society. And now, interestingly enough, but by no means surprisingly, the civil society in the developing countries, for a variety of reasons, nurses bitter suspicions against the private sector.

Up till the time of Nigeria's independence fifty years ago, the private sector, dominated by a handful of multinationals, was poorly developed, and the bulk of the nation's resources, such as they were then, were in the hands of the Federal and State governments. These resources grew by leaps and bounds, especially with the increasing exploitation of mineral oil. Unfortunately, this

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happy development was found too tempting by some of those in control of the nation's finances, and corruption began to rear its ugly head. Indeed, as time went on, corruption became one of the best known words of the English language in the country. People in public office began to be regarded with suspicion, and the situation exploded into frightening proportions with the introduction of the presidential system in the country. The legislatures at the federal and State levels became an irresistible attraction for many people, and desperate efforts were made to get elected. The general feeling was that one term in any of the legislatures was enough to banish poverty for ever for the winners. The whole country was turned, sometimes quite literally, into a huge battleground during elections, and the election offices became basically shops where votes could be bought by those who had the money, as well as by those who had raised loans from banks for the purpose. As such loans had to be paid back, winning became virtually a matter of life and death. Today, the demands for electoral reforms have reached a crescendo, but it remains to be seen what difference there will be during the next general elections next year.

While the attention of the public was riveted on the public sector, certain developments have been taking place in the private sector. A new moneyed class has emerged, and the middle class, hitherto virtually comatose, has been energized to take advantage of the resources with which the country is now awash. No one could mistake the changing skylines of Lagos and Abuja, nor fail to notice the palatial homes springing into life at Victoria Island, Lekki and Ajah. The era of the public sector had arrived, and its fortunes were further boosted by the declaration of the Federal government that the private sector should now occupy the driver's seat of the economy. The doctrine of public-private participation was enunciated, and what this means, in real terms, is that the country, in many people's perception, was changing into one of the haves and the have-nots.

The private sector with its growing ranks of billionaires had joined forces with the opulent government officials and turned the rest of the country into onlookers. But not everybody was satisfied to be an onlooker. For many, the watchword became: "If you

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cannot beat them, join them". The result is that the moral fibre of the entire populace has been considerably weakened. And that is the real tragedy.

Instead of a healthy collaboration between the public sector and the private sector, what seems to be emerging is an increasing complicity between the two sectors. The public sector, which should lay down the rules and regulations for enterprises and see to it that they are enforced, having itself failed to obey those rules and regulations, is hardly able to enforce them in the private sector. The difference between the two, in terms of probity, has become increasingly obscure.

In this dire state of affairs, what task lies before an idealistic organization such as the JCI in Nigeria? I suggest that that task is twofold. The first is to understand fully the nature of the phenomenon that we are talking about; and the second is to plan and execute an appropriate course of remediation.

First, it has to be realized that corruption is not a uniquely Nigerian phenomenon. In particular, no country that practices capitalist democracy can escape corruption, for capitalist democracy is fuelled by the greed and selfishness of the citizens. In the race to amass as much resources as possible (which seems to be the goal of existence in capitalist countries) individuals and organizations are sometimes impelled to cut corners, to lubricate the flow of transactions with bribes. The developed countries are aware of this and try to curb it as much as possible, but there is no question of eliminating it entirely. The strange thing is that some multinationals do not practice abroad the moral code that guides them at home, and we need not look further than the current Halliburton affair for confirmation. Rather, these multinationals do take advantage of the moral laxity in the developing countries that they deal with. In their own home countries, no one is allowed to get away with corruption, no matter how socially prominent they may be, and it is highly unlikely that the public sector would condone corruption in either the public or the private sector. In this way, corruption is kept perhaps to the minimum. In contrast, in developing countries like Nigeria, sanctions are either absent or weak, and the public sector has no qualms about collaborating with the public sector, including the multinationals, in perpetuating worst practices.

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It has to be admitted, at the same time, that there are certain predisposing aspects of Nigerian culture which facilitate corruption and ensure its entrenchment in every facet of Nigerian life. I refer to the ingrained culture of offering and receiving gifts. The hospitality of Nigerian peoples is legendary, and not to be disposed to offering gifts is generally regarded as a sign of hostility. Traditionally, such gifts used to be generally regarded as symbolic, but growing materialism in the country has turned the practice into something else. We can illustrate with some examples. In Yorubaland, at a child's naming ceremony, each of those present was expected to put one penny in a bowl of water, and this gave them the right to suggest a name for the baby. Over the passage of time, the bowl of water has disappeared, and the money is handed direct to the baby's parents. It would, of course be out of the question to offer them pennies. In any case, coins have now practically disappeared from monetary transactions in the country. From this point, it is only one step to corruption. If your boss, or anyone from whom you are expecting favours, performs the naming ceremony for a new baby, what you offer will not be pennies but thousands of naira.

Similarly, at engagement ceremonies, a symbolic gift is made by the parents of the bridegroom to those of the bride. Instead of a token gift, people now talk about a bride price, which may indeed be arrived at after a prolonged negotiation.

Nigerians tend to be hospitable hosts. It is a widespread habit to offer a visitor a gift. In the past, this would have been in kind rather than in cash. Now it is more likely to be in cash. The greatest abuse of this practice is the modern trend of offering money as gifts to public officials, from the President of the country down to the humblest Local Government Chairman, when they go around visiting different parts of the country. The avenue for corruption in this practice is all too obvious.

Offering rewards or tips, which is also intrinsic to many cultures in Nigeria, is another source of problem. There are no countries in the world, of course, where rewards and tips are unknown. Strictly speaking, and ordinarily, there is no obligation on anyone to offer rewards or tips. They are gestures that are made voluntarily. We are not talking here, of course, of rewards posted

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by the police to induce those who have information to come forward with it, though even in that case, that kind of inducement is not obligatory. Tips are even less ambiguous. They are small change voluntarily given to workers, most often in the hospitality industry, and taxi cab drivers, in appreciation of the service rendered, over and above the cost of those services which have already been paid. Obviously, if one is dissatisfied with the service one experiences in a restaurant, or is not happy with the comportment of a cab driver, one is under no obligation to offer any tips. The situation is somewhat more delicate in Nigeria.

Here, you offer tips to junior workers as a form of appreciation or encouragement, but you offer bribes to important people so as to influence their conduct. But it is not as clear-cut as that. While you would never describe the money that you offer your superior as a tip, there are occasions when you offer junior workers what you call a tip, whereas it is indeed a bribe, if it is offered to influence their conduct, for tips are normally offered *after* a transaction.

What emerges is that money may change hands before or after a transaction. In both situations, when the giver regards himself superior to the taker, the word 'bribe' is seldom used; but when the roles are reversed, 'bribe' is considered the appropriate word. A typical and well-known example is the money given to (more correctly extorted by) policemen on the highway. Most motorists who indulge in this habit would say they were tipping the police, even though the money is given prior to any transaction. In fact, of course, they are bribing the police to avoid being delayed by them. Thus the two words are no longer distinct in meaning but are in free variation in particular circumstances. We may thus conjecture that the ambition of many corrupt Nigerians is to receive bribes rather than tips. For one thing, bribes are more substantial and may run into billions of naira, and therefore taking bribes is considered, in a perverse kind of way, more prestigious than receiving tips.

The other aspect of corruption is, of course, plain thievery. Many people who are in a position to do so steal public and private funds surreptitiously or openly. Again, attention has been focused in recent years on stealing from public coffers, where the biggest aggregation of funds is to be found. The banks in recent months seem to have come a close second, but we are yet to know the full

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extent of this antisocial behaviour, since organizations set up to track down guilty persons seem unable to make real headway. As for the law courts, they seem to be having enormous difficulties nailing down offenders. This condemnable practice has by now taken hold of the entire fabric of society, so that those who do not have the opportunity of stealing billions of naira (often through inflation of contracts) are content to steal in hundreds. It has virtually become part of the culture of the country, although, unlike bribes and tips, it cannot be traced back to the traditional life of Nigerian communities. Indeed, there is unanimity in believing that, among all the Nigerian communities, traditionally, corruption was practically unheard of. It is, rather, one of the diseases of modern society which globalization may do little to minimize.

Sociologists have drawn attention to the fact that the modern Nigerian perhaps now operates two moral codes, as far as corruption is concerned. At the local level, Nigerians do all they can to protect the family's good name. To be branded a thief, or to be known to come from a family whose family member is known to be a thief, is a most grievous predicament. However, modern commercialism and greed make people who are known to have corruptly enriched themselves in the country's big cities acceptable at the local level. Rather than being regarded with revulsion, they are, indeed, celebrated as heroes. Perhaps two factors in the main explain this phenomenon.

One reason could be that while the elders at the local level are concerned about preserving morality at home, they are prepared to accept that different codes operate in the 'no man's land' of the great urban centres, where people live a more anonymous existence. They are happy with their sons joining the rat race on its own terms. But, perhaps, more important than this is the political factor.

National life in Nigeria is seen as a scramble for national resources. People are very conscious that they are in competition with Nigerians from other parts of the country, all eager to have as big a slice of the national cake as they can grab. Local boys (or girls) who are able to beat other Nigerians to it are consequently lionized. So, over and above the dual moral code discussed above,

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there is also this competition for a share of the national cake, in whatever way it may be acquired. The feeling is not only that the locality is fully participating in the struggle for resources, but that the success of the local boys at the national level will translate into a measure of benefit at the local level, though this often turns out to be a mirage.

Obviously, there is something unsatisfactory about the political structure of a country which seems to bring the worst out of its citizens. If government is brought closer to the people, that might reduce the degree of anonymity which predisposes people to behave at the national level in ways that they would not at the local level. But that, in itself, would not solve the problem of competition for resources which, in turn, encourages the culture of amoral behavior, which also sometimes turns out to be immoral behaviour.

Not being a political scientist, I would not be able to recommend an alternative structure. But there is a general feeling that the structure which obtained before the civil war largely brought out the best in the ethnic groups throughout the country. It was not perfect, but it allowed for the best human resources to be used in the various regions, and in addition, it promoted healthy competition among the various ethnic groups. It is also generally agreed that the division of the country into thirty-six states has had the effect of returning the country to the pre-1950 unitary form of government. As a layman, I have often wondered what kind of a federation it is that empowers the centre to keep breaking up the country indefinitely, and sometimes arbitrarily. In the history of the world, I know of groups coming together voluntarily to form a federation because of predetermined advantages, but the reverse process of a federation breaking itself up into states appears a little strange to me.

But surely, there is a reason for all this, even though it may not be valid. It goes back to the scramble for resources, and it plays on the desire by communities to have access to the national treasury by setting up the apparatus of government which at least ensures a steady flow from the national treasury. There is continued call for the creation of more states for this reason, even when it is obvious

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that the largest proportion of money going to the state is immediately mopped up by the salaries and allowances paid to the political office holders and their bureaucracy. Moreover, development at the state level tends to be rather slow, both because of large-scale graft, and because governors, instead of imaginatively seeking means of developing their states, compete with other governors for handouts from the federal authority. Indeed, governors are now virtually prefects looking after the provinces on behalf of the head of the federal government, and expecting to be handsomely rewarded for so doing, while being victimized for not doing so.

Besides, it should be noted that given the prevailing spirit, the agitation for the creation of more states will continue until, as someone cynically observed, every household is designated a state. Obviously, we are not going about things the right way, and a proper political structure may lesson the inordinate scramble for the nation's resources and at the same time make for the predominance of the local traditional morality in all the affairs of the country. The current state of anomy may then hopefully come to an end.

What can we expect JCI of the University of Ibadan to do in these depressing circumstances? Not very much, by itself; but a lot, if it puts its networking potentials into full use. One big advantage is that the organization is spread all over the country. Therefore, it can be expected to embark on a strong advocacy, beginning with the political structure which appears to ensure that antisocial activities continue to flourish. Of course, they cannot, by themselves, alter the structure of the country. But one of the most remarkable, and at the same time saddening, things, is that this country is full of the kind of people who can work assiduously to put it on the right track. What is sad is that we always prefer to be a copy-cat nation. Again speaking as a layman, democracy, which is the current buzz word all over the world, is a flexible mechanism which can be adapted by every country to cater for its own uniqueness. The United Kingdom and the United States of America are two countries which have, in different ways, successfully adapted democracy to suit their own peculiar needs, even in spite of the fact that the two countries share a common

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language. Notice, for example, that in the United Kingdom, monarchy is accommodated within a democratic setting. Both countries would argue that democracy, even there, is still an ongoing project.

For some reason which is not very clear, Nigeria became disenchanted with the parliamentary form of democracy bequeathed to it by the departing colonial authorities, and considered the grass greener in the United States of America. After all, that country has witnessed phenomenal development, not to talk of producing the largest number of multi-millionaires in the world. But it would be a fair assessment to say that the American magic has not worked in Nigeria, in spite of the imitation of externals. Of course, it cannot. America does not have within its borders, a multitude of ethnic groups; it does not have in practically every town someone addressed as His Royal Majesty; and most important, it does not adopt a cavalier attitude to the education of its citizenry. What is required is to put our best brains—not necessarily our legislators—to work to fashion out a uniquely Nigerian brand of democracy, and we are not in want of such brains. Such a brand would restore to the country, genuine unity, genuine peace, and the old morality. That is the advocacy that JCI countrywide should embark on.

Beyond this, JCI must add its voice to the clamour for setting up a credible education system in the country. Such a system would pay close attention to morality and good manners in the primary and secondary schools, just as was the case in the pre-civil war years. The possibility of returning to the system of grants-aided schools which produced far better results should be considered. It is true that it is the cardinal responsibility of governments to provide quality education for all of their citizens, but this does not necessarily mean that the government must provide it in the public sector. The public-private partnership worked in the old days when religious and other groups ran schools and received grants from the government. Private schools have mushroomed recently in the country, but with the added undesirable feature of social stratification. Parents pay incredible fees in these schools while the majority of Nigerian children, who of necessity go to publicly run schools, receive very poor

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education. It is thus hardly surprising that in the last NECO examinations, only 2% of the candidates passed, perhaps all of them from private schools.

Secondly, JCI itself should live its dream for Nigeria. While sustaining as vigorous an advocacy as it can possibly muster for a renewed Nigeria, the organization must show by example exactly what it is advocating, in terms of personal standards and comportment. It is now a common observation that young people in the country are being quickly recruited into the prevailing rot. It is not illegitimate for young people to work hard for success and remain focused, but when success is measured in purely materialistic terms, there is great cause for concern, because excessive materialism can easily lead to greed and selfishness, the bane of a democracy that has gone awry, and ultimately to corruption. Members of JCI thus have their work cut out for them living their dream but also influencing their peers to join the crusade.

The public sector and the private sector need each other for the optimum development of the country and the well-being of the citizenry. But each has its unique role to play; and the public sector, in particular, is supposed to be a highly professional organization, governed by what used to be called General Orders, which every civil servant used to memorize and was in mortal fear of breaching. This does not seem to be any longer the case. Reported cases would suggest that not only are the modern equivalents of the General Orders cleverly circumvented, but that, more ominously, the public and private sectors sometimes do enter into an unholy alliance to enrich individuals. The line between the two sectors is becoming increasingly blurred, and the role of a watchdog expected of the public sector appears to be slackening.

The guest of honour of today, Chief Tunde Oshobi, exemplifies many of the virtues of the old school that we have referred to. He was the beneficiary of quality education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and has actually gone on to distinguish himself in both the public sector, where he began his career, and the private sector, where he now largely operates, while not being completely out of the public sector. Members of the JCI of the University of Ibadan have exercised very good judgment in looking up to him as

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their role model and should be grateful for the attention he lavishes on them. JCI is a private sector organization grooming young men to eventually take up leadership roles in that sector. As attention shifts from the public to the private sector in the fight against corruption, it is gratifying to see an organization which upholds high ideals and is eager to usher in a sea of change in the Nigerian condition.

We congratulate Chief Oshobi on his 70th birthday and do commend him for his public spiritedness in trying to ensure that the next generation of Nigerians is better than the present one.

Ayo Banjo
17 April, 2010

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17 EUROPEAN MODELS AND AFRICAN REALITIES[+]

Some Underlying Problems

I should like to begin by expressing my thanks to the organizers of this conference, and particularly to Professor Akporobaro, for inviting me to participate at the conference and to give a keynote address. The theme of the conference may sound ambitious, but it is one that is nevertheless most appropriate at this point in time. 1960 was the year of Nigeria's independence, and 2012 gives us enough time to see what has been made of that independence. Most African countries have similarly had at least half a century of independence, and so it is time for the whole continent to take its bearing, particularly in view of the incessant invocation of such nebulous concepts as 'global village' and 'international community.'

These concepts have been developed in Europe and America, and particularly America, and it is important to note that Africa played no part whatsoever in their design. Rather, it has been argued, not without justification, that the 'global village' idea has been promoted to aid the economic designs of the developed countries while trying to co-opt African economies into those privileged economies. Yet, African countries have uncritically embraced the idea, little realizing that it may bode ill for the development that they desperately seek. At any rate, anyone who has had the opportunity of travelling to different parts of the world observes, not one village, but perhaps four or five villages at different stages of development. Perhaps those inhabiting the grossly disadvantaged villages should try to bring themselves up to the level of the more privileged villages first, and thereafter

[+] Keynote Address Presented at Babcock University International Conference, May 2013

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negotiate the terms of an emerging global village. Until then, all talk of a global village may well be premature and self-serving on the part of those promoting it.

As for the concept of an 'international community', the only organization that this appellation properly refers to, one would have thought, was the United Nations Organization. But in recent years, actions have been taken in the name of 'the international community' to which the United Nations was not privy, or indeed to which it was opposed—sometimes resulting in the deaths of thousands of innocent men, women and children. 'The international community' would appear then to be the sobriquet for one or more powerful countries, acting individually or in concert, which are able to defy the United Nations while in reality protecting their own real or imagined self interest. The ghost of the doctrine of 'might is right' would appear not yet to have been laid to rest, and this is not helped by the clearly undemocratic structure of the Security Council of the United Nations itself.

In all this drama played against the backdrop of the global village or the invocation of an international community, Africa appears to be little more than a passive observer. Interestingly enough, the antidote to Africa's passivity is prescribed by the same powerful countries, and this is seldom done gratis. African countries are given access to loans which, they are told, will make them look more like the powerful nations so that the disparities become less obvious. But it is worth examining how efficacious the antidote has been.

The encompassing prescription is that all countries should become democratic, and then everything else will follow. But how well has this prescription worked? The hope that countries in Africa and Asia can make one big leap from their traditional way of life to a democratic one in which elections will be flawless and a prosperous middle class will spring up virtually from nowhere, has not really been fulfilled. The results of elections have routinely been bitterly contested in these parts of the world, where the very process of elections has reinforced ethnic and religious cleavages. And the situation has not been helped much by the recent declaration of President Morsi of Egypt who said: "There is no

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such thing as Arab democracy; there is just democracy". The problems that that president is currently facing at home would seem to belie this confident assertion.

It is evident that beyond the fundamentals of democracy—justice, equality, liberty, openness, free and fair elections etc, democracy does in fact have to be tailored to the temper and history of every country adopting it. It is not the case that democracy is the same in every detail even in two such obviously similar countries as the United States and the United Kingdom. For one thing, ownership of guns by all individuals is regarded in the United States as an important part of the bedrock of democracy in that country. For another, Britain accommodates a monarch and a number of privileged dukes within its democracy—a situation that would be anathema to American democracy.

When we turn to Africa, a country like Nigeria operates—or tries to operate—a democracy in which there are scores of monarchs insisting on running their domains as they have always done in the past. From time to time, they have even demanded a separate legislative chamber for themselves. This of necessity creates tension among the populace between those who consider these monarchies as anachronistic, and those who feel that important links between the present and the past should not be rudely severed. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that democracy tends to be equated simply with the holding of elections, however rigged.

When we look further into the way democracy is operated in different parts of the world, we find differences dictated by local particularities. In some countries, 'winner takes all' after elections; in others, there is seldom any hope of an outright winner, and therefore coalitions have to be resorted to; and still in others, seats in the legislature are distributed according to the number of votes cast for the various contending parties.

Democracy took off on the wrong foot in Africa when national boundaries were arbitrarily drawn by self-seeking outsiders in an attempt to foist the European idea of nation states on the hapless inhabitants of the continent. Again to illustrate with Nigeria, the country is bounded to the south by the Atlantic Ocean, but to the

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west by the Republic of Benin, many of whose citizens speak Yoruba like south-western Nigerians; to the north by Niger, whose inhabitants speak the same language, Hausa, as most of northern Nigerians; and to the East by Cameroon, some of whose citizens speak the same language, Efik, as the inhabitants of Cross River State in Nigeria. The last case is even more instructive, for there is a dispute over Bakassi which refuses to go away. To what extent are people free to choose the country in which they wish to live?

It has been suggested that Africa needs to be restructured, not just for the sake of democracy, but for the greater imperative of progress and development. Two of the problems besetting the continent, without which neither progress nor development can easily take place, relate to language and education.

National Language

Africa has a population, according to Lemus et al. (2011) of 938,190,060—a population less than that of China or India, which operate as single countries. Of the total number of languages spoken on the continent, 2,146 are described as 'living languages', of which, in turn, 1074 are classified as 'vigorous'. 209 of the languages are considered to be 'in trouble' while137 are declared 'dying.' It is possible that languages are dying at a faster rate in Africa than anywhere else in the world.

This is hardly surprising as every country in Africa operates with a second language, which is the official language. These are English, French and Portuguese, the languages of the erstwhile colonial powers. This means that the practice of democracy in African countries is based almost exclusively on the participation of the elite, comprising perhaps no more than 20% of the population who speak these official languages. The extent to which democracy, as usually defined, can be practised in these countries, which are further characterized by mass illiteracy, is clearly open to question (see Bamgbose 2000).

The need has long been recognized for the re-drawing of the boundaries of African countries to accord more with rationality, but it is unlikely that entrenched vested interests will allow this to happen in the foreseeable future. It is certainly not one of the items

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that the African Union has thought of putting prominently on the agenda of its deliberations for vigorous discussion and a possible solution, even if a phased one.

The co-existence of indigenous languages and exogenous official languages has given rise, in some African countries, to the design of a language policy. In Nigeria, for example, such a policy was first promulgated in 1977 and then revised in 1982. This means that for more than thirty years, the country has had an official language policy which, however, has been observed largely in the breach. It is difficult to imagine how the language policy of any African country can be different from the Nigerian model. The ideal policy for every African country is bilingualism with the kind of caveat contained in the Nigerian policy. It is the only way to ensure the full participation of the citizenry in the democratic process and, more important, the best way of harnessing the energies of the population towards meaningful development. Moreover, it would make Africa, along with a few countries in Asia, unique in drawing inspiration from two distinctly different world cultures, with the result, hopefully, of creating something really new and powerful.

Continental Language

In addition to every African country designing an optimal language policy for itself, it has been suggested that a continental official language would aid the rapid development of the entire continent. After all, as earlier indicated, the population of the entire continent is not up to that of China or India; and India, which has as many as 415 living languages (admittedly fewer than on the African continent), has adopted Hindi as the official language in addition to English. Candidates proposed for such a role in Africa have been Arabic, Swahili and Hausa. These are languages already spoken over wide areas on the continent, but as in all such similar situations, it would be more productive to adopt a gradual approach towards the evolution of a common continental language: to start with, Arabic in North Africa, Swahili in East and Southern Africa, and Hausa in the West. It is important, however, to emphasize that the development of a common continental language

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should be in addition to the language policies of the different countries and not a substitute for them. When fully implemented, this would mean that most Africans would be required to speak at least three African languages in addition to a European language which can be expected to continue to sèrve as the official language in the various countries for the foreseeable future. With proper planning this ought to be feasible.

Education in Africa

The other big problem for Africa is education. Modern Europeans are heirs to the ancient Greek and Latin ideas and practice of education. The Chinese and Japanese also have their own traditions. But the countries of Africa would appear to have lost whatever educational tradition they must have had before the incursions of Europeans into the continent. Every colonizing power prided itself on bringing enlightenment to the continent, and an important aspect of this enlightenment was the replacement of African traditional religion, which was demonized, with Christianity. Despite the scholarly work that has been done in the past few decades on African traditional religion, the religion has failed to attract devotees of any significant stature in a country like Nigeria, for example. A recent advocacy worth examining is contained in Wole Soyinka (2012). Yet many may argue that it is bad enough that official business in Africa has to be done in a European language, but the very soul of Africa may be considered to be at risk with the abandonment of the traditional religion. It would seem, however, that a lot more work has to be done to improve our understanding of the religion and to codify it. For example, do we have one African religion or varieties of it? If different varieties, what are the common core features?

Meanwhile, the international religions of Christianity and Islam continue to spread in Africa, although it is widely claimed that in moments of crisis many an African Christian or Moslem does have recourse to the ancient indigenous religions. Of course, in terms of doctrine and liturgy, the traditional religion still has a long way to go to catch up with the appeal of the imported world religions. There is simply the feeling in Africa that being educated automatically goes with the status of being a Christian or Moslem.

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There are, of course, millions of 'uneducated' Africans who also embrace the world religions, and one may expect widespread syncretism among them.

When we look at education offerings as a whole on the continent of Africa, what we notice is a heavy influence of the erstwhile colonizers. Most countries of Africa have had at least a century of this adoption of education models from Europe, and the question is: Why have the models failed to deliver anything like they deliver in their countries of origin?

The reasons are fairly obvious. For a start, the models were designed for a different kind of society, for the most part an industrial one rather than the rural one that remains widespread in Africa. For another, European countries do not have to deal with the challenges of an exogenous official language. The nearest they came to that situation was in the middle ages, when Latin was adopted across Europe as the language of learning. Still another reason is that, in Europe, these policies have been cumulative, evolving over generations, if not centuries.

In contrast, the models were suddenly imposed on Africa without much consideration for the cultural particularities. The overriding consideration at the beginning, as is well known, was to produce a corps of interpreters for the Christian missionaries and, later, indigenous people to take up low-ranking jobs in the civil service, once colonization had been firmly established. In a way, the colonial powers succeeded so remarkably that within a few decades, African students were able to study side by side in Europe with indigenous Europeans and hold their own. But at what price?

The price is a very slow rate of development, with African countries taking their cue from Europe or America, instead of thinking their problems through. The urgent problem in Africa is how to develop the rural areas and bring the inhabitants there into the mainstream of national development. The peculiar problems of these areas have to be studied by Africans, rather than being left to the blueprint from UNESCO, IMF and World Bank. And there are many universities in Africa where such studies can be meaningfully undertaken. One noticeable difference between India and the African countries is that in India, virtually every identified national problem seems to have a research centre set up to solve it.

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Africa has to imbibe the spirit of research, instead of resorting to being mimic men (see Naipaul, 1969) of Europe and America. But this immediately raises the problem of even the viability of research in most African countries, where power, water and a clean environment cannot be guaranteed. So these basic problems of infrastructure need to be solved as rapidly as possible by spending the resources available to do so, instead of spending them, largely corruptly, on a minority that happens to be close to power.

Kwame Nkrumah in the middle of the twentieth century preached African Personality. It is sad that many decades later, we still wait for the emergence of the authentic African Personality on the world stage.

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SECTION VI

Case Studies

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18 SUSTAINING THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA, ESPECIALLY IN A DIFFICULT POLITICO-RELIGIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE*

I should like to express my most sincere thanks to the Most Reverend Segun Okubadejo, Lord Bishop of the Diocese of Ibadan North and Archbishop of Ibadan Province, for this invitation not only to attend this Synod but also to present an address. I should also like to take this opportunity, again, of congratulating him on his recent elevation, and to pray that God may continue to prosper his Ministry.

On a sad note, I would also like to commiserate with Your Grace and this Diocese, and particularly with the Adesina family, on the passing of the Chancellor of the Diocese, Hon. Justice Tunji Okeyode Adesina. I am aware of the devotion that he gave to that office. He was a very good man, and we pray that his soul may have eternal repose in the Lord, whom he had served so faithfully.

Not many of you may know that I am not a total stranger to this Diocese, and in particular to this Cathedral Church of St. Peter, Aremo. About fifty years ago, my father had the privilege of being the Vicar of this Church, and although for most of the time he was here I was a student abroad, I still regard St. Peter's as one of my four Churches in Ibadan. In case you are wondering, my other three Churches are St David's Cathedral, Kudeti, where my parents were married in 1930, the Chapel of the Resurrection of the University of Ibadan, for obvious reasons, and Archdeacon Banjo Memorial Anglican Church, again for obvious reasons. I do not often have the opportunity of worshipping here these days, but each time I do come, it is a kind of home-coming for me. I am very pleased to be here again today, and to speak on the topic suggested to me by the Synod secretary.

* Paper Presented at 3rd Session of the 5th Synod of Ibadan North Diocese, 25 November 2013.

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Anglican Intervention in Education in Nigeria

I have been asked to speak on "Sustaining the Church's Role in Educational Development in Nigeria, Especially in a Difficult Politico-Religious Circumstance". This is a very apt topic because, from the very beginning in the history of the Anglican Church in Nigeria, religion and education have gone hand in hand. When you look around, except perhaps for Churches built in recent years, you find that every Anglican Church has a primary school attached to it. Like many people present here today, I am a product of such collaboration between the Church and education. The history of this country would have been totally different if this collaboration had not been there. At a higher level, the Church also established the inimitable St. Andrew's College, Oyo, to ensure the proper Christian training of teachers for the elementary schools.

This trend was totally and tragically upset by the military coup of 1966 and its aftermath. As is well known, the governments, at least in this part of the country, took over the running of all primary and secondary schools, without any prior consultations with the erstwhile proprietors, and of course without any word about compensation. Anglican primary and secondary schools were very badly affected, many of them reduced to little better than dunghills. The governments simply did not have the resources, and the action would appear to have been taken purely for ideological reasons. The result, whether intended or not, was to reduce all schools to a common dismal level. As was to be expected, therefore, the elite schools were hardest hit. With regard to secondary schools, it was left to the old boys to fight for the soul of their alma mater. My old school, Igbobi College, was involved, and so I was witness to the disaster that was visited on these schools, and the gallant efforts by the old boys to redeem their patrimony.

Sadly for us Anglicans, the loudest voice of protest to be heard at this time was that of the leadership of the Catholic Church. In Lagos, Governor Tinubu graciously agreed in the end to return the so-called mission schools to their original proprietors, and I hope it is not true that the Anglican Church dithered, complaining of lack of resources. The old boys of the CMS Grammar School and of Igbobi College picked up the gauntlet and practically ran the schools on their own until the Church decided to set up a common board of governors for them.

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Meanwhile, the same sad fate had befallen St. Andrew's College, Oyo, which the government of Oyo State had later turned into a college of education. Through the combined efforts of the Church and the leaders of the St. Andrew's College Old Boys Association (SACOBA), gallantly led by the late Ven. Archdeacon Alayande, the college was returned to its original owners, who immediately embarked on plans to upgrade it to a university—the first Anglican university ever in Nigeria. The university is now in its seventh year, and by the special grace of God, has had all its courses fully accredited by the National Universities Commission. I will return to the story of its travails later in this address.

Current Trends

The current preoccupation of the Anglican Church would seem to be with the establishment of secondary schools. And so, from the original position of having a primary school attached to every Anglican Church in the country, the trend now is to have a secondary school—usually termed 'college'—attached to every Church. This is a commendable development, but it has to be realized that it is happening at a time when there is a proliferation of private secondary schools in the country. The Churches clearly have to think through what they have to offer in these colleges that is not available in the private secondary schools, many of which are, indeed, Christian schools as the proprietors, being Christians, offer to give good Christian education. All things being equal, however, there is little doubt that most Christian parents would rather send their children to a good school run by the Church than to any other kind of school.

As far as I am aware, the Church has not offered to re-enter the area of teacher training. This is understandable, as there seems to be some ambivalence in government policy in this matter. However, with regard to the other tiers, I believe some flexibility should be built into the way that the curricula for both primary and secondary schools are designed in the country. While it is desirable to stipulate standards of attainment at the end of each tier through national public examinations, proprietors should be allowed some freedom in the design of the curriculum of their own schools. The quality of offerings can then be monitored, as in the past, through

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inspectors employed by the ministries of education. Perhaps this is something worth looking into when next we review the working of our federal system, and then perhaps the Anglican Church can return to the era when it provided model training for teachers by running a number of teacher-training colleges.

By the current policy, the old Grade II Colleges, one of which the Anglican Church had nurtured at Oyo almost to university standards, and which had produced very competent teachers and outstanding Nigerians, have been abolished. Instead, it has been decreed that the minimum qualification for teaching at any level is the NCE. That is what the policy says, and it is a laudable idea, but surely, there are large numbers of teachers, not just at the primary tier but at the secondary tier as well, who do not have the prescribed qualifications. The quality of teaching in the primary schools therefore remains deplorable, and many secondary schools do not fare better. Now that the Church has decided to intervene at the secondary level in a big way, it will have to be particularly concerned about the quality of teachers available at this level.

Ideally, of course, all teachers at the secondary level should be graduates, and given the over one hundred universities now operating in the country, this objective should be easily achievable. The residual problem would then be how to pay the teachers a decent wage.

It is worth bearing in mind that the age of 'missionary teachers' with little regard for adequate material benefits, such as were produced in Oyo in the past, is over. Teachers should be enabled to take their proper place in society, because that is the only way in this age that they can give of their very best. The establishment of secondary schools should therefore not be taken in hand lightly, but only after a very careful consideration of the financial implications. Such prior planning should also make provision for up-to-date infrastructure in an age dominated by ICT. The good news is that there are now an increasing number of parents who are prepared to pay what it takes to give their children good education. But the Church must be prepared to make the initial outlay in full. A number of voluntary agencies are already in the business, and the Church should be prepared to compete with them.

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To ensure a supply of good quality teachers, it would be advisable for the Church to recruit good Honours graduates with a postgraduate diploma or certificate in Education. This is the direction in which the whole country should be moving, but the Church can lead the way as it did in the old days. The Church can make optimum use of the two Anglican universities at Oyo and Awka, and any more that the Church may decide to establish, not only to ensure a supply of highly competent graduates but also to institute an appropriate diploma or certificate course in education. Such a course at Ajayi Crowther University, for example, would simply help to perpetuate the fame of Oyo as the centre for the production of the very best teachers in the country.

Anglican Intervention at the Tertiary Level

The establishment of Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, makes an interesting case study as well as a cautionary tale. The spark which ignited the interest in establishing the first Anglican university in Nigeria was provided by the then Primate of the Anglican Church in the country, the Most Revd Abiodun Adetiloye. The occasion was the Church service in celebration of the centenary of St Andrew's College, Oyo, by the old boys of the college (SACOBA) in Oyo. The old boys immediately accepted the challenge and decided to spearhead the attempt to convert their college, which had previously been raised to the status of a college of education, to a university.

The original intention was that the Church of Nigeria, rather than a fraction of it, would be the proprietor of the university. After all, the original suggestion had come from the Primate himself. But it quickly became evident that the Church was not ready for the challenge, and so the four Provinces (now five) constituting the Supra West Board, came to the rescue.

But developments from this point onwards became puzzling. The Church, presided over by the Most Revd. Abiodun Adetiloye, had readily agreed to the proposal from SACOBA to initiate the process for the establishment of what then was indeed to be St. Andrew's University, and the Rt. Revd G. Olajide was invited to put together an Implementation Committee. No funding was provided for the work of this committee, whose members then

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personally taxed themselves to ensure that the work continued. Indeed, but for the remarkable leadership of Bishop Olajide, the committee's efforts would have been aborted at an early stage, and there probably would have been no Ajayi Crowther University today. The change of name from St. Andrew's University to Ajayi Crowther University was brought about by expediency.

Many members of the implementation committee felt there was some skepticism on the part of the leaders of the Church about the possibility of securing a license for the university. Such members felt, however, that once the university had legally come into being, the Church would rally round and start playing its role as the proprietor. But it became increasingly difficult to believe that the proprietors had any real plans for the university. Appeals, first for seed money, and then for an annual subvention, went unheeded. Instead of concerted action by the proprietors as a body, what the fledgling university has experienced so far has been some financial assistance voluntarily offered by individual dioceses, with Lagos West playing the leading role. In the area of provision of hostels, however, the University was fortunate to have the ready participation of every Province in Supra West in providing hostels for the university on a Build-Operate-and Transfer basis. Without this participation, it would have been well-nigh impossible for the institution to operate as a fully residential university.

Obviously, there were misunderstandings, largely due to the absence of a firm line of communication between the university and its proprietors, some of whom perhaps began to look on the university as an alien institution. Yet the university had persistently asked for such a line of communication without success.

The university's infrastructure, such as it is, has been established almost exclusively from students' fees, which is a rather unorthodox way of building a university. When all appeals for funding from the proprietors failed and the institution was teetering on the edge of total collapse, the Board of Trustees and Council of the university had to resort to borrowing almost a billion naira from First Bank, resulting in the institution having to pay back over three hundred million naira annually—again, from students' fees.

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Happily, there are now signs of the emergence of the kind of rapport that should subsist between the proprietors (the owners) of the university and the organs of the university, who are the agents of the proprietors. The university is encouraged too look forward to the dawn of a new era, one in which roles are clearly understood and the Church embraces the institution as truly its own.

I have been obliged to go into so much detail about the troubled history of Ajayi Crowther University for two main reasons. The first is that it would seem that there is very scanty knowledge of the university in many Anglican Churches in Supra West. Yet they, led by the clergy, are the owners of the university, and the expectation is that there should be as much passion for the institution in all Anglican Churches in the five Provinces as one sees exhibited by the Churches of other denominations which own universities. It is up to the leaders of the Church to decide how to source subventions coming to the university, but experience in other denominations shows that every parishioner gets involved. It is encouraging, therefore, to know that an annual ACU day has been declared to give every parishioner an opportunity of showing their involvement.

Particularly at a time when the Church is seriously concerned with evangelization and the resultant establishment of new Churches and new Dioceses, it is recognized that the demands on the Church's financial resources are enormous. Yet, the provision of quality education has always been close to the heart of the Anglican Church in Nigeria, and it is assumed that only the best is good enough for the Church. Moreover, it is worth bearing in mind, as has been stressed since the beginning of the Ajayi Crowther University project, that financial commitments are heaviest in the first ten years of the life of a university. Thereafter, the essential infrastructure will have been installed, and the institution's internally generated revenue will have been activated.

The other reason for this elaboration is to help to prevent a repetition of the glitches experienced at Ajayi Crowther University in any future attempt to establish more universities. Since it is the Proprietors that appoint the Board of Trustees, it is important to have close rapport between the two bodies to determine

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beforehand such things as the financial and religious implications of the project. The view that has been consistently canvassed by the university is that it would be helpful to have an Ajayi Crowther Committee, or even, more globally, an Education Committee, of Supra West which would aid the flow of communication between the university and its proprietors. In this connection, it is a welcome development that the Primate, the Most Revd Okoh, has in fact inaugurated an Education Committee, part of whose remit is to take care of the existing two Anglican universities in the country. Development at that level, however, should not foreclose the necessity for the proprietors of Ajayi Crowther University to set up their own committee.

The Intrinsic Educative Role of the Anglican Church

Outside the formal educational institutions at various levels, it is possible to say that religion, or at any rate the Anglican religion, has an intrinsic educative influence, and it is important not to lose sight of this. At a time when the Nigerian landscape is replete with all manner of religious denominations and foundations, it is important to remember that true religion is an antidote to ignorance and superstition—the very reason why, in the Anglican tradition in Nigeria, Church and school have gone hand in hand from the very beginning.

In this regard, sermons preached on Sundays are meant to have educational value, not just in terms of the elucidation of biblical texts designed to further the congregation's knowledge of the bible and deepen their faith, or to facilitate the memorization of Biblical texts, but equally importantly, they should rightly serve to expose the congregation to the working of an educated Christian mind. Scholarship, indeed, is traditionally an important attribute of Anglican priests. A cursory look at the list of Anglican Bishops in the country, for example, reveals that we are indeed blessed with intellectuals.

Contemporary developments, however, indicate that the Church may well be in danger of abandoning this important educational role. The reason is that some Churches have arisen in Nigeria whose motivation is suspect. A brand of Christianity has

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been imported from abroad, whose major concern would appear to be the material prosperity of the Church and its members. In such a situation, ignorance and superstition, rather than being banished, may become the very instrument for aiding the ephemeral growth of such Churches.

This is where the present 'difficult politico-religious circumstance' comes in. With wide-spread poverty in the land and an absence of a safety net, many Nigerians naturally turn to religion for succour. In some of the denominations, this could lead to exploitation. The tragedy is that the established denominations, of which the Anglican Church is an eminent member, feeling that, by maintaining their well-known standards, they may lose out to some of the other denominations which are unabashedly interested primarily in prosperity, may begin to compromise their own standards. It is certainly worth noting the obvious fact that the higher the number of Christian denominations in the country, the deeper the country sinks in unrighteousness.

Surely, the Anglican Church is faced with a dilemma. It needs to grow in order to fulfill its mission, and dwindling congregations are unlikely to help. The temptation may be to adopt strategies which are aimed at making the congregation 'feel good' rather than challenged to understand what it truly is to live the good Christian life. Some denominations, in Nigeria and elsewhere, are gradually becoming a variety of show business with pastors who are more or less 'celebrities'.

Yet, Christianity is serious business, in spite of attempts to domesticate it on this continent. We do not read anywhere in the Bible that Christ once indulged in making jokes with the multitudes who flocked to listen to Him, to make them 'feel good'. No rib-cracking laughter by the multitudes is recorded. Even when alone with His disciples, no jokes are recorded in His relations with them. By all means, the Church has to be indigenized wherever it finds itself, but not to the point of losing the real essence of the religion. The model must remain Christ Himself.

In this connection, the dichotomy between faith and intelligence is sometimes exaggerated, in an attempt to make the congregation 'feel good'. It is not true that the intelligence

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militates against faith; on the contrary, it may – or indeed, should - heighten it. We are constantly enjoined in the service of the Eucharist to love God with the totality of our being, including all our mind. What it would be true to say is that, as Pope Benedict repeatedly said, the world is getting over-secularized, with increasing trust in science, technology and salesmanship, but that is not to say that there are not many outstanding scientists who are deeply religious, or that critical thinking is antagonistic to religious faith. We recall that the last Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, was a Professor at Oxford University, where he has returned on the completion of his tenure. Nothing more clearly underscores the symbiosis.

Any Protestant Church, such as the Anglican Church, is in fact a beneficiary of the use of the intelligence by Martin Luther (1483 – 1546). The Church needs the use of the intelligence to keep our faith pure and uncluttered by superstition and tyranny. We need the use of the intelligence to assure us that we are, indeed, in the 'straight and narrow way'. But of course, like everything else, the intelligence can be abused, and we need to guard against that.

It is good to know that a think tank has recently been set up by the Anglican Communion in Abuja. It is hoped that such a unit will be able to engage in the monitoring and analysis of the total interface between the Anglican Church and the Nigerian society, to preserve the integrity and promote the vitality of the Church in these bewildering times. If in the future a proper academic setting is sought for the unit, I am sure that Ajayi Crowther University would willingly offer to host it in its Department of Religious Studies.

The Church has to be hugely concerned with education in the narrow as well as in the widest sense of the word in order to remain true to its mission and so fulfill the injunction of Christ to be 'a city set on a hill'; 'the light of the world'; and 'the salt of the earth'.

Ayo Banjo
May, 2013

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19 FOUR AGES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN: MILESTONES AND CHALLENGES*

The modest aim of this paper is to observe the trajectory of the University of Ibadan from the inception of the University in 1948; to see whether there are discernible stages of growth and development from that time to the present time; and to predict, or at any rate suggest, what might be the next stage of development.

The Golden Age, 1948 - 70

As is now very well known, the University started in 1948 as a College of the University of London, following the recommendations of the Elliot Commission. Before this, the Higher College, Yaba, had served as the only tertiary institution in the country. But the scope of that College was severely limited and did not extend to a full undergraduate course in any discipline. It was the students of that institution that formed the nucleus of the new University College Ibadan, and their arrival in Ibadan heralded the first phase of the university. The next twenty-two years (1948-70) can be described as the Golden Age of the University. The next thirty years after that (1970-2000) can, in turn, be described as the Years of Challenge. The years 2000 to date are the years of Revival, after which, we may look forward to the Return of the Golden Age.

Signposts in history are, in the final analysis, arbitrary, as one age merges imperceptibly into the next one; but it is nevertheless possible to delineate epochs in terms of a cluster of characteristics which mark out different periods of history. Thus the Golden Age of the University of Ibadan is marked at one end by the very fact of the inception of the University, albeit as a college of the University

* Paper Presented at 3rd Session of the 5th Synod of Ibadan North Diocese, 25 November 2013.

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of London. The end of the period, though not as sharply marked as the beginning, can be said to be signaled by a momentous event, namely, the end of the civil war as well as the end of the period of calm development, to be followed by the sudden burst of activities in the form of the creation of seven new universities in one single decade of the seventies.

As a college affiliated to the University of London, the institution had the good fortune of maintaining very high standards from the beginning. There were only 104 students, all Nigerians, looked after by a staff of 50, 13 of them being instructors. Residential accommodation by today's standards may be considered ramshackle, but there cannot be any doubt about the quality of lectures and tutorials. In any case, in 1953, the College moved into its permanent campus, a parkland campus dotted with imposing buildings.

The College was, during this period, a truly international community. Academic staff were sourced from all over the English-speaking world, particularly the Commonwealth countries of Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. But the United States was also represented, as were one or two countries in continental Europe. Student/staff relations were more relaxed than today, with students frequently being invited to their homes by staff for tea and discussion. The College was obviously intent not only on producing graduates who were well educated, but also individuals with refined manners. As enrolments grew and Halls of residence were built, formal Hall dinners were held in the fashion of Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

It is true that the foundation students were exclusively Nigerian, which was understandable, but before the end of this Golden Age in 1970, Ibadan's fame had started to spread beyond the national borders. Students were admitted from such West African countries as Ghana, Sierra Leone and Cameroon. Later, a batch of students came annually on a regular basis from the United States to do their Year Abroad. Such students went back to their home universities and had the year spent in Ibadan credited to their academic records.

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Already during this period, two Departments were recognized as operating at the cutting edge of their disciplines. In the Arts Faculty, the Department of History distinguished itself by working innovatively on African historiography under the distinguished leadership of Dr., later Professor, Kenneth Dike. In the Science Faculty, the Department of Chemistry was recognized as being one of the best in the world. Other Departments also began to make their mark. For example, the English Department became a centre for the study of African Literature; the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian languages for the scientific study of Nigerian languages; and the Department of Religious Studies for the study of African traditional religion. These departments drew scholars from abroad to participate in teaching and research, as did departments in the other Faculties as the University grew. Very soon, the Faculty of Medicine (now the College of Medicine) took its place as a leading centre of medical studies and research, not only in West Africa, but in the whole of the British Commonwealth.

In 1962, as we know, the institution became independent of the University of London, and by this time, the standards of excellence had already been established. Foreign Foundations, such as the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, had been attracted to the new university because of its excellent promise. Their contributions in the areas of funding, staff development and helping the university to maintain contacts with reputable universities abroad helped the university to maintain its high standards.

Funding posed hardly any problem at this time, for the political leaders were anxious to do all they could for this institution which was a pride to the country. Even after the university ceased to be the only one in the country and had been joined by Lagos, Ife, Nsukka, and Ahmadu Bello, funding was adequate and regular. Then came the civil war.

The Years of Challenge, 1970-2000

The civil war, which had started in 1967, ended in 1970. It is on record that the country did not obtain external loans to prosecute the war, and so, on the restoration of peace, the war years were, not

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unexpectedly, found to have inflicted a toll on the nation's treasury. The University of Ibadan, like all other sectors of the nation's economy, began to feel the pinch. Subventions started being both inadequate and irregular. The university's infrastructure began to fall into disrepair, to the extent that one of the Vice-Chancellors at the time got university staff—teaching and non-teaching—to come out and mend the potholes on the roads.

But the problems of the time were not created solely by the financial consequences of the civil war; for some strange reason, the government, in the face of these financial constraints, decided to establish seven new universities in the 1970's, and another seven in the 1980's.

The University began to lose its international character. Expatriate staff began to withdraw. Staff of British nationality, who had been supported for some time with a supplementation of their salaries by their home government, found it impossible to survive on the Nigerian salaries when the supplementation was withdrawn. Year Abroad American students stopped coming because, among other things, of the dilapidated state of the Halls of Residence. The university's excellent campus-wide intercom had broken down; electricity supply was becoming epileptic; water supply from the municipality was becoming very unreliable. The University was becoming a different place from what those who had passed through it up to 1970 had experienced. Student and staff unionism, in response to the prevailing situation, was getting somewhat virulent. The Vice-Chancellors of the era had their work cut out for them.

The University itself, following its own internally-generated momentum, had grown considerably in the same period. Student enrolment rose to over 8,000, and academic staff to 1043. The number of Faculties rose from two at inception to eight. By the close of the period, the number of academic staff had risen to 1,209. Luckily for these academic staff, opportunities began to open up for them in the private sector, where the conditions of service were more attractive. The big brain-drain was on, with many promising academics taking up jobs in the private sector, while many more left the country altogether.

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The Years of Revival, 2000 to Date

By year 2000, serious doubts had begun to be cast over the future of the university system in the country, and despondency, even at the University of Ibadan, had became palpable. Staff Unions became restless, and it was clear that something had to give. The government of the day had no choice but to agree to a comprehensive round of talks with all the unions. After many stormy sessions, the unions agreed on a log of demands. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) had been the most vocal during the negotiations, and the union was able, in the end, to get the government to agree to a reform of the system. Perhaps the most spectacular of their achievements was the improvement in staff salaries. The levels of salaries rose appreciably, after the government had been made to realize that this was one important way of stemming the brain drain. The government also agreed to improved funding of the universities generally.

After prevaricating for some time, and indeed, following another round of negotiations, the agreement of 2000/2001 is now being implemented. Consequently, the state of the infrastructure at the University of Ibadan has been improving steadily over the past ten years, and the task of returning the University to its Golden Age has begun in earnest. New units to aid teaching and research have been set up. With the MacArthur Foundation filling the void left by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, academic staffs are once again able to enjoy study leave and sabbaticals. Attendance at learned conferences is also now being facilitated. The Postgraduate School, developing out of the Higher Degrees Committee, is now the pride of the country. There is optimism in the air, and it would not be unreasonable to expect, if the current momentum is maintained, a return to the Golden Age.

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A Return to the Golden Age?

For this to happen there is still a lot of work to be done. We must realize, first of all, that there are now almost forty federal universities in the country, and that funding, though recently vastly improved, will continue to be a constraint. The Council of the university many years ago set up an endowment committee which

is being expertly managed, and one result is the magnificent international conference centre recently opened for use. UI Ventures continues to improve on its ability to generate funds for the university. Perhaps a spirited attempt should now be made to seek more financial and material support from the alumni on a continuous basis. This is the practice in all the great universities of the world. The university needs to ensure a secure financial base.

With the assurance of funds, the university can then complete work on the rehabilitation of its infrastructure. No university can hope to perform optimally without uninterrupted supply of energy and water. This problem is already being tackled, but on its solution depends the continuing greatness of the university, particularly in this age of ICT. Once it is solved, productivity will rise phenomenally, and complete sanitation in the Halls of residence and public toilets can be ensured. Once these conditions of modern living can be guaranteed, the university can open its doors once again to foreign students and staff, realizing that insularity is the bane of any world-class university. Moreover, the university should open up itself to international conferences and welcome visiting scholars from abroad. It is a very hopeful sign that the university has been designated as a centre of the Pan-African University, and that postgraduate students from all over Africa have already taken up residence in the University.

The Postgraduate School, indeed, should be encouraged to continue on its present path of excellence, and attempts should be made, as was once the practice, to retain the most outstanding graduating students, give them postgraduate training and encourage them to join the staff.

The university should establish itself as the acknowledged centre of postgraduate training in the country. To this end, the proposal to admit 60% of entrants to the Postgraduate School, and 40% for undergraduate courses, should be firmly effected. This is the historical role for the university. With the continuous growth in the number of universities in the country, this university should regard it as its responsibility to produce academic staff, not only for itself, but also for the other universities.

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Above all, the university should make itself a truly African university, dedicated to solving African, as well as uniquely Nigerian, problems. Faculties may be encouraged to orient their teaching and research in this direction without, of course, being out of touch or out of step with research developments in other great universities of the world.

Ayo Banjo
June, 2013.

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Appendix

Biodata of Professor Emeritus Ayo Banjo

Ladipo Ayodeji Banjo

Born 2 May, 1934

Married, four children

Educated at Igbobi College, Lagos, University of Glasgow, Scotland, University of Leeds, England, University of California, Los Angeles USA, University of Ibadan.

M.A (English) Glasgow, PGDE, Leeds, PG Dip English Studies (With Distinction), Leeds, M.A. (Linguistics) University of California at Los Angeles, Ph.D. (English Language), Ibadan.

Education Officer/Senior Education Officer, Western Nigeria 1960-66;
Lecturer/Senior Lecturer, University of Ibadan, 1966-73
Reader in English Language, University of Ibadan, 1973-75
Professor of English Language, 1975 –
Dean of Arts, University of Ibadan, 1977-79
Chairman, Committee of Deans, 1978-79
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Ibadan, 1981-83
Acting Vice-Chancellor, University of Ibadan, 1983-84
Vice-Chancellor, University of Ibadan, 1984-91
Chairman, Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, 1989-90
Emeritus Professor of English Language, 1994 –

Pro-Chancellor, University of Port Harcourt, 2000-2004
Pro-Chancellor, University of Ilorin, 2005 –2007
Pro-Chancellor, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, 2005 –
Chairman, Committee of Pro-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, 2000-2004

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Chairman, Visitation Panel to Ahmadu Bello University, 2011
Chairman, Visitation Panel to Lead City University, 2012
Justice of the Peace, Oyo State, 1984
Commander of the Order of the Niger, 2001

Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Letters, 2000
President of the Nigerian Academy of Letters, 2000-2004
Chairman, Sigma Foundation, 2005-2010
Chairman, National Selection Committee, Ford Foundation Teaching Innovation
Awards Programme (FF-TIAP) 2008 -

D.Litt. *Honoris Causa* (Port Harcourt), 2005
Fellow of the Nigeria English Studies Association, 2006
Nigerian National Order of Merit (NNOM), 2009.

External Examiner in various universities in Nigeria, Botswana, Swaziland, Sierra Leone.

Visiting Professor, University of the West Indies at Cave Hill, Barbados, 1980-81
Visiting Fellow, University of Cambridge, England 1992-93
Visiting Professor, Agder College, Kristiansand, Norway, 1993-94.

Over 55 publications (books, chapters in books and articles in learned journals})

The publications cover the following areas:

(a) Contrastive studies in aspects of the syntax of English and Yoruba, both as an aid to a more effective teaching and learning of the English language among Yoruba-speaking Nigerians, and as an enquiry into language universals.
(b) In Sociolinguistics, seminal work in the area of the definition of English as a second language in the country, suggesting a mode of classification of varieties of the language in the country and a principled way of choosing and developing an endonormative model to replace the

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exonormative model received in the 19th century. This work has strongly influenced subsequent research in the area.

(c) Stylistic studies of Nigerian literature of English expression.

(d) Issues in the area of language policy, with particular reference to the place of the English language in such a policy in Nigeria.

(e) A book-length overview of the English Language in Nigeria.

(f) Nigerian Higher Education.

(g) English Course Books at primary and secondary levels.

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