

Public Universities, Vision, and Knowledge Economies



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To say the least, it was intimidating for me to accept this invitation, in part because I only had one month's notice to prepare and appear before your august body. Yet, I was ready to honor the invitation because of my enormous respect for the university and its wonderful and well-meaning management. The invitation could not be turned down, under any shade of circumstances because it was in accordance with my long-held principle of adding value to our institutions for the purpose of advancing the course of humanity—the fact of which, I must confess, has become something of an obsession.

Indeed, by being here today, I hope I will be able to cover and impact very significantly other major academic institutions in Nigeria, and also pay back some debts to my indigenous cultural constituency. I am, myself, a product of a public and community education from elementary school to university. The Western Region, under the visionary leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was able to pioneer a widespread free education program that helped shape the needed awareness of Yoruba society to the degree that they live in harmony and with

dignity. I went to the University of Ife, a public university that has produced many of those who are now scattered all over the globe, some of whom are here today.

My task, as mandated, is to speak about how to reposition public universities in a developing economy. Therefore, in this lecture, I plan to review the state of education, and make some suggestions that will definitely cause the desired repositioning. At the back of my mind are three principal ideas and broad issues, namely: the ideals and ideas of public universities; the challenges facing public universities; and, indeed, some suggestions on how to move forward.

I am of the opinion, though, that this call for repositioning means there are clogs to be located and removed. After such clogs are identified, the system can then introduce the cogs that can possibly fast-track the repositioning. In my view, therefore, the challenges (clogs) with existing public universities shall first be identified and discussed without equivocation, and then I hope to come up with the way forward, the cogs.

The Context for Creative Imaginations

All over the world, public universities have been able to supply the required human power to develop the humanity and the nation. They advance the frontiers of knowledge, contribute to research, support the vision of the country of location, and sometimes serve as veritable support pillar for critical institutions in society. Basic education may enable individuals to survive, but public universities are necessary for society to succeed.

Public universities also serve as the spaces to advance the collective agenda of a country in terms of creating narra-

tives around collective identity, history and culture, around collective self interest and how to deal with other nations. Where capitalism has taken hold, and in spite of the fact that scholars of the Left are members of faculty, their public universities advance the agenda of capitalism and produce graduates to service industries and corporations.

Public universities have been with us since the establishment of the University College, Ibadan, in 1948. Public education, including at university level, is also global and has a long history. Public education may be defined from a dual perspective, as indigenous and foreign. Indigenous education dates back to history; what used to constitute education was an all-embracing concept with acceptable and ordered models: public education (formal and informal); the apprenticeship model has included, and still includes, the babalawo, the blacksmith, the cloth-weaver, the dyer, the hunter, the palm-wine tapper, and other trades that are not tied to family lineage. Similarly, the other model which is tied largely to parenting and family lineage occupation, include, farming, drumming, carving/sculpting, etc. Of course, most often there are no clear delineations in the strict sense, some of the trades could fall under apprenticeship, some naturally fall under the family lineage category. But what I am driving at is the fact that indigenous education traverses all of this and that it was effective. What was the manner of education, and what was the secret of its success? It takes us to some fundamentals that are factorial of the decline of indigenous education: the transition from an agrarian economy to a modern/colonial capitalist economy led to the survival of the fittest, as well as introduced conditions for poverty and lack into many homes. Before now every indigenous family could adequately cater for itself, but that was many years ago. Again, the

transition from kinship-cum-communalistic ideals of a united whole which had encouraged closely knitted communal families, to capitalism which is sustained by individualism, resulted in self-centered pursuits that now characterize our modern society.

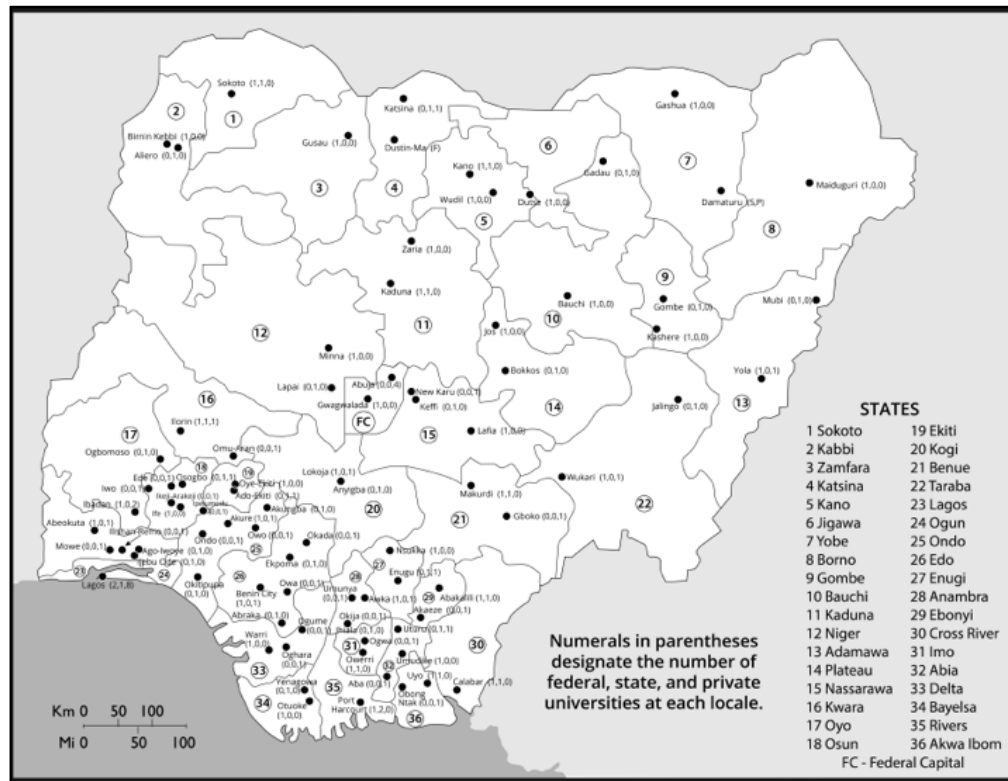
Note, by way of comparison to what is happening today, the adequacy of indigenous education to the system, the culture, and the times that developed and used it. It has been responsible, for example, for placing Nigeria on the global map, not the least for the development of indigenous systems of thought, its philosophical and creative signatures. One other example: the incredibly complex but intellectually stimulating Odu corpus, and the works of such artists as we now see in the Ife brass and terracotta works among others.

Western education began in the nineteenth century. In the first half of the twentieth century, many colonial schools were public. The nation's premier institution, the University College, Ibadan was created by the colonial government as a public one. There were ideas running in the minds of the colonizers as they defined the needs of their subjects. Did they have research institutions like Cambridge and Oxford in their own country in mind? Certainly not! Primarily, they wanted to train civil servants that would take over from the colonial masters. Rather than establishing universities to serve developmental goals, it would appear that postcolonial political leaders also followed the example of the colonial masters in their philosophy of establishing public universities in the country. The fallout of this flawed conceptualization is that, despite the fact that Nigeria now has over a hundred universities, the country has hardly experienced any significant technological breakthrough to date. To illustrate with the most common example, the hoes and the cutlasses that

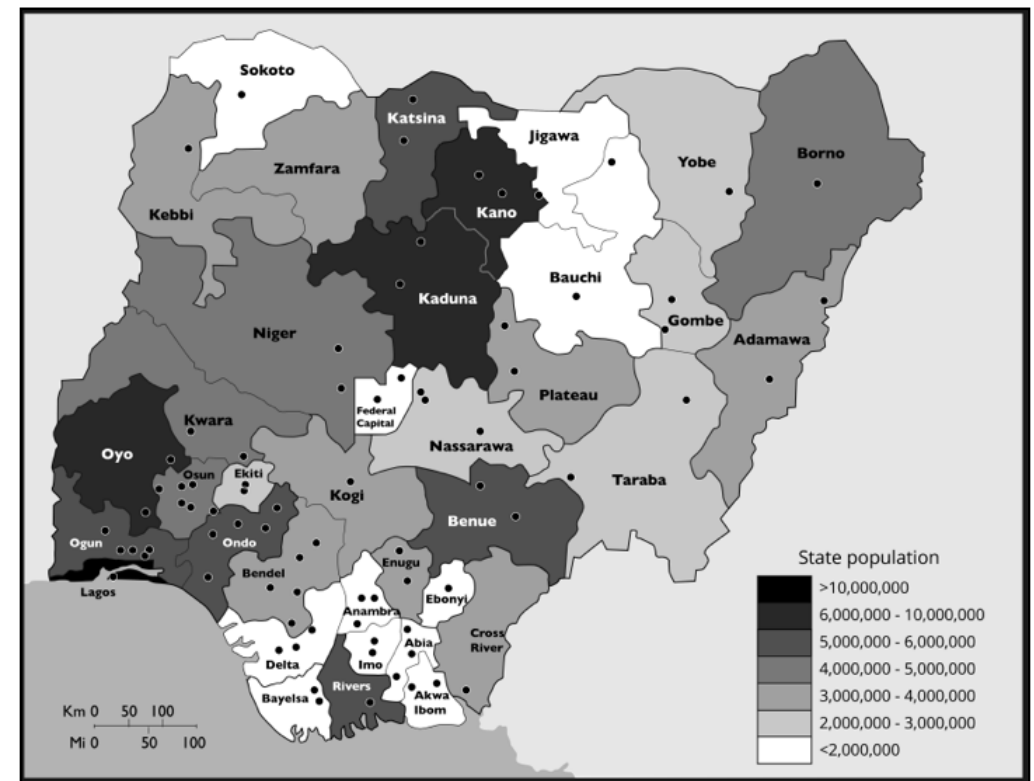
farmers used over a hundred years ago are what most of them still use today.

The regional universities that followed Ibadan at Ile-Ife (University of Ife), Zaria (Ahmadu Bello University), and Nsukka (University of Nigeria) were nationalist projects tied to vibrant notions of hope. All the universities were historical and cultural landmarks. All these universities educated mainly Nigerians and concentrated on the citizens within their regions, what they called "catchment areas," produced their own PhD holders who became their teaching staff and focused on research projects connected to the areas of their locations. As more and more states were created more and more public institutions emerged that reproduced the ideas and practices of the first generation universities.

Below are two maps: The first shows the locations of universities in Nigeria; I used the letters F, S, and P for each location name to designate the presence of Federal, State and Private universities. The second map shows the locations of cities with universities, color-coding the states by the total population of each state (but not the population density). I show the locations of towns and cities with universities, but did not label them because I thought that would make it illegible. From the two maps below, an argument can be made that Nigeria already has a high number of public and private universities and has satisfied the demands of a large number of people. Certainly, we can determine the optimum number in relation to population and change, demography and needs. However, the addition of new ones requires coordination with the existing ones, long-term commitment to pre-planning, especially in the areas of curricula and infrastructure. For now, quality must be the emphasis, with the assumption that we have won the battle



Map 1: The locations of universities in Nigeria.



Map 2: The locations of cities with universities.

for quantity.

The colonial and post colonial political economy impacted on policies concerning education. In this regard, it would be necessary to link the crisis in the education sector to the type of economic reforms it was subjected to since, for example, the plummeting of the oil price in the late 1970s. With specific reference to our institutions of higher learning, we saw how the involvement of both the IMF and the World Bank implicated the Third National Development Plan (1975-80), and particularly the National Policy on Education (1976). The various military juntas that ruled Nigeria in succession from the early 1980s to the 1990s failed to change the inherited system, and the education sector suffered immensely. Our institutions of higher learning, therefore, sank deeper and deeper into the systemic crisis mediated by the IMF and the World Bank and their local collaborators. This crisis manifested itself in several ways, not the least of which are:

- (1) infrastructural inadequacy (in quality and quantity) and decay in the areas of teaching, research, classrooms, libraries, books and journal acquisition;
- (2) inadequate and dilapidated students' and staff accommodation;
- (3) loss of autonomy in critical decision-making areas such as curriculum development, admissions, and the appointment of top managers and council members;
- (4) loss of the universal and cosmopolitan character of the university in terms of staff recruitment and student admission due to poor funding and inappropriate policies and practices, poor conditions of service;
- (5) increased insecurity of staff tenure of staff resulting in

- low morale and commitment;
- (6) poor conditions of service in relation to remuneration, research facilities, and opportunities and general training;
- (7) general break down of law and order arising from the upsurge in student gangsterism, cult violence, and uprisings.

Following closely on the heels of the SAP in the late 1990s came deregulation and liberalization as major planks in the economic policies of the post colonial Nigerian state since the late 1990s. Many had thought that the dawn of democracy would reverse the negative economic trends and indexes; however, deregulation and liberalization complicated the situation. Since 1999, therefore, we have seen:

- (1) the increasing commercialization of the Nigerian institutions of higher learning;
- (2) the drastic reduction of and/or cuts in the government's budgetary allocation to the education sector;
- (3) the decentralization of staff salaries;
- (4) the regulation of tuition fees, sub degree and remedial programs requiring self-financing or be removed completely from the institutions running them;
- (5) the generalized introduction of cost-recovery measures and the increase in revenue from non-governmental sources

Unions in institutions of higher learning have responded to these trends by insisting on their rights. With regards to ASUU, the fight has taken on the character of resistance to what its

members see as internal and external colonization. ASUU has insisted on defending the education sector by demanding improved funding, improved conditions of service and university autonomy.

Old and new public universities experience similar challenges as identified below. They all derive funding, directly or indirectly, from oil revenues. Significant improvements tend to be slow, and connections to the job market are weak. It is the reason why the call for the repositioning of our education system could not have come at a better time than now.

I also understand that public universities cannot isolate themselves from the bigger problems that face Nigeria as a nation. Instead, they can, and indeed they are being looked up to, to lead the way. I will suggest that those areas of reforms that can connect public universities as well as the type and quality of education they provide, to strong entrepreneurship and vibrant roles by women in ways that new industries can be created and, cumulatively, a middle class can solidify to lead us to greater heights of development.

Public universities operate in an economic, social, political and cultural milieu. The issues that affect public universities do include the political climate, economic diversity, the communities' interests, national performance with regard to issues of development, and global forces as well. If the nation does not generate sufficient revenues or manages what it makes with prudence, the quality of the school system will be degraded. If the quality of leadership is mediocre, its vision and instructions will be severely limiting. If elite behavior is morally bankrupt, its value will affect everything the institutions do. The "ivory" tower cannot be a world unto itself, unaffected by what happens in national politics and the economy, and global issues.

Today, the social and economic landscape has shifted. Many families are poor and do not have the means to overcome poverty. Apart from being unable to provide beans and bread, they also struggle to send their children to school and, in the end, to expect returns. Thus, they expect jobs to follow soon after graduation. More and more youth seek higher education in the hope it will provide access to good jobs and incomes. Some disciplines have been seen as irrelevant because they provide no route to gainful employment. The creation of states and the expansion in education make getting jobs in many states other than one's own, to be difficult. More and more young people to go to the bigger cities like Lagos, Abuja, Kaduna and others to have any hope of securing a job.

Public universities admit students from secondary schools and various pre-degree higher institutions of learning such as Colleges of Education that run NCE programs, Poly-



University of Nigeria, Nsukka

technics, monotchnics, and other Diploma awarding institutions, Colleges of Basic studies that run IJMB programs (only popular in the north, though), various technical and vocational schools, among others. Thus, what happens at elementary and high school levels are critical to the effective functioning of public universities. Without developing elementary and secondary schools, the pool of students to recruit to public universities will be degraded. Thus, the argument cannot be about which one to fund more or to privilege because it should be both. Well-trained students at the lower level of the educational system make the work of universities easier, while mass literacy will make society better organized, at the very minimum in the circulation of information and ability to understand instructions. To improve public universities, we have to revamp the elementary and secondary schools.

An active citizenry has to be united to develop a united country, democracy, accountability, and a diversified economy if the youth are to be well integrated into society and the emerging economies. Some good policies are in place, but not always well implemented. One of them is the original secondary school curriculum to learn your language, English, plus one other, Nigerian language (nominally out of Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo). One can track the erosion of this language policy in practice during the last twenty years and its lack of support in implementation has much to do with the current state of ethnic division. Teachers were never fully trained in Nigerian languages, schools never gave them the same curricular support as English teachers, and the idea of learning one other Nigerian language fell by the wayside some years ago. The overemphasis on English, in my opinion, maintains a type of neocolonial mentality and perpetuates a time of internal colonialism that



Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

creates a dual sense of self, that is, I am Nigerian and I am Yoruba, etc. Political conflicts and competing ethnicities will diminish the capacities of many people. National consciousness must be seen to be connected with public education, as well as the ability to move in all parts of the country.

There is global competition in everything, including higher education. As universities in Europe and the United States redefine their mission to benefit from the inflow of foreign students, Nigerian public universities lose students and faculty to those abroad. For our public universities to compete, we must promote undergraduate teaching to a global standard, produce research that solves problems, encourage faculty to be part of a global academy where research and productivity are measured in qualitative ways.

The diminished (or diminishing) resources of developing

economies impede their capacity to compete globally. Thus, higher education in such economies must always be creative to develop niche areas, and to be effective and productive in areas of focus. These institutions have the capacity to become global research universities in some fields in the humanities where research costs are lower. Furthermore, modern economies continue to rely less and less on agriculture and to make fewer and fewer revenues from the land. Service-based economies privilege knowledge economies over reliance on natural resources. For knowledge economies to function and flourish, they are dependent on technologies and the sciences, and the extensive products of applied research and humanistic creative thinking. Not only is the knowledge widely disseminated, it is put to utilitarian uses.

Universities are now set in the mode of competition, not just within each country or region, but worldwide. A bright student at Osogbo may go to school in Costa Rica or Ghana. The trend of traveling to any part of the world to receive higher education will continue to grow. Not only do parents and students do research on where to study, resources of parents get diverted to those institutions that produce good research and whose graduates get placed in better jobs.

There is a history to this larger context of tertiary education in the global world. In 1948, Nigeria had only one university. The number of students was small, and everyone was assured of a job. The products of the pioneer university automatically became part of the elite of the new nation. Jobs were available in the 1960s and 1970s, when university degrees were needed in government services and companies, with the revenues providing the resources to create a middle class. Since the 1980s, not only has the economy declined, the quality of the products



University of Ibadan

of the universities, too, began to decline. Attempts by unions to reform the university and demands by students for improvement led to strikes, some prolonged, that made it impossible to know when students would graduate.

With widespread complaints that the quality of education was diminishing, the unpredictable duration of the programs, the expanding financial capacities of a tiny percentage of Nigerians, parents with the financial means began to explore universities outside the shores of Nigeria. At the same time, private universities began to be created and their number has continued to increase in the last ten years. Today, public universities have to compete with private ones within Nigeria. While this lecture is not about private universities, the point should be stressed that both must complement one another. The students who attend private universities are fellow citizens who are part of our development process, and their parents contribute to the

economy and pay their taxes. We cannot create a holistic tertiary education without paying attention to the private ones. The government must find out a good way of advancing grants to private universities.

For a public university to succeed in what is now a market place of tertiary education, it has to understand and respond to issues around the flow of money, students, and faculty, as well as the contributions of school fees as a component of the overall national economy. Just as cocoa and groundnuts used to be sources of income, so too are now students regarded as parts of transnational investments.

A final context is that of the various stakeholders: the government, the NUC, parents, federal and state governments, parents, students, management, students, and the unions. Of all the stakeholders, the unions (ASUU, SSAUTHRAHI, NASU, SANU etc.) are the most assertive and combative. Meeting the key demands of the unions, notably ASUU, will be important to prevent the irregular school calendars due to the persistent breakdown of dialogue between unions and government/university authorities. The unions have to be carried along to complement concerted efforts towards the proposed repositioning. The need for a re-orientation of the Unions in a way that can advance the objectives of the repositioning is crucial, as union leaders must also not supplant the role of the senate and council of a university.

With the aforementioned overarching context in mind, my emphasis is on how education can become more responsive to internal and external forces, become visionary to bring about progress and lead the country to glory. Toward those ends, we have to create relevant training and education of our youth that will prepare them for the job market, that is, make



Bayero University, Kano Campus

them employable, and even for them to become entrepreneurs/employers themselves. Education must lead to the emergence of a political citizenship that will create the integration of the country. National unification must go along with economic empowerment. With the problems of corruption both in and outside of government, it seems that the new civic education push is vital to making such economic skills truly value-added for the nation.

I am of the view that education is crucial to the re-organizing of the expansive informal sector, reducing its violence and poverty levels, and impressing on the people that birth rate and family size are important to their overall standard of living. When I was young, a popular Yoruba proverb encapsulated the reality so well: *Olomo mefa amogi, olomo meji ni je eyin* (parents with six children drink liquefied corn, those with two eat eggs"). Or, as the Yoruba would also say, *Omo beere, osi beere* (too many children brings poverty). This assertion implies that we need to

increase school enrollment rates, improve educational quality, and create an active middle class. Education shapes the mind, allowing individuals to learn new things, be receptive to change and to apply knowledge to decision making. And there is no other institution that is better placed to champion this course of action than the public university.

Current Challenges

Let me start with a summary before I elaborate upon them. The current problems facing Nigerian public universities are many, all of which affect their capacity to respond positively to the challenges of national development and remaining globally relevant. Some of the challenges include:

- (1) The problem of inadequate funding which has an impact on the requisite facilities for knowledge creation and dissemination through research and teaching. Knowledge is a process of awareness expansion directed at enabling us to grapple with the challenges of existence.
- (2) The problem of brain drain associated with negative or bad policies toward the education sector generally and the university system in particular. The best brains must be retained in the system in order to deepen its capacity and credibility in the globalized world.
- (3) The problem of undue government intervention in the university system through the instrumentality of the NUC. The NUC, over the years, has abandoned its traditional regulatory role as stipulated in the edict that established it several decades ago. The NUC has become so power



Kwara State University

ful that it has usurped the duties of university senates and councils at the detriment of the requisite autonomy the system needs in order to operate as a center of research and learning. Today, the NUC dictates to vice chancellors, determines university programs, admissions, and policies without due consideration for their individual peculiarities and comparative advantages.

(4) The problem associated with conditions of service. There was a time in this country when university lecturers were the worst paid professionals as a result of which many had no choice but to relocate abroad in search of better options or simply to engage in teaching on a part-time basis.

(5) There is also the challenge of deregulating univer

sity education associated with the proliferation of universities across the country. A fall out of this development is the increasing erosion of standards as witnessed for sometime now. As more and more universities are established, and not all of them because of service and merit, so long will standards continue to fall. Instead of focusing on better funding of the existing ones, the ruling elites in collaboration with the post colonial state are busy establishing new universities for parochial reasons. A study carried out by ASUU four years ago has associated the falling standards in university education in Nigeria with the emergence of more (particularly private) universities the goal of which, among other things, is largely commercial rather than imparting knowledge and building capacity for national development.

The indigenous socialization process of the education system that worked in the past has diminished. If we have lost the autonomous principles, can we not seek an educational system for our people in a way that they will be able to fend for themselves? A reformed system will provide information, skills, and critical training. Tailoring education to *Ise Ijoba* (civil service/government jobs) is no longer going to work. The purpose of education is to help the younger generation develop mentally, emotionally, flourish, and bolster the economy. Most people understand the value of education, a process of training and teaching, the imparting or acquisition of skills for a specific trade or profession, a set of systems, which can be implemented by community and government for their people. Not everybody, however, has access to good education in Nigeria, whether in cities or villages. More than half the country's popu-

lation is not connected to government wages and patronage to have an income to pay for fees and tuition. And poor preparation at one level prevents climbing to the next. The rich and the wealthy may send their children abroad for better opportunities, but a good number of those vibrant and promising youth does not return to Nigeria to contribute to the nation's development, causing the much-talked about brain drain.

The success of students is very much tied to funding, infrastructures, programming, and specializations. Education has to be affordable to the majority of students. Within each campus, the quality of undergraduate education must not only be improved but also strengthened and upgraded. The perennial problems of our country such as inadequate funding and educational infrastructure, inadequate classrooms, teaching aids, and low-quality teachers are well known. It is imperative for all levels of government to invest heavily in education if we want any future growth for our children. But how can any good educational proposal be implemented when the top officials are corrupt? One important quote puts things in perspective:

The infrastructure in schools, including those in the higher institutions is dilapidated. The adverse learning conditions in schools include paucity of teaching and instructional materials, absence of adequate infrastructure, as well as over-crowded classrooms. The hygiene and sanitary conditions are also critical and have been identified as contributory to the effective retention and participation of girls in education, particularly in some parts of the country. (1)

This statement is not from any angry citizen, but from the Nigerian federal government itself!

Federal and state funding is crucial to maintaining the

school system, and it is not unusual to hear complaints at all levels that funding is inadequate. As far as the United Nations Human Development Index is concerned, Nigeria is lagging far behind in literacy and numeracy skills and general education. In its most recent Index Report, 2011, the country's public expenditure on education is put at a mere 0.8% of the GDP, which is regarded as abysmal too low. The adult basic literacy rate is of 60.8 percent, which is significantly lower than that in most developed countries. The Index notes a high school dropout rate; putting the mean years of schooling at 0.422 years. Sustainable development is difficult to attain with this kind of index. One factor that negatively impacts the educational system is the amount of money that is being diverted to private pockets—call it corruptions. If corruption were to decrease sufficiently, then the privately diverted funds could be invested in education.

For an oil-rich country like Nigeria, it is not far-fetched to ask some serious questions: Is it difficult to educate the citizens? If there is a low school enrollment rate, what do young men and women do to occupy their time? If a large number lack skills or any formal training, what will be their future? If technology and the Internet have become so integral to economies and nations, who are those teaching them? And how are they being taught when electricity and updated equipment are scarce resources in many schools? Are the quality and effectiveness of education adequate to advance the agenda of the country? From the point of view of children, there are a number of identifiable problems:

a) those from poor homes do not have adequate food and nutrition to support mental work. Without good nutrition and water, focusing on education is difficult. That is

why our people say, "*Ebi ki i wo inu ki oro miran wo o*" (As long as hunger persists, nothing else can penetrate the mind). Illness does hinder the educational process; b) infrastructure is needed to move goods back and forth, and to involve children in non-classroom activities; c) low-income parents need their children to assist them in the informal economies as they focus primarily on the day-to-day needs of survival and just do not have the means to provide incentives for their own children.

As the children become teenagers, they extricate themselves from their parents and some take to hawking or other similar vocations to survive. Today, the "Okada business" has taken over as an alternative career of desire among young men, reflecting not just a way of survival, but a false belief that there is a short cut to making money. Can we not make the argument that the "Okada business," while providing a form of self-employment, has introduced its own problems such as the craze for quick money? Did the "Okada business" not destroy artisanship, apprenticeship in vocations such as carpentry, auto mechanics, bricklaying, and textile weaving, among others? What about the endangerment of lives of the passengers and the "driver" himself, with daily mutilations and amputations of arms and legs, thanks to the accident-prone Okada? If so, why does the "Okada business" seem better than learning a craft for three years and having a job for the rest of one's life? Or, to posit a contrarian perspective, is the Okada business not a fall-out from the national malaise, whereby wealth is celebrated even when the community is aware that the source of such wealth is unwholesome? Is the rush to Okada business not an index of the lopsidedness of the educational system, which instills in

young adults the notion that university education is the solution, even where it is apparent that such young folks neither have the skills nor interest to succeed?

The current situation of youth unemployment is dire. A large number of young Nigerians are unemployed, while under-employment remains a serious national issue. The youth unemployment rate is now put at an alarming figure of over 40 percent because of factors such as the slow and stagnant economy, the high rate of population growth, and a small private sector. There is also the sad irony that many Nigerian public schools do not prepare their students for the world after schooling. There are serious consequences if people cannot find jobs: the crime rate will increase among men; many women, in this risky world of sexually-transmitted diseases, will take to prostitution to support themselves. These habits will be detrimental to economic development. High crime rates will make it difficult for businesses to stay open; the government will have to allocate more money to their security and police forces in order to ensure peace; and foreign investors will not want to risk their money in an unstable polity. These are not the only outcomes, but by taking up a life of crime and prostitution, young adults destroy themselves. In order for our economy to grow, we must think and actively do something to help young men and women acquire a relevant and thorough education that positions them as full citizens and prepares them to find fitting jobs that will utilize their skill sets and education. This should be the primary role and responsibility of public universities.

There are issues around over-centralization at various levels, concerning the way in which the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) seeks to homogenize and harmonize various programs. It may be useful for an independent commis-

sion to review and re-evaluate the role of the NUC as some of its policies may not all be positive, especially now that we know that Nigerians attend private schools in other countries that are far less inferior to what we have. What was the original motive of setting up the NUC, and why has it now become the almighty regulator of most things? Accreditation is one thing, over-centralization another. Universities should bear the imprint and stamp of their localities. Specialization, to a large extent, does not need not to be national but should be regional and local, especially, in U.S. parlance, like politics, which is said to be all local.

Within each university, over-centralization of power tends to overburden the Vice-Chancellors, who have a say in every manner of activity, academic and administrative, in their respective universities. Rather than concentrate on the most crucial things like sourcing for funds, meeting with industries and entrepreneurs, government agencies for purposes of patronage and consultancies, piles upon piles of files are daily waiting for their approval for many and sundry things, including staff going on annual leave, sick leave, sabbatical leave or maternity leave. It is almost the norm for a Vice-Chancellor to be at Senior Staff Disciplinary Committee meetings, or at Tender Board meetings to award contracts. Most Nigerian public universities' chief executives have become micro-managers, lacking the opportunity for more crucial time-consuming deep reflections and executions of bid policies. In some universities, the Senate is also bogged down by the over-centralization of issues to discuss at its seemingly unending meetings for the approval of academic programs, approval of admissions, and the approval of examination results when indeed, there are neater ways of turning many of these things to faculties, and relevant academ-

ic units.

From recent history and practice, public universities have four issues arising that need to be addressed as urgently as possible:

1) Development of curricula that are relevant to the needs of their immediate society, especially where the NUC, as it were, wants all the universities, public and private, in the federation to be identical. It calls for serious caution and a public check on the NUC for eroding the autonomy of our universities. Granted that Nigerian universities might run similar courses but their designs must be quite different to meet the goals of the respective universities. And is over-centralization not a problem when we know that each region and community may have its different needs and move at different pace? There are rotten aspects of the system that need to be corrected: inadequate funding, unattractive and sub-standard facilities, power abuse, embezzlement of school funds, certificate forgery, examination malpractices, low teacher to student ratios, a deficit of qualified teachers, predatory sexual practices, etc.

2) Creative methods and ways have to be explored to diversify the knowledge economies and to tie national stability to the economy.

3) Most public universities pay the same salaries to academics more on the basis of their cadreship or designation, regardless of whether or not one is more productive than the other. Faculty compensation and incentive struc-

tures must be disaggregated to reflect productivity. The practice of paying everyone without measuring their productivity encourages lethargy, idleness, useless politicking and redundancy, and it must be discouraged, altered, discarded and substituted with an incentive regime that is tied to the productivity and value-added of each professor, and thus to the realization of the overall objectives of the university and the nation.

4) Most universities hardly impact their immediate community, particularly in the area of infrastructure. In the area of the provision of basic amenities, the universities are hardly able to help themselves with the provision of student-designed solar panels, the construction of dams for the water supply, the use of local materials to pave and construct roads, etc. So when the university is thrown into darkness the community is also in total darkness, and society does not look up to the universities in their neighborhood for solutions; it is unmoved or unimpressed, so far, by the public universities. Therefore, the call for the repositioning of public universities is timely.

5) Universities have a role to raise critical citizens and develop the leadership potential of students. Whereas this used to be so in the 1970s and 1980s, this has now changed as many students are pliant, timid, and generally indifferent to mis-governance, incompetence of the leaders, failure or the lack of infrastructures that are happening around them.

Any suggestion on repositioning must take into consider-

ation the challenges, some of which are identified above.

Repositioning Public Universities

I am here today to, first and foremost, provide knowledge underpinned by evidence that— through a visionary repositioning of public universities with education, which is linked to nation building, jobs, tourism, and cultural development—living fulfilled lives may be realized. I am glad to inaugurate a new tradition. Toward that end, we have many subjects to talk about: for example, how to make education more utilitarian is connected with all other issues: educated and gainfully employed citizens with jobs expand the economic basis, develop social vision, liberate ignorance, celebrate breakthroughs, and are active politically.

Allow me to again summarize the critical points that I want to elaborate upon. Given the context of the subservient role of the post colonial Nigerian state in the global system, repositioning our knowledge banks is a patriotic task that must be tackled with quantum seriousness, dedication, and commitment. It has been argued that no society can advance above or beyond the knowledge it has of itself and the variables underpinning its development process. Bearing this caveat in mind, let me propose the following:

(1) The state should play a leading role in funding public universities, particularly in the areas of infrastructural development. Many have argued that given the particular history of the country as a former colony, the post-colonial state cannot and should not abandon its role as major caretaker of the welfare of its citizens. Besides, education is in the concurrent list of the constitution of the

Federal Republic of Nigeria. Other stake holders (parents, private and nongovernmental organizations) must also be involved. Since this is a national task, everyone who has something to offer must be brought on board. We recommend the allocation of at least 25% of our annual national budget allocation to the education sector as proposed by UNESCO.

(2) The university system must be insulated from politics and other negative tendencies associated with the ruling elites' struggles for political power. Indeed, the universities should be allowed sufficient latitude to operate without any form of interference. We insist on the complete autonomy for our universities to make them self-governing. In this regard, the edict establishing the NUC should be reviewed. Our universities are advanced enough to regulate themselves. The NUC regiments the university system in Nigeria and implicates the contents and quality of knowledge that universities are capable of generating and imparting themselves. In the event of Nigeria's inability to trim the power of the NUC, the nation must be courageous enough to turn it into a truly regulatory body rather than the all-powerful and centralizing role it has now assumed.

(3) The country must address the central question of what type of knowledge these universities should impart. This would require the interrogation of the history of our educational system. What is the purpose of education? How can we redirect our consciousness toward national liberation from the shackles of neocolonialism? How do we

redirect our institutions of higher learning to lead in the onerous task of nation-building? All of these would require a radical shift from what was bequeathed to us the British colonialists. Our education should empower our people, it should create wealth and not restrict us to white collar jobs. Many have argued that knowledge is knowledge for a purpose, the validity of the purpose validates the type of knowledge. The knowledge our university system imparts on our citizens should validate its purpose in so far as the ultimate goal is to liberate us from both mental colonization and global subservience. Our universities must produce the type of knowledge that would empower us and enable us compete with peoples from other climes.

(4) As we ask for autonomy for the university system we must not forget that autonomy comes with responsibilities. Instructors must rededicate themselves to the ethics of the teaching profession. For a very long time, the university system was left porous and as a result quacks and charlatans invaded the system. The emergence of this category of people implicated the ethics of the teaching profession and the survival of academics and intellectuals. This has manifested itself several ways: the quality of research and teaching, the quality of the students we produce, and by implication, the quality of the capacity we imagine we are building; and the quality of knowledge we are distilling its impact on the quality of societal progress. Certainly, no university system can survive where the leading lights are mediocre, academic fraudsters, molesters, rapists and ethnic jingoists, or pawns in the

hands of rapacious ruling elites. We have also always argued that while ASUU's agitation for improved conditions of service, funding and university autonomy are justified, this is in no way matched by the commitment of its members to upholding ethical issues. Ironically it has become the case that the more concessions the union wins for its members, the more immoral and hedonistic they become. This has terribly injured ASUU's image both as a trade union of academics and an agent of national development. Staff strength in universities are not commensurate to the jobs being done. Indolent folks feed fat on the system. I see more clearly when you compare the work ethics/attitude/output of folks in Euro-American universities with folks in Nigeria. It is shameful what university employees do. Lack of necessary technology that should necessarily summarize staff positions also increase the decay and indolence in the system. Why must people attend meetings for issues that can be resolved by emails. How is it realistic to have more administrative than academic staff in the university system? Why should a department of 16 academic staff have 43 non-academic staff? What are they doing? Carrying files? There are areas of gross wastage of resources. Such funds used for the excesses could be committed to research and infrastructural development that will ultimately lead to expansion of knowledge and economic growth. Repositioning the university system would therefore require attitudinal change in the university academic, change in the modus operandi of the unions in terms of their proclivity for strike actions and commitment to higher national ideals.

Most certainly, a country cannot modernize without good education. It is through qualitative education that we build people with skills who can push for growth. It is the key to successful and financial security. In order to get a well-paying job to sustain oneself and one's family, we have to get an education. As we build a solid education system, we are able to utilize our natural resources to their full advantage, producing people who will develop skills to produce greater prosperity. We are in an age of knowledge economies: strong training provides the foundation for an informed citizenry and skilled labor force to generate investments.

Having identified some of the besetting challenges, how are we to tackle them? As far back as 1981, Professor C. O. Taiwo itemized some of the key needs to help reform the education system (2), which subsequent demands by ASUU also emphasized. Most demands concern funding to improve the quality of teaching, pay for staff, comfort for students in feeding, accommodation, and health, and general infrastructures. Demands have also been made for autonomy in terms of reducing the power of the Visitor, decentralizing admissions. Moral discipline has to be enforced on campus. The role of the Vice-chancellors, some argued, must be reviewed to let them focus more on fund raising and sourcing, and representing the university as vital to the national agenda. More money and strategic planning of resources is needed to support libraries and research.

We should not discard what our people created in the past: the indigenous past in which those with skills and knowledge transmitted them to the next generation. It fulfilled the four pillars of education as endorsed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): "learn-

ing to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together."⁽³⁾ People were socialized by internalizing practices that would make society function in an orderly manner. Values and customs were shared, and individuals were integrated into occupations. People learned the rituals of farming and other survival skills, as well as issues around building a cohesive society. Education prepared them for active lives as adults. Where Islam spread as a religion, Islamic education held the second position of education in our national history. It provided the advantages of literacy in the Arabic language, the establishment of mosques and schools. Islam created a much more formal structure, and moved education from parents and homes to mosques and schools. Western education, now the most common, which is the subject of this lecture, arrived during the nineteenth century with the Christian missions, and was subsequently expanded in the twentieth century by European colonial forces. Between World War I and II, the British colonial government contributed to the system based on specific needs. Reforms followed after World War II, leading to the creation of University College, Ibadan. Western formal education prepared people for wage economies in modernizing sectors. Unfortunately, with very few exceptions, this mentality of going to school to be fit for the wage economy is still predominant in the curriculum of public universities in Nigeria today.

Solutions that are Nigerian-based began to be offered from the 1950s onwards, ranging from free primary education, to the establishment of new universities, for the purpose of rapid human-capital formation. Since then, various reforms have been undertaken to expand opportunities. Among key postindependence reforms are the introduction of the Free Universal Basic Education Act and the National Action Plan (NAP). The

NAP “provides a situation analysis of Nigerian education and the initiatives taken by the government to meet the challenges of the sector.” NAP makes room for an examination of the state of the educational system. The Free Universal Basic Education Act is meant to provide access to didactic opportunities at all levels of the educational spectrum. Units of power that control the system often overlap and conflict, notably at the Federal, State, and Local Governments levels. Systems are also many and may require harmonization. One general complaint is about funding; one of its many consequences is the creation of an unstable workforce as teachers complain that their salaries are too low and that they lack equipment and have lost much of their status as key community leaders.

There has been a series of attempts to rethink the education system to meet the challenges of the modern era. In 1977, the country formulated the Nigerian National Policy on Education, which was revised in 1981 and with some modifications, since then. Nigeria departed from the colonial system, and adopted an American model of six years in primary school, three years in junior secondary and another three years in senior secondary. Higher education, for the award of a university degree and a host of other professional courses, is for a four to six-year period depending on the program. Although the initial expectation was that both primary and junior secondary education would be free and compulsory, some parents now opt for the fee-paying private schools in part because they do not trust the public schools. The competition for excellent schools creates obstacles for the less privileged. Limited spaces in good schools meant limited progress for a number of boys and girls. Although the number of universities has increased, the spaces available may also not be adequate when related to the over

100,000 primary and secondary schools in the country.

The government must also get it right, perhaps the Ministry of Education needs repositioning too: inconsistencies with educational policies that live and die as one government lives and dies, cases of good policies and very poor implementation, or curricula that do not touch the fabrics of the society. For example, Civics are no longer taught in our primary schools, West African or African history is also rendered “obsolete”, when other countries around the globe are doing everything possible to encourage their citizens to know who they are and ought to be, digging up more historical facts about themselves and spending a fortune on the same.

To keep adding to the catalogue of ideas on repositioning the public universities, for whatever we do to have any chance of success, the university curriculum must address the interests of the people. We need to make some changes to policies, attitudes, and priorities. Both the lecturers/professors and students must create a high attention level, both to acquire and then apply the knowledge that can help them create and grow economic opportunities of their own. An individual must have a passion, to be able to formulate a lifestyle. We have to know our people and institutions very well to articulate what will work for them and adopt a national vision as central to the university's role. Repositioning the public universities is a difficult task, but if we study the needs and resources, it will be possible to get people prepared. I am trying to argue that qualitative changes that are capable of transforming the educational system should provide skills and tools for a new generation of youth to be economically active on their own and in partnership with others. I will suggest we rethink all levels of the education system.

Programming must be proactive. Attractive, up-to-date

programming, actually helps the infrastructure as it attracts a more serious set of students and their families. As all of us know, theories of underdevelopment have been expounded, hence this lecture is not dealing with them, but with practical policies of isolating the public universities and the knowledge economies as a developmental component and making their value-adding relevant to the basic needs of the populace. Various cases have shown the linkage between numeracy, literacy, technical skills, communication and critical thinking to build economies and to empower individuals to put food on their tables. Programs in universities require constant updating, reinvention, re-adaptation to changing needs at local and global levels. The NUC and management in universities cannot create obstacles in the way of proactive programming. In many departments, there is no room for faculty to add to the curriculum, so when someone comes in with a new specialization or updated theories/perspectives, they are unable to contribute to the official syllabi or program until the department, the faculty of domicility and, finally, the senate decide to revise the full program, which may take years—indeed, talking of clogs.

Again, all public universities need to identify specializations for each one, so that they will all plan to meet the country's future needs, that is, engineering, medicine, languages, the arts, history, social sciences, etc., rather than trying to offer every program at every university. This should help streamline costs and give them a real reputation for excellence in the chosen specialties.

The problem of funding is crucial: many Vice-Chancellors and Deans are too busy in internal management to engage in the time-consuming job of fund sourcing for funds for their programs. The practice has been to sit down and expect all

needed funds from the proprietor-government. This attitude has to change. Vice-chancellors must go out, and engage professionals to handle the packaging, branding and sale of their research products to industries, entrepreneurs and government parastatals, and on the basis of agreed commission.

Public universities have to broaden the base of their funding. There must, for example, be some creative ways by which funds may be sourced to promote good education across the board. Given that the country could hardly pay the recommended N18,000 minimum wage, many parents are not able to afford the fees in public universities. State appropriations remain the main source of revenue. The fight has been whether these are enough or not. To ASUU, the 26 percent of the national budget as recommended by UNESCO should be strictly adhered to if we are to make the public universities more competitive. The well-to-do are being contacted to create endowments in the promotion of knowledge and research in our universities. Hopefully more and more will continue to do so, but let us hope that some donors are not just returning some of the public money they have stolen and stored in their private wallets. There is power in small donors who make donations from the sweat of their labor.

Other possible sources include the alumni associations and foundations. What effort is being made in this direction? To this extent, database of alumni must be developed. Let them know the average revenue generated through donations from alumni. But are public universities preparing their students with the right attitude? Don't public universities, through red-tapism, administrative negligence or crass incompetence or the unprofessional handling of crucial matters afflict and inflict students with unwarranted hardship, etc.? There is a need to cultivate

the right attitude toward the students if they expect them to give back to their respective universities. Staff, especially academics, must be given a re-orientation for developing the right attitude to work and should interact with students in a way that enduring loyalty may be built.

What about government patronage and public universities? Universities can also generate revenue through government patronage. But how much patronage do the public universities in Nigeria receive from the government? In most cases they prefer to contract consultancy services to private companies and individuals for untenable reasons. The irony of course is that private companies and individuals curiously rely on the same public universities for their expertise. In other words, the contractors still fall back on experts in the university. If at all they want to give consultancy to universities, they prefer to do so to those abroad. This is a clear indication of the contempt that the government has for universities in its own domain!

Adequate funding will ensure infrastructural development that will create positive visual contexts, impressive learning environments, access to health and sport facilities, modern classrooms, and much more. Every campus in the country, old or new, needs to maintain its infrastructure: university buildings (hostels and faculty/classroom buildings), roads, electricity, water – maybe this is the first thing to pump a lot of investments into infrastructure as there is definitely a link between infrastructure and education.

Public university lecturers need to be remunerated well, as in other jurisdictions. Education is a social service and the driver for the rest of the economy. Teachers are not only the cream of Japanese university graduates, but they are the best-paid public servants! It used to be the case in this country that

the salaries of professors were in parity with permanent secretaries in federal government ministries. But today the salary of an average professor is less than one third of the N22million that a permanent secretary earns per annum. Yet the workload of professors has increased many more times over from what it used to be in the 1970s.

Partnership with private individuals is also another option. The economic reality may make it necessary for public universities to go into partnership with private individuals, but the provision of expensive and non-profitable infrastructures for education, such as teachers' training and retraining, textbook and curriculum development, and quality monitoring and management, etc., cannot be left to private individuals whose bottom line and primary motive are maximizing profit. These tasks must be seen as foundational to the maintenance of national stability. Development is never a closed option; neither does it come without cost and political fallout.

But perhaps the most significant cause of youth unemployment, if the truth must be said, is that many Nigerian university graduates are unemployable! Examination malpractices, the unpredictable and epileptic opening and closure of colleges and universities due to strike actions, the endemic and systemic corruption in both the public and private sectors of our political economy, the lack of work ethics, and the overall desire to get rich overnight, have compromised the quality of Nigerian university graduates. Many employers are frustrated that they are hardly able to hire the right youth with the appropriate skills and work ethic. Many have found out to their dismay that many of the Nigerian university graduates can hardly read/or write intelligibly; and some cannot read at all! The situation is so bad that the major recruitment criterion, some private schools' pro-

prietors have adopted, is to give the prospective job applicants a nursery school book to read. They should be lucky to get one out of ten applicants who can read!

We must find solutions to unskilled graduates phenomena. In the 1970s, the University of Ife noticed a decline in the communication skills of its students, and introduced "Use of English" for all students; it was a required course and failure to pass terminated the student's contract for university education. At the University of Ibadan, it is now mandatory for prospective applicants for graduate study to take entrance qualifying examinations. We need such programs and gate keeping measures that would correct the lapses of the early years' foundation education. A child should be able to read with expression and understanding before the age of seven! And since Listening and Speaking (both of which are lacking among most Nigerian public school children) precede Reading and Writing/Composing, it is difficult to reposition our educational system without rectifying the errors of basic foundation education!

At university level, we have to build on this capacity for oral and written expression, the ability to communicate in different contexts for different reasons. Each university must have a rigorous mandatory set of courses in the sciences, mathematics, natural sciences, English, and history that will teach valuable skills in the five components that all students need to survive for the rest of their lives: independent and objective inquiry, ethics, writing, critical thinking, and quantitative ability. These mandatory courses must apply to all students, irrespective of their fields of interest. The time that a medical student could claim that he or she need not be able to write good English, communicate well or understand the outline history of his/her country is gone. The time that a history student could claim that

he or she cannot read on her health situation and dialogue with a doctor about a recommended medication is gone. The era when a student of English cannot claim that he or she cannot do basic arithmetic or understand the principles behind road construction is gone. The world no longer operates in clusters of knowledge that do not interact with one another.

A state institution like Osun State University has an obligation to define its mission first and foremost in terms of contributing to the uplifting of Osun State. The university must produce students with credentials in leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship. There have been rich discussions on the economic viability of a multi-campus university and the political wisdom in the quest for an even development in the State. Besides the accessibility of university education, its proximity or nearness to the people is bound to rub off on the local economy. Some critical minds wonder whether with the kind of economy of the State of Osun, the multi-campus model can be sustained for long, especially where lecturers have had to travel from one campus to the other on monstrous roads to deliver lectures. The way around these challenges, and the way forward is to explore the possibility of an E-class or E-conference option, except of course that it introduces new technical problems of inadequate bandwidth and regularity of the electricity supply. There are examples of multi-campus universities in other parts of the world, as in many states in the United States. However, each is autonomous and there is no the need for academics to travel from one campus to another. States in the USA have a vibrant economy to sustain multiple campuses, and some universities hardly depend on the state governments for sustenance. They see their role as preparing the present and future generations for maintaining national interests in a global landscape. Notwith-

standing these monstrous challenges, in the years ahead, the various campuses of Osun State University will surely become a major advantage in producing critical manpower, boosting the economy and contributing to solving problems at local, national, and global levels.

Repositioning for Visionary Education

Repositioning requires an approach or vision that is very much different from whatever consciousness that created the need to reposition. And to make the repositioning requires being realistic in the discussion of the financial burden and implications of the new position being proposed. I recommend the following steps, among others, for Nigerian public education.

Developing something unique

In repositioning public education, we may want to consider other models such as the Indian or Chinese model, countries with vision, and see how we can learn a thing or two from them. They looked inward and developed a public education culture in the face of derision by the powerful West, and came up with what is now globally beneficial to humanity. Nigeria has what it takes to evolve its own public-education culture that can possibly propel the nation much faster forward than it is currently doing.

Bilingualism

Indigenous and English languages should be used simultaneously as the languages of instruction at the elementary level. Therefore, repositioning the public universities requires

going back to the basic childhood education, and not only restructuring their foundation education, especially the language of instruction, but also investing in the training and retraining of primary and secondary school teachers. In elementary and elementary-middle, the most valuable tools students need are the skills of numeracy and literacy. Science has shown that humans are capable of absorbing information so rapidly at this stage, learning to read and write, and acquiring technological skills. Language is crucial to transmitting this knowledge. I am recommending that we simultaneously use an indigenous language, as in Yoruba and English in the case of the Southwest as the languages of instruction at the first education level (4). The new Civic Education course in junior secondary schools lays a foundation to ready students to take their education as more than personal gain, but as a necessary tool for achieving the wellbeing of all Nigerians. And I cannot overemphasize the role of public universities both in designing the relevant curriculum and in training the necessary qualified teachers to implement the restructuring policy programs.

Language is important, and we seem to be at a point of confusion. For example, many of our youngsters, irrespective of their level of education, are not good in the Yoruba language; and they are not good at English either. Yoruba is under intense pressure from English, as are many Nigerian languages, due to the colonial legacy and globalization (5). The country has retained the colonizer's tongue as its official language, which is also considered the standard language of education. Thus, many primary and secondary schools utilize English as the language of instruction. While English may dominate education, Yoruba is widely spoken.

In rethinking and repositioning public universities, we also

have to consider the use of language to promote new occupations. Perhaps, we should begin to think of bilingual programs geared at preparing young students for various occupations, and the need to instruct them in Yoruba, either complementing or bucking the tradition of English language instruction. Therefore, rather than merely requiring the acquisition of a Nigerian language in secondary school, the creation of bilingual programs that focus on an in-depth understanding of Yoruba (or other local languages) will enable those with formal education to communicate well and tap into new possibilities. This represents one prominent solution for increasing human capital; those with knowledge of Yoruba may be better equipped to educate others, resulting in a more efficient school system. In this regard, the role of government and public universities becomes that of policy architects designing the structure built to meet the needs of their clients. For example, discouraging the students' desire to do courses with a view to look for government jobs could be stage-managed: the government simply provides grants and subsidies for the university education of Yoruba specialist teachers and allows parents to pay economic fees for students who want to study public administration!

The use of English, under colonial rule, was connected with the goal of colonial dominance (6). Thanks to the colonial educational system, English acquired "elite" status in colonial society, and this elevated the prestige of those that communicated in it. Today, while the majority of people in our area continue to speak in Yoruba (7), English is the language of instruction. The use of English guarantees communication within structures of government and can provide civic employment opportunities. Those without formal education may lack the linguistic skills necessary to obtain a higher socioeconomic sta-

tus. This is a source of the problems that have to be corrected.

Is the linguistic dominance of English in the schools not a problem? The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) asserts that indigenous languages are superior to Euro-languages for primary childhood development (8). This policy seems reasonable given the need to educate children first and foremost in the language of their culture. Koichiro Matsuura, the former Director-General of UNESCO, *inter alia*, stated: "The language we learn from our mothers [mother tongue] is the homeland of our innermost thoughts. We may travel or live abroad for years on end, study and master others but we dwell all our days in the very words through which we first came to perceive our surrounding world." (9) However, the UNESCO policy does not advocate the need for continued study in local languages. UNESCO claims that bilingual education in global languages allows for "intercultural education aiming at the promotion of understanding between communities and between nations." (10)

The policy of either studying or using local languages at primary level is laudable but bilingual education of European languages at secondary and university level may eliminate local languages as significant forms of communication in schools. It is clear that the primary-level schools tend to abandon Yoruba mother tongue languages in an effort to prepare students for secondary and university-level education that will occur in English. What then happens to those who do not continue their education? In many ways, the policy of utilizing English in the classrooms may create its own problems. Learning our own language and that of our neighbors builds citizenship and was one of the original methods that was never fully implemented to unify our diversity.

An Economic Report on Africa released by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) came to the conclusion that “Africa’s development potential can only be unbridled if governments greatly improve human resources, through a battery of actions to make the educational system relevant to the economy, including thorough and systematic reform of the educational system.”⁽¹¹⁾ For this to happen, the use of Yoruba in Western Nigeria schools is important; it encourages the students to be more active and involved in the subject matter ⁽¹²⁾. The language spoken at home and at school, if the same, may generate many advantages. A viable argument to support this position is that there is no scientifically and/or technologically advanced society today where the language of schooling is different from the one spoken at home. The fact of the matter here is that no scientifically and/or technologically advanced society exists that “names its world” in the words of others, to borrow from the critical discourse of Paulo Freire. The efficiency of the education system will no doubt improve if teaching occurs in Yoruba as well as in English (in Western Nigeria) in order to ensure everyone has access. My suggestion is not to abandon the use of the English language, as this option is neither feasible nor advisable, but to encourage bilingualism that will connect people to multiple opportunities.

Provision of ICT Infrastructure

The acquisition and use of modern technologies have become non-negotiable in changing the way in which knowledge is imparted and research is conducted. Undergraduates are now extremely smart and quick in using the resources from the Internet and devices as smart phones to communicate and

exchange information. Modern libraries have to rely more and more on electronic books and other new technological innovations like E-clustering. The country should not rely on the permanent purchase of these technologies, but must contribute to creating new ones and generating ideas for private companies to convert them marketable products.

Innovative and marketable knowledge industry

Public universities have to be creative homes for innovation and must partner with the private sectors in training and research. The project of the “innovative” Opon Imo project, as it gets improved upon, may become a visionary one, which could be used as evidence that indigenous concepts may be interposed with Western technology and made to generate an effective, consumable intellectually vibrant end-product. Intellectual property can be connected to investors outside of the university in order to create companies to train more students and generate more revenues. From bottling water to baking bread, utilizing the universities can actually convert knowledge into cash.

Repositioned knowledge economies will involve the production of skilled manpower for the state, Nigeria, and the rest of the world. Indigenous knowledge has to be utilized as well. There is in the Osogbo-Ede area a bevy of a dying population of septuagenarians, octogenarians, nonagenarians, and younger, and non-Western schooled. A quick peep into the palaces of the Ataoja and Timi Agbale would reveal that these men and women could easily be used at the university as chroniclers of events in the area, which educated historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists are unable to replace. The former may

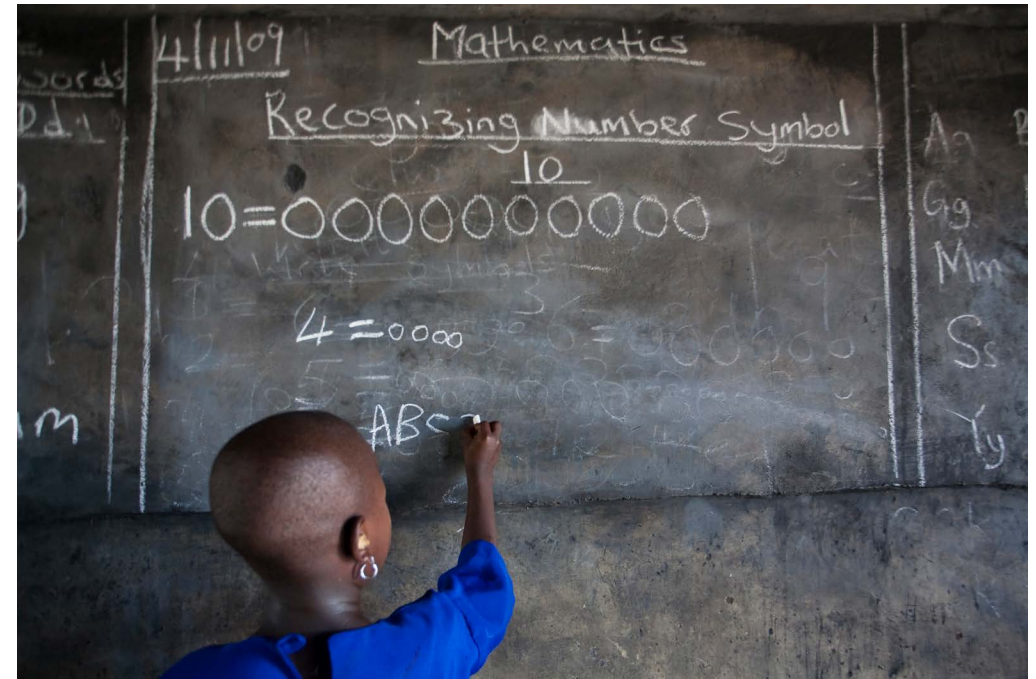
reveal and unveil the mysteries that textbooks cannot—these men and women are prodigies in poetry and prose. Some of the knowledge gained by students in African studies, philosophy, pharmacy and medicine at Ife in the 1970s came from some of the aged babalawos (Awofatunmbi, Omoge Ijoye, etc), whom Professor Wande Abimbola brought to campus as lecturers. The power of indigenous people is what my latest memoir underscores in the Agbekoya. Why can't UniOsun (as your university is fondly called) borrow from the Ife model?

Students are not robots who must always receive and not give, listen to lectures and return the same ideas back to the lecturers. For this to happen, lectures have to move in the direction of testing creativity, innovation, and critical thinking. Basic knowledge has to be presented in all disciplines, but beyond routine knowledge transmission and skill training is the ability of students to coordinate ideas and lessons from multiple sources. Students must know there is no such a thing as a useless discipline but only an uncreative student lacking the preparation to adapt. Universities have to teach time management, financial management, and entrepreneurship. Someone with a degree in the liberal arts may be an astute manager, effective government official and entrepreneur.

What Must Be Done?

We have to think of how we can:

- i.) restore the standard of public schools, in particular spending on better public buildings, equipment, and conducive environments;
- ii.) maintain efficiency and effectiveness;
- iii.) provide adequate funding for quality education in a



Child at Tajudeen Agbangudu Primary School

- way that produces excellent teachers and better infra structures;
- iv.) improve the capacity and conditions of service of school teachers. There are reported cases that some of them go without pay for months and are forced to take to petty trading in order to survive. Teachers are no longer necessarily “second parents” of our children/wards in public institutions;
- v.) train and use high quality teachers (here, the country of Finland provides an example; so does the Asian nation of Singapore);
- vi.) motivate parents to be active in the training of their children;
- vii.) provide incentives to those who perform well;
- viii.) ensure that communities become more active, as



they did in the past, and provide the necessary infrastructure that will sustain their active participation; and ix.) inculcate good values in, and transmit valuable skills to students: they must speak and write well, think critically, and acquire valuable technical skills.

Prioritize Education

Education must become a priority, with enhanced quality to take advantage of both internal and external investments. Not only do we need to enhance our internal capacities, we need to compete globally. We operate in a global system where citizens compete for jobs, and unless we offer a first-rate education, we are unable to take advantage of this global power force. Others will take our resources for their own development,

as the British did, and as other countries are now doing since we are not using our skills to convert those resources to better use.

Poverty Reduction

If people live below the poverty line, survival becomes more important than schooling. As UNDP's 2012 Africa Human Development report correctly notes, "A well-nourished and empowered population, in turn, is more likely to seek education, participate in society and expand its productive and human potential." (13) To a person who wakes up hungry, how to get food is more important than how to get an education. When hardworking people look around to see other hardworking fellows who completed their education and have no jobs, they get discouraged. Lack of incentives, both moral and physical, thus creates problems. Therefore, it is not only important to understand that low school enrollment rates in some places occur because children work to augment the household incomes of their parents but also to take measures to put them back into school. The informal labor in which young children participate is not necessarily impacting their skill but wasting their foundation years. Inculcating and providing the necessary supports of a Nigerian dream, where even the poorest citizen may rise through education and perseverance, is central to maintaining their participation in the education system and reducing the cycle of poverty.

Higher Enrollment, More Funding

We have not succeeded in putting everyone in school

because of funding, discipline, and inadequate facilities to accommodate demand. We have, however, noticed a high drop-out rate. Where jobs are difficult to find, education becomes a disincentive. In some cases, early marriage by women limits their overall opportunities. The proliferation of sub-standard schools is creating its own problems, especially those with examination malpractices. Learning environments are not always conducive to personal development. Teachers are not always motivated because of low pay, and they complain that resources are inadequate for them to do their work. And what about the quality of the teachers produced by teacher training colleges? Educating the educators is a crucial factor in restoring what is missing in Nigeria's educational system.

Models to Emulate

There is nothing wrong with seeking knowledge elsewhere, to borrow models that work. I am reminded of a statement credited to the late President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania who once said, "a nation which refuses to learn from foreign cultures is nothing but a nation of idiots and lunatics...[but] to learn from other cultures does not mean we should abandon our own." (14) If what we have does not work well, are there places where things do work? Why do parents send their children to Ghana? It is not the case that policies that work in one country will work in our own or even when they work will, reach a similar degree of success, as in the case of the National Service that has worked well in other places but not in ours. We therefore have to adapt ideas and programs that suit our local conditions.

We can borrow tertiary education models that work elsewhere, but it does not mean that will not adapt them to our own

society. Knowledge production has to operate within local, national, and global contexts. The context of knowledge must relate to our needs and must respond to universal ideas that are useful to us. The epistemologies of knowledge can borrow and adapt but must also be grounded in our cumulative indigenous ideas and knowledge systems. A brilliant synthesis of African and Western knowledge system will serve us very well.

There are some examples to change things at the elementary level. In 1994, Mexico began a very successful program, known as ProgresoOportunidades, an initiative that rewarded mothers with cash if they participated at parent meetings and if their children stayed in school. The program took children off the streets. But it also ensured that the parents, by attending mandatory meetings, learnt about sanitation, hygiene, and nutrition. ProgresoOportunidades was a clever way to ensure that children attained literacy and skills, and that their parents gained knowledge of nutrition and health. The overall objective was to reduce poverty. So successful was the model that it was adopted in Nicaragua, Brazil, the United States, Zambia, Peru, Honduras, Malawi, and Chile where changes could be made in poor places, and poor families could be targeted. In places where the program worked well, parents have reduced the number of children they could potentially have by using contraceptives, the rate of teen pregnancies also dropped considerably, and school enrollment was up.

Yet another example, which works at the lower education level, is the creation of charter schools in the United States in areas with high poverty rates (15). The charter schools teach valuable skills, and encourage teachers to be active in monitoring the students. Teachers and parents work together to develop the curricula and to encourage leadership activities. What

the charter schools do is to prevent centralization and to give communities the power to follow what works for them. Individual talents and skills are identified, and then promoted by teachers and parents alike.

Technical Education and the Community (Neighborhood)

College Option

In knowledge economies, as the ones that we seek, training has to focus on entrepreneurship and leadership. At the core of both is an effective program to impact literacy, numeracy, technical and communication skills, all of which are valuable for competitive societies. Technical training is key. Whether one does English or Yoruba, Literature or French, it does not mean that technical skills cannot be part of those programs. Nothing stops a student studying for a BA in history to understand computer science or acquire the skills to repair cars. The problem is actually the way we put the educational program together. In advanced economies, students are allowed to do a double or triple major, to do chemistry and history, for example, as a combined degree and to have the opportunity to go to a graduate or professional school in a field totally unrelated to the one acquired at the undergraduate level. In the US professional school system, for example, it is not uncommon to have someone with an undergraduate degree in history, linguistics or any other field to end up with a doctor of medicine or doctor of law degree. Gateway courses are desirable in a combination of sciences and liberal arts to create the diversity of knowledge across the disciplines.

In secondary schools, students must develop the skills to solve problems and to communicate well. Book knowledge

and practical experience must go hand in hand. As they combine both, they will discover their talents, interests and abilities. Brains are stimulated to process words and symbols, and students learn early that plumbing, painting, and masonry are decent ways to make a living. Recently, the vocational education curriculum was reintroduced in the senior secondary schools, but no funding was provided to create viable workshops and practicals to teach this curriculum beyond the theoretical level. Without practical experience these students are ill-prepared to develop their vocational training into full employment.

Community colleges, as there are in Canada and the United States, are cheaper to run than universities. Higher educators perceive a community college as a junior, non-four-year higher education institution. A community college would not care for research or graduate programs, especially at the doctoral level. The students do not live in dorms on campuses, in order to reduce the overhead costs of hostels. The majority of teachers are part-time. Courses focus on practical matters that students need in technological and commercial environments. In the United States, they realize that universities are not for everyone, and that what is necessary is to create a large middle class to sustain the economy. Community colleges make it possible with vocational education—a plumber makes more money than many with university degrees! The colleges know how to communicate the opportunities of entrepreneurship. We need to create technical institutions and community colleges that will provide education for what we need in cities and the nation, such subjects as how to convert, refuse into energy and manure, irrigate rivers that run through our cities, invent basic technologies, repair machines, develop roads, etc. With the right technical skills, the individual can leave school to estab-

lish his or her own small business to repair cars and watches, household equipment, supply food items, etc.

Community colleges mean there is no end to learning and no person is too old to go to school. Whatever is of interest to people becomes a school subject, like gardening, preparing a will, organizing events, etc. Adult classes provide ways to network and reinvigorate the brain. The colleges give a second, third, and fourth chance to people to change their careers. The thousands of people who have migrated to the United States are successful because these community colleges give them the option to acquire skills, so that someone who completed a Fine Arts degree at Obafemi Awolowo University at Ile Ife may end up working as a nurse or pharmacist in Baltimore and make a decent living.

Support from Parents for Visionary Education

We are fond of always criticizing the government. Nigerians must pause for a moment, look inward, and for reasons of self-purgation, criticize themselves as well. Tough love for parents: what do parents want?

a) ***Under-age children in schools and universities:*** Many parents rush to get their children through education when the child is not mature and ready. Many children go to secondary schools before they are nine years old. It is more prevalent among members of the so-called elite, who often think it is prestigious to do so. Age and maturity produce well-educated citizens. People of my generation I entered secondary school at the age of twelve or thirteen! One principal of a good school in the Ibadan area told me that the children are so immature that their parents come into the class after school to help them copy notes. What

is the rush in getting children to go through university education before the age of eighteen only to stay at home for over 5 years without any prospect of employment? Maturity before leaving school helps a lot in education for self-reliance. Maybe Howard Gardner's taxonomy of educational objectives (16) should be a requirement for all citizens to be educated on, so that they would know that a child thrown into adult culture early in life would hardly ever grow up to be normal. Individuals like Michael Jackson, Gary Coleman, and a host of others, who were thrown into the adult world early in life ended up in jail, or altogether dead.

b) ***Misconception of the meaning of education.*** The type of education Nigerian parents want for their children is what Plato prescribed for the philosopher kings, the elite rulers made of gold, who did what they proclaimed to be right because they, and only they knew what was right through many years (over ten years) of intellectual training. Education for self-employment is for those made of silver and bronze, that is, the technicians/soldiers and labourers, who had to be told what to do and be supervised to do what was right! The question arising from this then is, do we need Plato's idea on education in Nigeria at this time?

c) ***The emphasis on quality education is skewed towards the belief that we need more universities rather than have education for self-employment.*** For Nigeria, we need driving schools, machinist schools, schools for plumbers, carpenters, etc. Tailors, generator/electricians and welders live well and have cars and they, in their twenties, the age of university graduates, have

jobs, while those with degrees roam the streets after their university degree programs! These schools exist informally in almost all Nigerian cities. For instance, a tailor engages a lady or more as an apprentice for an agreed number of years during which she learns the craft and eventually sets up her own outfit after the “*oga*” or “*madam*” settles her financially for years of service learning. (17) The model cited here exists only with the Igbo traders and artisans, which is quite commendable. The Yoruba model, on the contrary, is rather exploitative. An apprentice serves-in-training his master for three to five years at the end of which the apprentice pays a specific fee to buy his freedom which is then celebrated with a certificate of discharge. After which he still has to look for money to establish his own trade. In some cases, where an apprentice is unable to buy his freedom, he is denied his certificate of discharge, and he may choose to remain with the boss but work independently of the boss to raise his freedom/discharge fee. This much I know. The same goes for mechanics, etc. We should establish more vocational schools that would provide formalized training of artisans with a properly delineated curriculum. Paying fees in those schools becomes another issue, especially for individuals from poor backgrounds who would rather serve a master for five years, learn the craft, and receive a financial settlement than to pay fees in those technical schools. However, for those from middle class families who are bent on going to liberal arts colleges, the existence of those technical schools and the ease with which their graduates secure employment upon graduation will eventually cause a positive shift in attitudes towards those schools or in pursuing double and triple paths.

d) ***Reorientation of the Nigerian concept of “work”***: Who wants

to be self-employed if being a clerk in the tax office, immigration, customs, or police, not to talk of being a politician, means that you can earn far more than a self-employed professional? People look for certain jobs where there is a lot of “*egunje!*” A retired teacher once told me that his son had a good job in Lagos. I asked what makes a good job? He said the boy had so much *egunje* that he didn’t have to spend all of his salary! That is a dimension of corruption which is considered normal by many Nigerians, as is the case under reference. Corruption is a hydra-headed dragon manifesting different ugly heads at different occasions. A strange breed of Nigerian politicians also considers it the norm to steal or divert public funds. Medical doctors use government hospitals to operate on private patients, and pharmacists, radiographers, etc. in government hospitals use their positions to divert patients to their private practices. The message parents tend to communicate at home these perilous days is: *Akata-kata laa se ise oba, enikan kii se ise oba ko yan oogun!*

e) ***Viability of education for self-employment in the modern global village***: self-employment ranges from professional occupations (doctors, accountants, solicitors, engineers, pharmacists) to artisans/technicians (hairdressers, barbers, plumbers, welders, panel beaters, electricians). The most viable is what everyone uses, everywhere, everyday. Hence, food, the body, health care, and the telephone are in the first category followed by shelter and the clothing industry. The basic human needs provide jobs. Education for self-employment means that we will raise career awareness of the viability of what is possible. Nigerian parents even push their children who are not academically sound to pursue courses in engineering, medicine, etc.

to probably massage the parental ego, rather than encourage them to do what they are best at, and interested in! Well, it works for now because we have an examination system rather than an education system, so that what counts is rote-learning and the attainment of certificates and qualifications.

f) ***Who is a dropout?*** The idea of “school dropout” is what education for self-employment is not! “Dropout” is a form of education that only provides for the learning style of intellectuals. In a proper education system that caters for the learning styles of all, every child is a success in his/her area of interest, capability, and ability. The cripple (aro) does the knitting of agbada at Ibadan. Two to three years of apprenticeship, after nine years of Basic Education for about N120,000 per year with a guaranteed self-employment after graduation, is much cheaper than senior secondary and university education without the prospect of employment. Even worse still, even if the so-called secondary school or university-educated individuals are fortunate to be employed, they take the meager money to those barbers, knitters, tailors, welders, etc.

g) **Morality (or Vision):** I don’t want to be pretentious talking about character education in the university of the state of the virtuous, Ipinle Omoluwabi! Character education is important because many graduates of our universities today lack moral premonitions. This explains the high level of corruption among university graduates in politics, the civil service, and in private life. There have been many cases of armed robbers known to speak the Queen’s English as they engage in diabolical and nocturnal activities. Many students have found joining cults relevant to their schooling experiences. This has been reported

in as high up as graduate schools in Nigeria and as low as in elementary schools. Education without morals, then, is a recipe for social disaster! Remoralizing our educational system must start from university administrators, some of whom have also joined the bandwagon of stealing from government allocations or living ostentatious lives such as having as a dozen cars in their fleet; the change must also incorporate faculty members who sleep with students who are sometimes younger than their grand-children and collect money for marks. In loco parenti, faculty members are role models to the students and there is a high probability that students will copy them without question. We lose the respect associated with the “Ivory Tower” scholars become as much culprits as degenerate politicians.

h) ***Parents do not want their children to do odd jobs in Nigeria, but do send them abroad instead.*** What do many of such children do overseas? Typically, they do odd and menial jobs as night guards, taxi drivers, domestic servants, cleaners. *Oruko to wu ni laaje lehin odi!* It is easy to do anything where you are anonymous. People do things abroad that they are proud not to be doing at home. Why not do similar jobs at home and improve upon how to do them?

Knowledge Economies: Cultural Resources, Economic Diversification, and New Occupations

Let me start with a most apparent point: a Christian pastor has a job; an imam has a job; a *babalawo* has a job. These three well-known examples are occupations tied to knowledge, spirituality and religion. These are not just a few jobs—they are there

in the thousands, connected with the marketing of knowledge and skills. As professions, they are unregulated, undocumented, with untaxed incomes.

Like religion, all aspects of culture are tied to occupations. Cultural values can be commercialized in positive ways. Many are very well-connected to the tourist industry, very many others to daily practices. In Bahia, Brazil, the Ile-Aye, a training ground for carnivals, is a school, a club, an apprenticeship, and there are many more providing jobs to hundreds of people. The Candomblé houses do the same. Both are connected to a limitless number of *akara*je (the word for “akara” in Brazil and most Caribbean countries) small stores all over Salvador.

Cultural resources generate points of attraction. Attractions are linked to tourism. Tourism is an industry that generates books, photographs, the training of experts in guided tours to visit sites of interest. To be clear, cultural resources on their own will not generate employment unless we develop them, announce our resources to the world beyond us; and anchor them in tourism which in turn will depend on an uninterrupted power supply, good roads, peace, and security.

Assuming that I have convinced you within such a short time that religion and culture are entry points to occupations, let me show you how to do it. The starting point is an elaborate compilation of all the available cultural resources in the city and immediate environs. In a recent book, Dr. Jide Fatokun has compiled a list of tourist attractions in Ibadan, for example. In his list are: David Hinderer’s house, Cocoa House, the Cooperative Building, the Western State Agricultural Investment Corporation Building (formerly WNDC), Agodi Gardens, the Premier Hotel, Broking House, the Lekan Salami Sports Complex, Mapo Hall, and Bower’s Tower (18). This is an impressive list,

a good starting point, to which we must add more. There is the need for a rigorous compilation of what we have, what we want to preserve, and how those heritage treasures connect with tourism. A task force should be established to engage in documentation so that hidden assets of families are revealed. The State of Osun is also rich in many historical sites. The government must be commended for its efforts at promoting tourism, especially through the annual Osun Osogbo festival. However, the university can further enhance tourism activities in the State through vigorous research of other potential sites, documentation, packaging, branding and marketing to the global community.

A colorful brochure of this list has to be printed, with multiple photographs for distribution. In addition, they have to be part of an elegant website on our cities with information on how to access them. Tour guides must be on location to explain. The sites are history, but also sources of wealth generation. For job creation and tourism, such sites can be divided into the following categories:

- a) the historical and archaeological
- b) festivals
- c) the crafts and skill-oriented and/or industrial occupations (e.g., soap making; *adire* or tie-dye production, etc.)
- d) the occupational—medicine, music, drumming, food, dance, weaponry, decorations, beauty
- e) architecture—old compounds, old ways of construction, cenotaphs.

Following the cataloguing is the need to institute a host



Osun Shrine

of apprenticeship system to learn the practices and crafts, and then to formalize and integrate them into the school system.

There is no doubt that Iya Osun Suzanne Wenger (Adunni Olorisa) has not only raised the profile of Osogbo but her contribution to the Osun festival has generated and created jobs for a number of people who come to Osogbo every year for the Osun festival. These are jobs that have their own multiplier effects to create such other jobs as the following:

- *Egungun*—textile and costumes
- *Egungun* carnivals—hotels, entertainment, tourism, facilities to promote tourism

- *Egungun* knowledge—books and training in schools, etc.
- Crafts—modernized and globalized, more beautiful products that are used for a diversity of reasons at the domestic level. Crafts of limitless range and possibilities, for example, mats for curtains and floors; cloth-weaving using local yarn, distilling local wine and alcohol, using local clay for brick making, etc.
- Agricultural and industrial capacity—old and new. The old are the crafts that have existed for so long (textile, mat making, basket weaving, etc.), using local materials; block making, clay bricks manufacturing, etc. Industrial production has to be part of the school system so that the skills can be transmitted and the new and next generation can modernize them by introducing new tools and technologies that will produce efficiency. Through the school system, creativity will flourish as people create new meanings, new ways of doing things, and new responses to global markets. Be it indigenous or modern, industries that rely on the use of local materials and basic tools will generate more jobs.
- Recreation centers: maintain the preservation and use of forest reserves; create safe youth centers randomly located in the city, just as some cities in the United States have done. These are centers meant to attract young people after school under strict supervision by adult volunteers.
- Relaxation centers: old and new; older ones to fall back on indigenous cultures, newer ones to borrow from abroad. Both generate revenue and create jobs.

These examples are just a few. We definitely must explore teaching youth the skills relating to culture, industry, resources, and technology. By investing in our resources, we will be able to export our treasures and in turn generate income and jobs. By teaching students about industrial work, we will be able to manufacture more of our own goods, possibly refining our natural resources. By adding technological skills to the curriculum, students would learn various skills and measure up to the global standard in technology.

Women Empowerment

Ghana's Dr. Emmanuel K. Aggrey often said that when we educate a man, we educate an individual, but when we educate a woman, we educate an entire village or community. Therefore, we must promote the interests of women, especially since many have suffered a lot and have been pushed to the unsavory and sad point even of selling their bodies. Women not only play crucial roles in the domestic space, they are—as Dr. Aggrey of Africa has alluded to—responsible for the socialization of children, in both cases providing the key support for local politics and national economies. Micro-credit financing is the fastest tool to create self-employment for women. We must care about them, and carefully prepare them for careers. Without skills, education and career paths, we are preparing them for permanent subordination and lack of respect. Schools must be gender-sensitive, and be fully aware of the need to promote equal participation and empowerment.

Here is what we learn from global statistics: that nations in which women have identical rights as men, where income gaps between men and women are small, and where there is a low birth rate do better than nations where women have high

birth rates, and enjoy fewer rights and lower incomes. Thus, empowering women benefits us all, and we can do this through education and capitalizing on them. Professional women will contribute to eliminating poverty in their households; at the very minimum, they have a lower number of children that they and their husbands will be able to cater for.

Women must have as many rights as men, and must be treated as equals. As they constitute half of the population (if not more), not to train them well is to lose half the labor force and undermine everybody. They must receive skills, and be trained in the art of modern politics so that they can participate and be members of civil society. We want to minimize a situation in which our women will engage in child trafficking, as we now see happening in some other parts of the country. Desperation and the struggle for survival create the conditions for prostitution and human trafficking. Many of the ideas on cultural resources and connections to occupations will work well with thousands of women.

Knowledge Economies: An Entrepreneurial Paradigm Shift?

In line with the task that the Osun State University authorities assigned to me, I have advocated a paradigm shift in this lecture. The ultimate goal of repositioning public universities and also in instituting a visionary education as well, requires a paradigm shift from education for public-service employment to education for entrepreneurial and self-employment. In the West, service-related economies are replacing manufacturing and agriculture, creating opportunities for us to connect with areas being vacated. Expanding technologies and globalization have created new economic activities while older ones are being transformed. Key areas of change, that our universities

must respond to, must include the digital divide, global warming, job outsourcing, new technologies, and changes in international trade.

Education must aim at making the products of universities self-reliant and gainfully employed. To do this, three conditions must be firmly in place:

- a) Is there an existing entrepreneurial culture?
- b) Can we have specific curricula to develop students with skills specific for entrepreneurial culture?
- c) Can we create a support structure for aspiring entrepreneurs?

My answer is “Yes” to all the key points, and I will develop each in a few critical ideas that are easily digestible.

Can public universities develop specific curricula so as to develop students with specific skills for entrepreneurial culture?

We can balance the current deficit-oriented aspects of the education system by recognizing that many are already self-employed and successful. Osun has entrepreneurs:

- successful, can be self-supporting; doesn't need to be rich (example: thousands of market women). Can they not be capitalized? Can people with education not become traders and use education to reform trade?
- there are already many entrepreneurs, small shops, grocery stores, the informal sector. How did they become self-employed? Are these people not in themselves teachers, images of entrepreneurs? Can the school system not learn from them?

If they have successful practical experience, are we not wasting valuable information that we should collect and turn into university curricula?

- Additionally, in spite of the dire conditions, people still learn; youth go to school and still work hard. Is this not a tribute to their strong potential (especially the fact that so many succeed internationally) rather than labeling them as “lazy,” overly “interested in corrupt practices?” How can their ingenuity be funneled, and their potential tapped into? We need to study successful young men and women, and do away with the bad eggs and 419-ers who are on the path to failure.
- Re-orientation to entrepreneurial culture and ability through some of the suggestions that I have made.

Education for self-employment needs to be focused around this goal, by learning from the already successful, and developing youth talent as such:

- the curriculum, rather than being general, may be re-aligned to think what it means to teach on entrepreneurship. It requires, in addition to the basics, an environment that stimulates the fostering of ideas, from learning how to develop to implementation.
 - o What does it mean to leave school with the capabilities to be self-employed? (e.g., we have examples of those who have designed businesses, role models of those that have achieved success. We know about micro-financing and what it takes to get good loans, those who have written a grant/business plan, etc.). The goal is to learn from successful people.

- A focus on projects (what I called practice) and learning from competent entrepreneurs:

o have entrepreneurs help with designing projects, curricula around these skills. We can create a Council of Entrepreneurs that offers guidance, produces educational materials, produces a list of the top 50 self-made people of the year, etc. and use them to teach others. Members of the Council of Entrepreneurs will give lectures in schools and organize workshops.

o to have projects in class (like many universities and schools) where students are tasked with designing a business or social entrepreneurship idea. If microfunding/financing can be done for N100,000 how many ideas are going undeveloped? How many student prizes, business ideas can be started, so that some will succeed? A school, university, or local organization becomes then a micro-funding source.

Re-orientation to entrepreneurial culture and ability through some of the suggestions that I have made

Youth themselves have many ideas. Rather than adults and teachers creating careers for students, they will more likely create careers we could never have imagined:

- how can they participate?
- how can their ideas be taken seriously? [Many young people have told me of many ideas schoolmates have had, but that went unheeded, not taken as serious, or no avenues to get further developed.]

The idea does not have to be grand or from the outset seek to make millions. It can start by addressing a gap, fulfilling a desire or a need.

- for example, people have organized waste management businesses and then used various ways to turn organic waste into fertilizer that they sold to earn a profit for the business.

- how can addressing the needs be turned into occupations and profits?

Concluding Remarks

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, students, parents, let me thank you for your patience in listening to this long lecture. I would like to reiterate the key points to leave you with. For public universities to acquire relevance, they must accomplish the following critical missions:

- i) create relevance in the communities where they are situated such that they can improve the standard of living of many people; pedagogy must be relevant, suited to the localities, environments, and culture;
- ii) make the university accessible to a cross-section of people in the areas of location;
- iii) attract exceptional students from Nigeria and other African countries;
- iv) solve many basic problems in the areas of locations;
- v) solve national and global problems;
- vi) expand the frontiers of knowledge;
- vii) offer high quality training to students at both undergraduate and graduate levels through rigorous teaching and research;

- viii) ensure students who pass through them have a commitment to changing the nation and the world;
- ix) foster permanent relationships with alumni in a way to generate their loyalty and commitment to funding;
- x) constantly adapt to new technologies, and the creation of basic and advanced science and technology for public use; the cultivation of innovation on how students and faculty can create and promote new knowledge must be constant.
- xi) generate revenue streams outside of the usual government channels so that they can build financial support and ultimately financial sufficiency;
- xii) relate cost to efficiency in operations;
- xiii) focus on specific programs that promote academic excellence and provide the best training opportunities to students; institutions must distinguish themselves by focusing on developing programs that will benefit the nation without unduly replicating generic and redundant sets of knowledge;
- xiv) create niche areas to advance new knowledge;
- xv) create vision centers, project champions, stars of the university where productivity is constant, and faculty members receive support to enhance productivity;
- xvi) combine and share resources among universities within a region to maximize the use of resources;
- xvii) partner with private universities in cost and staff sharing to advance educational opportunities; rather than lecturers teaching on different campuses for fees, public universities can actually collaborate with the private;
- xviii) create partnerships with entrepreneurial and private sectors to train and retrain staff and engage in collabora

- tive research; and
- xix) measure and constantly improve upon institutional productivity.

In my endeavor today, it is my abiding hope that I have provided enough materials to create the basis for change. Educational reforms or visionary education that create a new generation of entrepreneurs dedicated to cultural, agricultural, industrial, commercial and over-all economic development will promote the welfare of citizens, consolidate an emerging middle class, and bring prosperity to our city, region, and country. There must be institutional autonomy, strong and enterprising leadership to enable revolutionary changes that will enrich the experience of students. Let me close with a few suggestions:

1. Our institutions must give our youth real world skills in order to help them become gainfully employed after graduation, utilizing the idea of apprenticeships and trade schools.
2. Young children must be taken off the streets. The short-term financial discomfort many households will endure will be compensated for over the years when upon graduation the youth would start earning more durable income. The inability of the state to provide funding means that laws cannot be made to mandate and enforce compulsory education at the local level.
3. Our educational goals should be able to make food available, plan cities, supply energy, and run services.

4. Abundant skills must be developed to reduce importation so that money can circulate to create a more diversified economy. We will be able to improve on what we produce and market the products elsewhere.
5. Parents must relate the pressure and advice they give their children to their talents. Suggestions are usually tied to overcoming poverty, but not on manifesting talent, creativity and happiness.
6. There also must be a shift in the attitude of the youth: they have to work hard, shun corrupt practices, and believe in a slow accumulative process.
7. We have been hurt by our own policies and practices that harm the educational system. By doing damage to the educational system, we have ensured that our economy would falter as well.
8. The educational system must be equitable, sustainable, and rigorous to prepare children for multiple skills, leadership, entrepreneurship and more.
9. Uncertified teachers must be phased out, as some of them are part of the problem. The good ones must not be overburdened. A teacher cannot handle too many students in a classroom. The certified ones have to stay happy and love their jobs. The rewards for teachers cannot just be in heaven but begin from earth! As I mentioned earlier, the current reward system which is based on a general template should be adjusted to reward excel

lence. The university should also have specially designed programs to reward exceptional faculty members who can be “vision carriers” for the rejuvenation, visibility, and improved ratings of the university. Such schemes could involve granting time off for further training as mentioned above, identifying and pairing faculty members with accomplished academics in the various fields, who could serve as their mentors.

10. By providing funding, creating new types of schools, making it cheaper to attend school, using the appropriate languages, teaching the right set of skills, and helping currently unemployed citizens to find jobs, we can rise above our present predicament and take our place on the global scale. Ideas cannot work without adequate funding. We must reflect upon the issue of cost sharing between the state and the beneficiaries of the school system. The culture of something for nothing is no longer realistic in our current local and global economy undergoing increasingly severe stress. Rather, state funds should be directed more toward providing better learning facilities, environment, teachers, and conditions of service to ensure the high quality of graduates. Holding school administrators accountable for funds allocated to them is as important, if not more important, as allocating adequate funds. The Gowon and Shagari regimes made huge sums available for educational expansion, yet the absorptive capabilities of all levels of schools, especially universities, did not improve significantly during and after their tenures. One problem that accounts for this are the misplaced priorities and corrupt practices of school ad

ministrators.

11. The many children who do not attend school have to be assisted, in some cases they must be forced to go to school. The government should support these impoverished children with financial aid so that they can attend school instead of having to work at odd jobs to support themselves and their families. Mechanisms to determine who needs financial help could easily be subject to local or village politics and the intended aims could thus be threatened or simply defeated. For instance, poverty alleviation programs launched in Imo State some years ago, which entailed giving a monthly allowance to unemployed youth, ended up becoming an opportunity for a few members of the privileged and politically connected class to fill their pockets using fictitious names.

12. We must create careers for students, and encourage them to create careers for themselves. We must guide them into a job path they will enjoy and help them find jobs once they graduate. There are some examples that have worked in other places. In the state of Ohio in the United States there is the Youth Enterprise Society (YES), which was initiated by Ohio State University: Teachers serve as advisors to help their students find jobs. They encourage their students to enter the private sector and create their own jobs rather than try finding ones. Another example is the CISCO Networking Academy Program in Ethiopia. This program targets unemployed youth and train them in networking design, maintenance, and use. This attempt to alleviate unemployment is successful. It

targets people who are trying to find work and teaches them useful skills that they can actually use.

13. Entrepreneurship and innovations are important ingredients in economic development. We must find the means to encourage the growth of youth entrepreneurs to create a larger private sector with more available jobs.

14. We cannot encourage entrepreneurship without access to human capital, equipment and money. Banks do not lend money to those without collateral, and the government has too many needs to fulfill. Creative micro-credit financing and venture capitalism may work.

15. I have mentioned funding several times. This will not come from the government alone, but also from individuals. Private schools run on endowments and private funding. Public schools require support as well. We live in a society where people think that funding is all about the government. No! How many average rich Nigerians have given money to schools? How many have raised money for schools? How many give moral support? How many have adopted a school? We must praise those who do, great people and humanitarian educators whose generosity is commendable. We have to pray for many men and women like them to make our nation great.

16. Ideas will be hard to implement until we improve upon the energy supply and the infrastructure. A maintenance culture is crucial for the continuity of the system, to give

dignity to the infrastructure and overall beauty to the campus. Night economies have been destroyed because of the lack of power and problems of insecurity. Moving goods over long distances is better done by rail instead of roads. But where are the railways? Manufacturing and industries are tied to the energy supply. We need security, a new and efficient network of infrastructure, public transportation, electric lines, better roads, Internet access, refuse collection, water reclaiming, etc. Only the government has the resources to provide the enabling environment for citizens to do their work. It is commendable how many small-scale businesses survive and even thrive without the conducive environment the government ought to have created. It is testament to our peoples' ingenuity and undying spirit, and a promise of what is possible if the government would and could only play their part. The development of the infrastructure represents opportunities for training, skill transfer, and job creation. It offers vocational training and apprenticeship.

Hopefully, in the years ahead, the education of our children will be our number one priority. Well-trained people will be able to think critically, and use their skills anywhere in the world. As Frederick Harbison correctly states, "Education does contribute to growth but growth also makes it possible to expand and develop education. It is both the flower and the seed of economic development."⁽¹⁹⁾ If some of our recommendations are accepted, we will be on a steady path toward sustainable development.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen! Please give me a moment to address my fellow graduating and on-going

students. I sincerely mean my fellow students because I want to humbly believe that my modest success as a scholar may be attributed to the fact that I never stopped studying, learning, and, indeed, I have been a professional student all my life. So, we may ask, "Why reposition the public universities? Whose is a visionary education? Who needs knowledge economies? To be honest with you, my fellow students, this lecture is more about how to give you, the students, and your proud parents, value for your money! It is an admission that we need to reposition our public universities so that we can better serve the students who are the primary beneficiaries of our education service and systems. Therefore, for those of you graduating today, this lecture may seem three or four years too late! But is it? It depends on your attitude, which ironically would determine your altitude, that is, how far up you will go in life! If you see the points raised here today as food for thought and a wakeup call, then, the lecture is not too late for you. But if you think otherwise, then it is definitely too little, too late!

Years ago, a colleague of mine had the habit of taking a walk and also writing an email every morning on the social network for educationists. He usually ended his morning piece with, "Have a good day!" One day, he changed it to, "Make it a good day!" And I challenged him, "John, (not his real name) why have you changed your closing salutation signature?" He said, "I have realized no one can give me a good day. If it is to be, it is up to me [*Think about the most powerful ten two-letter words: "If it is to be, it is up to me"*]. No one can make my day either good or bad. It is only me that can make my day what I choose to make it." My fellow students, Osun State University is young and yours, just as the University of Ife remains mine. It may interest you to note that while Ife was one of the five Ni-

gerian universities in the 1970s, it was nevertheless referred to as “*Awolowo High School!*” So don’t be put off if people say similar things about you today. They said the same thing about me some forty years ago. *Eyin ni di akuko!* But a lot depends on what you do with yourself and your certificates. You are the ambassadors of Osun State University. *Bi onigba ba sepe igba re laa ba a pe.* Your university has done its best for you, it is now up to you to enhance and add value to yourself and invariably to your university and to what the university has done for you: *Ti onibata ko ba leejo, Bata ko loju oti, Onibata ti o lejo loju oti. Alagemo tibi omore na, aimo ojo dowo omo.*

The two main goal of a university education have never changed from preparing the student: 1) for self-discipline to do what s/he has to do when s/he has to do it, even when s/he doesn’t like to do it; and 2) for knowledge self-audit to be able to know what s/he knows, and what s/he doesn’t know, and to be able to learn how to learn, and to know where, when, how and from whom to find out what s/he doesn’t know. It is to serve these two goals that the university had made it mandatory for you to attend lectures, submit your term papers on time, do your research projects and, above all, use the available library resources.

For some of you, the greatest mistake you can make is actually to consider your graduation today as throwing off the yoke of all the inconveniences of the last three/four years. Rather, it should be studying and arriving at personal development. This is crucial because the world is changing rapidly, indeed just like a fast-moving train, and you can only retain your position if, and only if, you keep updating your knowledge, skill, and experience; in the scenario of the proverbial moving train, be ready to know when to jump on in order not to be left behind.

An interesting example is that, about less than thirty-five years ago, my doctorate degree was typed on stencils and cyclostyled because word processing had not yet been developed then. I wonder how I could write this lecture within the notice I received amongst the other activities of my busy schedule if I had not moved with the change in technology to be able to use word processing. However, there are several scholars throughout the world, who are not willing to move with the times or with the fast-moving train. Therefore, they are miserably left behind and missing out on progress, accomplishments and, indeed, accolades.

Graduating students, you are today being admitted to the elite one percent of the entire world’s enlightened population who has had the opportunity and privilege to acquire university education. You have certainly passed through the university, but has the university passed through you yet? The good news (as well as the bad news for some young people who have not allowed the university to pass through them) is that today is the beginning of your enrollment in the university of life. If any of you want to think that a little thing does not matter, I would advise you to share a room with an anopheles mosquito! The little difference that would make a huge difference in your life is never to stop being a student, even if all you can do is to create the habit of reading a book a month in your field of specialization or occupation. This is why I referred to you as my fellow students because, in my mindset, we are all learning together every blessed day, especially through the reading that I have suggested. For, this little habit will keep you current and alive in your field and, in the end, it will make a huge difference for you as well as for your respective nuclear families that you plan to create and, in a challenging manner, for your future students,

especially if you choose to push the chalk like some of us are doing to impart knowledge. Trust me, the world is what you and I make of it!

I congratulate you and wish you all the best for the future.

Mo dupe pupo.

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(3) UNESCO, "Learning: The Treasure within:" *Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century* (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), 86.

(4) It is appropriate here to refer to the Six Year Primary Project (SYPP), an experiment undertaken at the University of Ife in the 1970s, where the Yoruba language formed the primary medium of instruction. English language only augmented instructions. Many products of that experiment have performed so well in their chosen professions as engineers, physicians, and artists. Most notable among them is Lagbaja, who has literally brought a new genre of music to Nigerian performing art. This might be one level higher than bilingualism but quite relevant and augmentative to the discourse.

(5) Salikoko S. Mufwene, "Globalization and the Myth of Killer Languages: What's Really Going on?" in *Language Evolution: Contact, Competition and Change*, by Salikoko S. Mufwene (New York: Continuum, 2004), 225-52.

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(13) United Nations Development Programme, *Africa Human Development Report 2012: Towards a Food Secure Future* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2012), vii.

(14) William E. Burns, *Speeches in World History* (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 458.

(15) This has to be modified to suit our own situation. Charter school gets mixed reviews as it often shifts public funding to what are semi-private institutions, but limits access to who may attend. The company who owns the school in most cases decides more than the community. It is only in states like Missouri, where they do not allow the charter schools to limit who may attend, as part of the acceptance of public funds that they are

most beneficial. If the curricula and leadership activities were provided in all public schools and adequately supported, US schools would not have the problems they have.

(16) See, among others, H. Gardner, *Multiple Intelligence: The Theory in Practice* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); and *Intelligence Reframed* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

(17) There is abuse within the system that requires reform. The Yoruba model can be exploitative. An apprentice serves-in-training his master for 3 to 5 years at the end of which the apprentice pays a specific amount of fee to buy his freedom which is then celebrated with a certificate of discharge. After which he still has to look for money to establish his own trade. In some cases, where an apprentice is unable to buy his freedom, he is denied his certificate of discharge, he may choose to remain with the boss but work independent of the boss to raise his freedom/discharge fee.

(18) Jide Fatokun, *Ibadanland: Facts and Figures* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Positive Press, 2011), 327-341.

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