

Of the Dearth (nay, death?) of Values: Patrons, Patronage and the future of the Nigerian University

Being Presentation by Professor Sola Akinrinade, Vice-Chancellor, Osun State University, at the 52nd Interdisciplinary Research Discourse of the Postgraduate School, University of Ibadan, 26th April, 2012

Protocol

I must begin, naturally, by appreciating the leadership of the Postgraduate School of this University for the honour of extending an invitation to me to share my thoughts as part of your Interdisciplinary Research Discourse Series. This is not the easiest of time for me given the activities surrounding the end of the 2011/2012 session in our University and particularly as I am winding up (or is it winding down?) my tenure as foundation Vice-Chancellor of Osun State University. But no thanks to a friend, or a so-called friend, who will remain nameless for the purpose of this interaction, I found my name suggested, and, much to my disappointment, accepted as a speaker. I'm looking forward to the appropriate moment for my retaliation!

Let me appreciate the Vice-Chancellor of this University, Professor Isaac Folorunso Adewole, an obstetrics/gynaecology scholar of distinction, who has been piloting the ship of the great institution for the past several months now. I am very sure that he is fast becoming a master of the turbulent sea called the Vice-Chancellor's Office in the Nigerian University system.

I have elected to share my thoughts on a subject which I have been reflecting on for some time, the future of the Nigerian university in the face of obvious challenges that transcend the issues that have always caused frictions in relationships between stakeholders in the system and the proprietors and regulatory authorities. My reflection is on something akin to the soul of the system, the self-inflicted damage that is eating deep into the fabrics of the system but which may not be apparent to the distant observer.

There is an on-going struggle for the soul of the Nigerian university, and the battle is not the one that has the staff unions on one side and the proprietors, regulatory authorities and management on the other. No, it is the battle for establishing the cardinal principles on which our institutions

and the academic profession should stand. The ultimate loser is not either side in the great divide but the system or institution itself as represented by our various universities.

The loss of the thinking cap – or was it never there?

I have titled this section of the presentation, “The loss of the thinking Cap”. Let me begin here by recalling an incident that happened at one of our university teaching hospitals not too long ago. A Professor in one of the Science disciplines took his son to the hospital because of a persistent ailment. After the preliminary diagnosis proffered upon discussion, the doctor friend, a professor of surgery, informed the father, “Your son will require surgery.” The response was as brutal as it was unexpected: “Blood of Jesus”, snapping his fingers over his head from the front backward. “I reject that in Jesus name. Don’t wish my son evil, o.” And he promptly stormed out of the doctor’s place practically dragging the son along.

What does this story tell us? For years I have observed patients disappearing from the hospital when it is suggested to them that they needed surgery and the consequences of such disappearance had always been fatal, mostly leading to deaths or irreversible unpalatable conditions. I have also seen patients disappearing for inability to come up with the money required for treatment, even for such simple things as blood test or x-ray. But for a Professor of a Science discipline to storm out of the hospital because it was suggested that his son required surgery and interpreting the doctor’s prognosis as wishing his son evil, is simply incomprehensible. Or is it?

The academic members of the university community are generally considered to be thinking circle in any society. In the contemporary knowledge-based world, a professor in the Sciences is one important member of the community, those supposed to be thinking on behalf of Government and providing the intellectual basis of policymaking. Without question, the attitude adopted by our Professor friend, is a demonstration of crass intellectual deficiency that is totally inexplicable. The question then is, if this is the quality of thinking that our academics are capable of, what kind of intellectual support should the larger society expect from our universities? Put it in another way, is this the level to which the Nigerian academia has descended? What statement does this make about the state of our universities? What kind of critical

thinking ability can our professors offer to their students under the circumstance?

That is just one leg of the challenge. What about our students? I would not know how many of us here recall the incident a few months ago of the eight Obafemi Awolowo University students, members of a campus Christian group who were discovered by a farmer in the forest in the nearby village of Tonkere. All eight including men and women, looking emaciated had not eaten nor had their bath for days. Upon interrogation, the eight claimed to have vacated the sinful world of the campus for the serenity of the bush to wait for the rapture which was very imminent at the time they were found. It was better, they claimed, to be waiting, like the faithful steward, ready for the Lord's coming rather than waste their time writing the semester examinations that were on-going at the time. I remember vividly December 1999, on the eve of the new millennium, when many soothsayers were emphatic the world would end at midnight on December 31. A church at Gbongan, right on the Ife-Ibadan death way (humorously called expressway by Nigerian road authorities), informed all those who cared to listen that the world is coming to an end at midnight on 31 December and that the church premises is the ark of transition by which people would go to heaven. My friend, a Professor of Religious Studies who specialises in the study of new religious movements and new religious expressions, went to the church for the purpose of conducting research and observing what would happen that night. Of course, he was denied entry on the excuse that the "ark of salvation is full" and that he should go back to the world of sin where perdition was awaiting. All entreaties to be considered for last minute entry into heaven like the thief on the right side of Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary fell on deaf ears.

What is the purpose of this narration? The world did not make much of the folly displayed by the leaders of the church in question because they never expected much in terms of intellectual reasoning given the level of educational attainment of its leadership, which was nil. But what of members of a university community where intellectualism is supposed to be on display?

There are legions of examples but a third and final one at this stage. Between 1999 and 2001, during the heyday of suffering in the university system, inflicted on the universities by the mindless military rulers, I operated a private hostel not too far from the main gate of the University

campus at Ife where I worked. I was a regular visitor to the hostel where I maintained an office where I was guaranteed power supply because we had a standby generator that serviced the building. Next to this building was a vacant plot that separated it from the next house. The next house was a decrepit, run-down structure which, by all standards, one that only the less privileged of the society could live, an old 1950s style mud brick storey building with wooden decking and wooden staircase right as you enter the building. Each day I visited the hostel, I would see all sorts of exotic cars parked in front of this building. Initially, I thought they were guests of the delectable female residents of the hostel, trying to disguise their real location by parking in front of the next house. However, I never noticed their presence in the hostel, and I concluded that they were guests of that building and I was wondering what these people were doing in such a building. The visitors included top civil servants, businessmen, judges and magistrates, and, wait for it, university lecturers, one of whom was my contemporary. My curiosity remained with me until one day when the neighbourhood was thrown into darkness by a tree that fell on electricity transmission lines. At the meeting of landlords and other stakeholders we were told that some trees must be cut to allow free passage for the power lines but there was a tree in front of the house next to my hostel that the Babalawo living there would not allow us to bring down. Then it struck me: the host of the several important dignitaries in the next building was the Babalawo. I tried to recall the countless lecturers I have found in the place and started wondering what they could be looking for. What questions of life were they seeking answers to that only the diviner next door could answer?

In the context of our discussion, the question that springs to mind is this: can our universities truly perform their role as the central think-tank of Government when they are populated by individuals who have surrendered themselves to illogicality, voodooism and wizardry? What really is the purpose of university education and can our universities as presently constituted faithfully discharge that purpose. If University education is indeed the highest and most important level of the education system which must impact on the lower levels, it is doubtful, in the present state in which we have found ourselves, if our universities can perform their expected role of serving as catalyst for the development other levels of education.

The next section is titled “Reinventing the Wheel?”

Reinventing the wheel?

Writing in *The Orbit*, Obi Nwakama, in his piece titled, “Gridlock in the universities”, states: “There seems indeed nothing behind the idea of the Nigerian public university besides to continually crank out graduates who are neither properly trained nor exposed to the most current frontiers of knowledge because of the limitations imposed upon the universities by limited government funding. These universities are simply degree mills.” He continues, “There is a decline of the culture of the university. Universities in the South-East particularly are ghettos, aesthetically unpleasant, ideologically stultified. These universities have been severed from the umbilicus of the public service – that is, as the frontier of knowledge; as the central think-tank of governments and society, and as the base for all innovations that drive industry, culture, and the productive powers of states and nations.”

While all of us may not totally agree with his diagnosis and his prognosis, there is little doubt that his affirmations constitute real food for thought. It raises the question that we have raised earlier: what is the mission or purpose of the public universities in Nigeria today, and can these universities as presently constituted fulfil that purpose? The National Policy on Education (1977 and 1981) states that the aims and objectives of the universities in Nigeria are basically to serve as instrument for:

1. Individual, societal and national development;
2. National unity, commitment and consciousness;
3. Equality of educational opportunities for all citizens;
4. The full integration of the individual to the community;
5. Self-realisation, effective citizenship and progress;
6. Inculcation of the right type of moral values, through character training and development; and,
7. The acquisition of skills and development of mental, physical and social competence, useful to the society.

These broad aims and objectives are to be pursued through teaching, research, and service, the three traditional areas of activities in our universities.

In recent years, particularly from the late 1990s, a fad entered into the Nigerian university system, i.e. the development of strategic plans and crafting of lofty sounding vision and mission statements. Indeed, with the

full onset of the era of accreditation by the National Universities Commission of academic programmes in our universities (which, by the way, is one of the most positive interventions of the Commission in the Nigerian university system), even Departments and academic programmes now come complete with philosophy, objective, vision and mission statements that are additional to those espoused by the university itself. In another sense, the emergence of Strategic Plans and the crafting of vision and mission statements could not be separated from the attempts by our universities to respond to the demands of the World Bank and other international donor agencies seeking to rescue these institutions from the afflictions to which they had been thrown during the dark days of utter neglect by the proprietors, the harsh operating environment and the failure of the national funding system that put our universities in the lowest of the lower rungs of the ladder of priority of public spending.

The question that I asked myself is this, by crafting new philosophies and objectives, vision and mission statements for our universities, are we truly engaged in any innovative action or are we merely seeking to reinvent the wheel? Yes, every institution that seeks to stand the test of time must have a sense of mission and a culture driving it; and we will come back to this shortly. But I hasten to add, and I stand to be corrected, our universities, particularly the first generation – and indeed, some second generation ones including Bayero University, Kano, the University of Jos, the University of Maiduguri, the University of Calabar and the University of Ilorin, functioned efficiently and effectively during the 1960s, 1970s and up to the mid-1980s without crafting lofty and high-sounding vision and mission statements and 500-page Strategic Plans all of which are observed more in the breach and which are barely understood or digested even by those who developed them on behalf of their institutions, much less by those who are supposed to implement or drive them at the various levels.

Our universities at the time performed the real functions of real universities, producing graduates that were inherently globally competitive as they never had to write remedial examinations or audit virtually all the courses they had done at the undergraduate level, before proceeding to Master's degree programmes in top rate overseas institutions including Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London. This, they achieved without writing out a mission statement that reads "to produce globally competitive graduates". It was just taken for granted

that a graduate of Geography in UI commands the same respect and attention as the graduate of Geography at Manchester. The researchers at the time conducted cutting edge research and produced inventions that impacted the technological world and affected the life of the people nationally. At the University of Ife alone, Professor A.M.A. Imevbore and his colleagues distinguished themselves with the Kainji Lake Research Project when the nation was constructing its largest hydroelectric power generation dam at Kainji, and his study of river blindness and the containment of the menace in the new Federal Capital Territory remained outstanding contributions to national research and development agenda. Professor G.A. Mekanjuola invented the yam pounding machine, an invention that revolutionised the preparation and production of probably the acknowledged delicacy of the Yoruba people of South-western Nigeria and beyond. What with Professor Abayomi Sofowora's Sofagara for the treatment of sickle cell anaemia?

In the humanities, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ola Rotimi, J.F. Ade-Ajayi, Obaro Ikime, J.D. Alagoa, Isaac Adeagbo Akinjogbin, and others, produced literary and other humanistic works and studies that impacted the world of learning without vision and mission statements or the NLNG Prize for Science or Literature as the motivation. These people just did their work as they were expected to. Relating at the level of their foreign counterparts was just a natural thing that nobody regarded as extraordinary or special.

In recent years, much has been made of the ranking of Nigerian universities by the National Universities Commission particularly in the area of academic programmes (teaching) and research. I have asked myself several times, when the NUC says the Obafemi Awolowo University is the number 1 research university in Nigeria, what does it really mean or translate to? Or when the Commission declares Covenant University as the number 1 in research among private universities, what were or are the parameters for assessment? The ranking, permit me, is largely determined by parameters that emphasised quantity rather than quality, being, as it is, based on the volume of publications submitted by the staff of the institution as publications for that year. Each year while compiling my Annual Report on the University, staff members are required to submit the summary of their contributions during the year under review including learned conferences attended, research conducted, grants received, travel fellowships and publications among others. The largest submissions

usually come from a particular College that will remain nameless. In the large mass submitted, I usually struggle to find one that is really distinguished or worthy of citation. But what obtains there is hardly different from what obtains in the larger Nigerian university system. How many of these large collection of publications targeted at meeting promotion requirements have won international awards and how many of the engineering publications have led to inventions that have revolutionised life in Nigeria (not even in Africa or beyond)? They couldn't have given that 90% of them are either self-published, or more appropriately, printed, or published in junk Asian and internet-based journals driven by the quest to meet a recent fad in the Nigerian university promotion system, the on-shore, off-shore requirements, rather than being the outcome of quality research. This is the outcome of our contemporary lofty and grand vision and mission statements.

Please do not get me wrong. I am not by any stretch of the imagination claiming or even implying that no quality research is emerging from our universities in recent times. Far from it; indeed, many of our scholars are working quietly, not driven by on-shore, off-shore, to produce research of high quality. It is just that those in this category are few and far in-between, and constitute a miniscule minority, probably 10% or less.

Also, I am not deriding the development of vision or mission statements, or of philosophy and objectives that should drive our programmes and our institutions at large. Indeed, my argument is that it is the loss of those unwritten values and of the university culture that has thrown us into the dark ages in which we have found ourselves in our universities. Addressing members of his university community, the immediate former Vice-Chancellor of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Professor Ikenna Onyido, gave an insight into the relevance of university culture in the development of the institution, noting and emphasising that an organisation without a culture is a rootless one that lacks identity. After reviewing the general progress recorded by the University during his first four years in the saddle, he concluded: "I still feel a sense of incompetence when I realise a general absence of the pervasive university culture and tradition which should provide the background for our attitudes, engagements and output."

In this presentation, I have adopted a very elastic approach to the use of the word "value" to cover the broad spectrum of belief systems, culture, tradition, and abiding and guiding principle. The question then would be,

what values or beliefs or abiding principles drive our teaching and learning experiences? What values drive our research and community engagements being the other two major functions of our universities? How committed are our researchers to institutional research ethics, if any? Or, may be no research ethical policy is necessary since not much research is taking place with the general and pervasive engagement in mere redistribution of knowledge that is taking place in our universities?

In the next few lines, I will borrow generously from Professor Ikenna Onyido's address to participants at his university's workshop of evolving a university culture. Extrapolating from the dictionary meaning of culture, Onyido affirms that "university culture could be seen as the integrated pattern of knowledge, belief, attitudes, values, behaviour and collective worldview that members of the university have in common. Culture has the inherent qualities of being transmitted from generation to generation." University culture determines the prevailing mode of behaviour of the members of the university community and determines its principal features and those characteristics immediately visible to the outside world. It defines the institution's innate capacities and adjustment mechanism that enable it to cope with the challenges of its existence. In other words, university culture injects the needed strength and resilience the institution needs to be on top of her challenges and provides hope for the future.

True, in developing a unique university culture, the institution is constrained by the larger milieu in which it is existing and operating with its largely negative pervasive influences. In which circumstance, if the university's culture is not strongly discernible and distinctive, it is bound to be swallowed up and rendered ineffectual. But the university is not only expected to rise above the society, it should actually provide leadership for the society rather than allow itself to be swallowed up by it. It is the absence of a strong university culture or lack of commitment to its defence that allows the larger society to swallow it up with its values. A properly blended university culture produces students who are resourceful, creative, inquisitive, passionate, persevering, resilient, and willing to question accepted ways of doing business. It is the failure of a university culture to impact upon the student that could make a group of students to abandon their studies and make for the bush waiting for the rapture while the semester examinations are going on. We need to rediscover the purpose and essence of our universities. Obi Nwakama might be right after all: our universities have turned into mere degree

mills rather than being a place of teaching and learning. We are producing graduates who possess certificates and not knowledge, who obtain degrees and not the attendant intellectual competences that would make them impact their world with what they took out of the university because they are taking out nothing. Yes, nothing – at least for most or a vast majority of them. Students can only pass on what they have received, and, in most cases these days, that is nothing.

Can we safely interpret attempts to define vision and mission statements for our universities as attempts to lay the basis for something enduring around which the institutions could be developed? Or are they mere statements to which nothing should be imputed? I must make a disclaimer here: I'm not a student of symbols and symbolisms, so please permit me if I'm terribly off the mark. But I have taken the time to go through the vision and mission statements of most of our universities in Nigeria via their websites and through the NUC website. They are virtually saying the same thing, by the time you read one, you've read most, if not all. They fall largely into three categories: the older public universities – federal and state – that discovered the need to develop vision and mission statements quite recently, the faith-based institutions, and the new universities both state and private. The five words or expressions that are common to most of them are: 'world class', "entrepreneurial", "quality", "excellence" and "innovative". Add to these five, a few other words or expressions and you have read all.

A few examples:

AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY (Vision): "Ahmadu Bello University shall be a **world-class** university comparable to any other, engaged in imparting contemporary knowledge, using high **quality** facilities and multi-disciplinary approaches, to men and women of all races, as well as generating new ideas and intellectual practices relevant to the needs of its immediate community, Nigeria and the world at large.

Federal University, Wukari, Taraba State (Vision): To be a leader among **world class** public universities by: advancing knowledge through **high quality** educational experiences for our students; encouraging and **fostering entrepreneurship**; conducting leading edge research and scholarship in hydro-energy and bio-energy, food technology and biotechnology.

Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola (Vision): To be a **World-Class** University in Science and Technology; Mission: To Promote Technological **Innovations** for Sustainable Development Through **Excellence** in Teaching, Learning and Research.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN (Vision): To be a **world-class** institution for academic **excellence** geared towards meeting societal needs.

University of Ilorin (Vision): To be an international centre of **excellence** in learning, research, probity and service to humanity.

And of course, Osun State University:

Vision: To be a centre of **excellence** providing **high quality** teaching and learning experiences which will engender the production of **entrepreneurial** graduates capable of impacting positively on their environment while being **globally competitive**.

Mission: To create a unique institution committed to the pursuit of academic innovation, skill-based training and a **tradition of excellence** in teaching, research and community service.

Every institution wants to be a “centre of excellence” or a “world class” university whose graduates are competitive and entrepreneurially minded, even if the statements are not exactly couched that way. The question is, are these statements sufficient to hold the institution together in pursuit of enduring values that can drive these institutions’ teaching, research and community engagements such as to become a worthwhile tradition? If we have quality operators and stakeholders, do we really need these fancy statements for us as individual members of the academic community to commit ourselves to the true and enduring values of the academia that transcend geographical boundaries?

I had my undergraduate studies at the then University of Ife and my graduate programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science, one of the acknowledged foremost social science institutions in the world. I cannot recollect the University of Ife having a one-sentence vision or mission statement that has become the fashion today but I could read in its establishment law the objects of the university which are:

- a. To provide facilities for learning, and to give instruction and training in such branches of knowledge as the University may desire to

- foster and in doing so to enable students to obtain the advantage of liberal education;
- b. To promote by research and other means the advancement of knowledge and its practical application to social, cultural, economic, scientific and technological problems;
 - c. To stimulate, particularly through teaching and research, interest in and appreciation of African culture and heritage;
 - d. To undertake any other activities appropriate for a university.

It is within the ambits of these objects of the university that the members of the academic community of that university produced the leading and cutting edge research for which the institution became famous. These people worked with unwritten values but which nevertheless drove their research activities and their inventions.

While putting together this presentation, I also took time to visit again the website of the London School of Economics as well as the website of a few acknowledged world class institutions, specifically, Harvard and Cambridge Universities. None had vision and mission statements emblazoned on their websites as you would see on our universities' websites. Yet, Harvard University, established 1636, has produced 44 Nobel Laureates in academic disciplines (not the Peace Prize!). It is not mere descriptive statements that turn our institutions to world class universities; it takes a whole lot more.

If our universities in those earlier days were able to compete with their peers, it means that they had some things going for them, values to which they were committed. If our researchers produced cutting edge researches that were deserving of international recognition and impacting on national development, it means there is something inherently good in our system which must be rediscovered. Even then, I am not talking of the distant past. Many of our colleagues that left for greener pastures during the 1990s in particular easily accessed the top hierarchies of the best universities in different parts of the world including Europe, Southern Africa, and North America and many even found themselves appointed to higher positions than they occupied while back in Nigeria. Where did we go wrong? Indeed, the road to rediscovery must begin by sincere soul searching of how we arrived at this sorry pass where our universities can hardly perform the functions which the society has actually reserved for them.

How did we arrive at this sorry pass?

Opinions have been expressed on how Nigerian universities found themselves at the pit of decadence in which they are and are struggling to climb out of. Of course, most of the explanations are external to the system, and are, in most cases, right: decades of neglect, funding inadequacy, flight of the best teachers to greener pastures, and so on and so forth. But after the blaming the brain drain for several years, may be it is time we turned our attention to the drained brains that were left behind in seeking the explanations for our failures.

I am of the opinion that our universities are yet to fully recover from the fallouts of years of military assault on our educational system that led to the flight of several top level academics in virtually every discipline in most of our universities. The 1990s was a particularly brutal era for the universities as several leading academics left in droves. The group included those who trained outside the country and who found ready homes in their former territories, others who went on short or medium term fellowships and who were absorbed into the system, and many young and bright academics who left the country on sponsored training programmes but who failed to return at the completion of their studies. Coupled with this were the recruitment challenges and lack of generational renewal. The competition from the industry for the best graduates made it difficult to attract the best talents for entry level positions in our faculties. So, our universities faced the dual challenge of inability to attract best talents and retaining good ones.

Yet, our universities and departments must have teachers. In the larger society, graduate unemployment was reaching record highs and individuals who never in their wildest imagination would have contemplated a career in the academia found themselves becoming candidates for entry level positions in our universities. With several Departments brimming with vacancies, the stage was pretty well set for the invasion of patronage in the recruitment system. I remember a particular incident in which a Bursary staff came to my office when I was Dean of the Faculty. The summary of the conversation went something like this:

Madam: Sir, it is about your son.

Me: My son? What about?

Madam: He graduated about four years ago and he still doesn't have a job.

Me: Sorry, o!

Madam: I learnt that there is a vacancy in the Department of English for Graduate Assistant.

Me: Okay, so?

Madam: Sir, if you can help us give him the job.

Me: Give him the job? But does he really want to become a lecturer?

Madam: He has a 2:2 and he can do it. He has no job.

I did not know whether to laugh or cry.

I am sure most of here can identify with this conversation, which I believe would have been replicated in many of our academic departments in many of our universities during the time and most probably even now. The rationale for seeking an academic position for someone is not because he has demonstrated a flair for or interest in academic career but simply because he has no job and there is a vacancy. Even now, because the unemployment situation has only taken a turn for the worse, and the university system now offers some of the most financially rewarding employment positions in the public service sector in this country today, this phenomenon has persisted.

I believe herein lies the root of patronage and the power of patrons in our systems. Gradually, our universities became populated with several individuals as lecturers who could better serve the institutions in other capacities; individuals who never in their wildest imagination considered a career in the academia and who took the job hoping to bail out at the first available opportunity but who began to enjoy the attractions of the position even as the opportunity of alternative employment never presented itself. Many entered the system not because of what they know but who they know. It was common for Heads of Departments to exchange candidates for appointment. Departments declare vacancies or adjust vacancies to suit the status of preferred recruits and lowering of the standard became commonplace. In the process, many entered the

profession without understanding what it entails and what it requires in terms of its values and culture. The truth is, after so many years, many of those who joined the system inadvertently are now occupying commanding positions in our systems and are indirectly creating new cultures and new values to suit their capacities and preferences.

I know I most probably have touched on raw nerves, so I must hasten to conclude before I say more things that can put me in trouble.

In concluding, I like to return to where we started, that is, the place of values, culture and enduring tradition in the development of our systems. The question is, in seeking to move forward in the 21st century and become competitive once again, does the key to the future lie in the past? I believe if we are to successfully redefine our place in the global community of universities, we need to return to the roots of what universities stand for worldwide. It is true that each institution would have its peculiarities but the basic adherence to values that drive universities into fulfilling their mandates must be present. Sadly, while the developed world have boarded the 21st century express, we are here struggling to discover the route to the future in past values.

Writing in the Sunday Punch of 22 April 2012, Ken Ihedioha stated the obvious: “Values shape human society; every society is defined by its value system, a lack of which devalues human existence.” We can extrapolate: a lack of value system in an institution devalues that institution. Values project institutional priorities and influences allocation of resources particularly when there is competition for the little that is available. With all the resources in the world, our institutions will still miss it if they are not driven by appropriate values.

At Osun State University, like so many other institutions, we have had to cope with the most of the challenges noted above but seizing the advantage offered by our status as a new university and the opportunity to create a new institution with adherence to the academic culture, we have tried to enshrine some values as we go along. Being a new university, emerging in an era of proliferation of new universities – actually, you can rightly say that our university too is a product of the proliferation and I will not take any offence, we are faced with severe challenges. We are a new university that recruited our initial staff from a motley crew that included unemployed PhD holders, lecturers from colleges of education and polytechnics/colleges of technology, staff of

older institutions approaching retirement and coming to spend their terminal or accumulated leave or both in our institution, staff crossing from other new universities mostly private and some struggling institutions, and some young and vibrant as well as seasoned academics from established institutions, many poached directly by yours sincerely, many upon recommendation from trusted colleagues including senior colleagues, and many who joined just looking for new excitement and the opportunity for creating something new and different that the institution offers. The goal was to create a new, unique institution. All the appointees came from different background which all believe is the best – naturally. I came in from OAU, Ife, the Oba Awon Universities, and having studied and worked there, had become part of that institution, and was quite defensive of its system, structures and values – if I can call it that. But the goal was to create a new university not to clone Ife or any other one with prominent presence among the staff; hence, the struggle. Every attempt to introduce something people were not used to was met with the usual refrain, “the VC is trying to turn this place to Ife!”

Thus, we tried to set an agenda as well as some core values for the university and build the institution around these right from inception. We realise the need to mould our people into what they should be, acknowledge the reality of the quality you have to work with rather than keep lamenting about it. That informed our monthly capacity building workshops during which we share our vision and aspirations as an institution, not as a cliché but as values that we are trying to project and around which we want to develop the place. The essence of the monthly capacity building is to instil into staff the traditions and values that should drive the academic enterprise and build the capacity of staff to be able to perform the duties expected of them. We have drawn our resource persons from various older institutions including the University of Ibadan and many from the Obafemi Awolowo University.

We have also tried to build support around a social charter. In our particular situation, what were the basic considerations that influenced the development of the social charter?

1. Need to consider and fulfil the expected role of the university in contemporary society and more, notably, the relevance of the our institution to the society;
2. Need for accountability and transparency in relation to all stakeholders – students, staff, proprietors, the co-players in the Nigerian tertiary education system, and the general public;

3. Appropriating the right values to critical thinking and developing critical thinking ability in our students;
4. Providing leadership for the larger society; we acknowledged and proceeded on the basis of the fact that our larger society is bereft of values and that the university is a mirror of the larger society. We believe that our university should lead our society and not simply be a mirror of its failures and deficiencies and wave this failure around like a banner;
5. Beyond pecuniary considerations – getting our institutional responses determined by defined values rather than knee jerk reactions and orthodox protest methods; we acknowledge the need to develop and embrace institutional value that will recognise this and form the basis of our attitudes and responses.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I would not know if I have left you more bewildered or confused by my presentation than haven enlightened you. Whatever is your conclusion, kindly remember that at the beginning, I confessed my inadequacies to you, and if I have left you seething with rage, please don't blame me, blame the man who had so much confidence as to suggest my name for this 52nd session of the Postgraduate School Interdisciplinary Research Discourse, and the man who agreed to take me on, the Dean of the Postgraduate School and probably his Board.

Vice-Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, for the moment, my task is done. I thank you all for your attention.