



# Covenant University

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## *3rd Convocation Ceremony Distinguished Lecture Series*

*(The Release of Eagles 2008)*

# **African Universities in the 21st Century: Attaining Global Relevance**



**By Professor Michael Omolewa**

*(Ambassador & Permanent Delegate Of Nigeria to UNESCO)*

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**COVENANT UNIVERSITY, OTA,  
NIGERIA.**

**THIRD CONVOCATION  
DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES**

**AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY:  
ATTAINING GLOBAL RELEVANCE**

**By**

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**10TH JUNE 2008**



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*Profile of*  
**PROFESSOR MICHAEL OMOLEWA**

**P**rofessor Michael Omolewa is currently the Ambassador/Permanent Delegate of Nigeria to UNESCO, and the President of the 32nd Session of the General Conference of UNESCO from 2003-2005.

A two-term member of the Executive Board of UNESCO, he has served as the Chairman of the Committee on Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) of the Executive Board, Chairman of the Education Commission of the General Conference of UNESCO, 2001, and Co-Chairman of the Drafting Group for the Preparation of the Medium-Term Strategy for UNESCO. He is currently a member of the Governing Board of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in Vancouver Canada, and a member of its Governing Board. He was awarded the fellowship of the Commonwealth of Learning (FCOL) in Jamaica in 2006 and the Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) the same year in Nigeria. He is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Redeemers University and also a member of the Board of Trustees of Babcock University.

Professor of Adult Education at the University of Ibadan since 1982, he has served as Dean of the Faculty Education at the University of Ibadan 1985- 1987 and Chair of the Committee of Deans of Faculties of Education of Nigerian Universities, 1986/87 Session. He has served as External Examiner to the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom, Free University, Belgium, University of Botswana, and several Universities in Nigeria.

He delights in announcing that all his achievements have been made possible by the Special Grace of God, through the intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Power of the Holy Spirit. Professor Omolewa is happily married to a Gambian lady and they are blessed with four children.

## COVENANT UNIVERSITY ANTHEM

We're a covenant generation Pursuing  
Excellence Redeemed to reign  
Learning to lead  
We are bound by an oath  
Obeying rules to rule  
Making kings of youths  
Flying high on covenant wings  
Wisdom call for change  
Inspired, on fire  
With courage marching on in grace  
God's own arrow shot for glory.

Covenant generation arise  
Light and knowledge to shine  
Glorious foundation stone  
Leadership skills to show  
Departing from knowledge  
To empowerment  
Legalism to realism  
Wisdom's call for change  
Inspired, on fire  
With courage marching on in grace  
God's own arrow  
Shot for glory.

## **INTRODUCTION**

I give God the Glory for His Grace to make this presentation on a most topical subject.

For the Lecture, I would seek to identify the state of African universities today as my starting point. I would then attempt to invite you to join me in retracing our steps as we examine the development of the universities in Africa, starting with Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, and highlighting the key moments in university education in Africa.

I would hopefully attempt to draw attention to the unique place occupied by the first generation universities such as the University of Ibadan, Makerere University, as well as the University of Legon which have produced award winners and eminent African leaders, professionals, international civil servants and several other African intellectual and educative elite.

I shall then observe how the flame begins to flicker and how new dreams are dreamt leading to the conception and birth of private universities such as the Covenant University, the Redeemer's University, Babcock University and others in the category. I shall conclude with a discussion of the challenges of building the universities for today and tomorrow, and suggest some broad initiatives for the universities of Africa for the 21st century global village.

This is no doubt a tall order, but I am trusting the LORD to help me reach my goal on the subject!

## **THE IMPORTANCE AND STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN AFRICA**

We must confirm at the very outset that like in other parts of the world including Europe, the United States, Asia, Latin America and the Arab world, there has never been any doubt in Africa that the university is a symbol of development, a means to prepare learners and teachers to acquire the skills, capacities and potentialities to offer solutions to the challenges facing the individual, the wider society, the nation and the

international community through its teaching, learning, research, and community services. To this end, an investment in the provision of university education has always been considered wise. Indeed when Nigeria decided to examine what to do in the field of higher education on the eve of its independence, and turned to Sir Eric Ashby of Cambridge for advice, the scholar titled his report 'Investment in Education.'<sup>1</sup> Thus from its foundation, the university has been a beacon of hope to the world, offering high expectations for progress and development at the personal and corporate levels.

As Richard Levin, president of Yale University, put it:

As never before in their long history, universities have become instruments of national competition as well as instruments of peace. They are the locus of the scientific discoveries that move economies forward, and the primary means of educating the talent required to obtain and maintain competitive advantage. But at the same time, the opening of national borders to the flow of goods, services, information and especially people has made universities a powerful force for global integration, mutual understanding and geopolitical stability.<sup>2</sup>

It is therefore by no means surprising that countries that later became economically dominant and technologically developed such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom and recently Japan, and the United States invested heavily in universities. Vartan Gregorian, president of Carnegie Corporation of New York and president emeritus of Brown University, argues that:

The role of university is critical to national development and central to the progress of society. And as such, it will continue to be the engine of change for every nation; all citizens, from the richest to the poorest, will look within its walls for the keys to their future. And not just their economic future: the main aim of higher education in a globalized setting must be for human beings and societies to develop a deeper understanding of each other's values, traditions and cultures. In essence, while governments are busy

creating economic trade agreements, universities must not only provide the requisite expertise but also work to foster cultural exchanges of ideas, wisdom and knowledge - the truly precious currency of humankind.<sup>3</sup>

C. J. Porter, the founding Head of the Department of History at the University College, Ibadan (UCI), and the first Public orator at the convocation at the College in November 1948, made the important observation that the idea of the university was not new, and that long before the UCI there were thriving universities in Africa:

The continent of Africa has a great and long tradition of learning. The valley the River Nile was the very nurse and cradle of scientific research. The Library of Alexandria was among the wonders of the ancient world ... So the Secretary of State has come to inaugurate not the first, but the latest of the houses of learning in these regions.<sup>4</sup>

That label of house of learning does not stick to some universities in Africa. In fact, most universities in Africa are in a pathetic and deplorable state. There are, of course, some good ones, and the universities in Africa have produced world award winners in the arts and the sciences, international civil servants, respected researchers and scholars and accomplished business men and women.<sup>5</sup>

However, not even one African university is on the list of the world's top 50. The top 50 include 22 American, five British, five Swiss, three Canadian, two Japanese, two Australian and one Singaporean universities. And among the top ten are eight American universities and the UK's Oxford and Cambridge. Interestingly, it is the very critical documents which are regularly provided by academic unions and university authorities in Africa to justify their demand for improved situation that are the mine of information on the current status of the universities. A foreign observer, Lydia Polgreen, forcefully contended in May 2007 that:

Africa's best universities, the grand institutions that educated



a revolutionary generation of nation builders and statesmen, doctors, and engineers, writers and intellectuals are collapsing. It is partly a self-inflicted crisis of mismanagement and neglect, but it is also the result of international development policies that for decades have favoured basic education over higher learning even as a population explosion propels more young people than ever towards the already strained institutions. The decrepitude is forcing the best and brightest from countries across Africa to seek their education and fortunes abroad and depriving dozens of nations of the home-grown expertise that could lift millions out of poverty.<sup>6</sup>

Many of the professors in Africa are accused of being only local professors who are hardly known outside their institutions, and are not recognised for the quality of their knowledge or contributions to creative thought or scholarship. The academic, administrative and technical staffs of the university, often accompanied and supported by the student body, frequently enjoy going on protracted strike. Many university libraries in Africa do not have up to date stock of books, journals and other academic resources that universities should take for granted. The environment is still not conducive for learning due to erratic electricity supply, abject poverty, and lack of employment prospect after graduation. Many respected international organisations and governments have also been suspected of deliberately withdrawing funding of universities because of the fear that the production of high quality minds in Africa would bring an end to the exploitation of the continent, which remains poor in spite of the enormous resources deposited by the Almighty God.

And added to the current challenges facing African universities is the burden of globalisation sweeping through all parts of the world. If we are to compete in a globalised world, our universities must be fully prepared to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The issue of the marginalization of Africa has to be addressed as well as the world's seeming indifference to the the plight of Africa and its woes and gloom. But there is hope. Africa has many good structures in place for development and growth. These include: specialized Universities of

Agriculture, Science and Technology, and Education, in addition to the conventional universities. These are potentially capable of playing relevant roles in the world.

Perhaps we can summarise the present state with the African proverb that "although the hen is sweating, its feathers make the sweat invisible". That means that although Africa is making a real effort at development, the myriad of other problems undermine its efforts.

## THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR

In seeking to discuss a way forward, we will adopt the historical method of analysis, because it provides a meaningful tool for our discussion.

Twenty one years ago. I delivered my Inaugural Lecture at the University of Ibadan. It was titled *Education Through the Rear-View Mirror*.<sup>7</sup> I attempted to encourage my audience and subsequent readers and everyone involved with educational development to use the knowledge of the past as a tool for mapping out their work for the future and to seek to return to the past in order to move forward. We are persuaded that the future will always be enriched by the knowledge of the past. We should therefore seek to identify some of the trends that we need to continue to foster as part of the strategy for moving African universities forward. In other words we now need to chart a course for the African University of the new century. We therefore need to outline the emergence of the African university in a systematic way<sup>8</sup>, explore the origins and explain why it became necessary for churches and private individuals to get involved in higher education and establish private universities.

The first point to note is that there has never been any doubt about the commitment of Africans to the development of universities and the cultivation of excellence in the delivery of higher education. Indeed, as soon as Africans began to appreciate the value of the university, they all as one began to demand for it, and to invest in it. We know that this was the background to the establishment of Fourah Bay College, founded in 1826 in Sierra Leone as a trade School inculcating the virtues of hard work. There was persistent request by the African educated elite to bring in the sciences, technology, engineering and architecture to restore the

lost glory of Africa, and Africanus Beale Horton, who had a broad vision and faith in the future of Africa, had specifically demanded:

Why should not the same race who governed Egypt...who had her Churches, her universities and her repositories of learning and science once more stand on their legs and endeavour to raise their characters in the scale of the civilized world.<sup>9</sup>

*And as to the full-scale support given to the foundation of the university in Africa, the statement by President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, in an after-dinner address at the Chancellor's Installation Banquet at the institution on 12 July, 1966, is an apt testimony, as he recalled the sacrifice that turned the university into a citadel of learning:*

Humble folk in every corner of our nation...gave freely and willingly everything they could, often in the form of fish, or maize or chickens. The reason for this extraordinary response was that our people see in the university the hope of a better and fuller life for their children and grand children.<sup>10</sup>

## **PRIVATE EFFORTS, NEW DREAMS AND INITIATIVES**

African parents, religious and social groups who could afford to do so started sending their children to universities abroad and to the few universities available in their countries.

There were however *also* Africans, mostly teachers and clerks who could not have access to university education for lack of resources, the limited places available and because there were as yet no universities in many of their countries. These Africans nevertheless showed an intense determination not to be denied their destiny because of lack of opportunities, or patronage for overseas education. These Africans decided not to be excluded from access to university education by embarking on self directed study at home through long distance

programmes provided by overseas universities for Africans on African soil. Using alternative sources of access, in particular correspondence courses, evening classes, self-directed learning, open and distance learning, tuition colleges, this category of learners began to invest their personal resources and strong determination in the pursuit of university education.

To this end, there was a resolute manifestation of the will to do it: to struggle, sweat, make a sacrifice. They did not allow their circumstances to raise insurmountable obstacles. Many of these, mostly clerks and teachers began to make several attempts to pass the Matriculation examinations of the University of London introduced into Nigeria in 1887, Sierra Leone 1895, Gold Coast (now Ghana) 1914, The Gambia 1924 and several other African countries.<sup>11</sup>

Many of the candidates became professional students who continued even up till old age to make the effort to obtain the qualification for further stages of university qualification. January each year became a pilgrimage month for the desperate learners.

A few successes were recorded, although *there was mass failure, much wastage of time, and considerable frustration.*

A blacksmith from Ijebu Ode, Nigeria, Emmanuel Odukoya Ajayi, struggled from his base at St. Andrews College, Oyo, and at personal sacrifice including the suspension of marriage plans, to obtain success at his London Matriculation examination in 1922, his intermediate degree examination in 1925 and his final degree examination in philosophy in 1927.<sup>12</sup>

Alvan Ikoku from his base at Awka was also successful in his degree examination in 1929 thus becoming the first Igbo graduate. Contrary to the assertion by Ayandele that Nnamdi Azikiwe was the first Igbo graduate<sup>13</sup>, the truth is that Ikoku was already a graduate as far back as 1929 "when Azikiwe was still negotiating with the authorities of Lincoln University in America for admission into the undergraduate programme."<sup>14</sup>

Ayo Banjo, and Josiah Soyemi Ogunlesi thus obtained the degrees of the University of London in 1930 and 1933 without leaving the shores of

Africa. There were therefore African graduates of the University of London long before the University College, Ibadan (UCI) was founded in 1948.<sup>15</sup>

Considerable progress was made in East Africa where Makerere University was founded, in Ghana where the University of Legon was established, and other parts of Africa. In Nigeria the Federal government adopted the recommendation that the country should have, in addition to the University of Ibadan, at least four universities, one in each region, and with one sited in the Federal Capital of Lagos. As a result, the following universities were established: the University of Nigeria in the East, Ahmadu Bello University in the North, the University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University in the West, and the University of Lagos at the Federal capital city of Lagos in 1962.

In Eastern Nigeria the new University of Nigeria pioneered the process of massive student population expansion, with an intake of 1000 at the second admission exercise. As the country was increasingly carved into more states, many states considered starting a university an important investment and therefore set up state universities to provide access to learners.

A further development came with the decision of mostly Christian missions to revisit the scope and content of university education and to assist to supplement the efforts of the government in the provision of university education. This was the background to the establishment of the private universities, many of which were in East Africa. It was also the explanation for the foundation of universities many of which, like Babcock, Bowen and Ajayi Crowther were named after the founding missionaries in the country.

The Pentecostal Churches then came with the wave of enthusiasm to build a new generation of leaders through the university education who would lead the countries to the promised land of unity, peace, unity, holiness and righteousness. For these missions, the emphasis had to be on character training and the inculcation of positive habits, values and attitudes. The founders of these new universities were aware that character building had not been a priority in earlier universities where the emphasis was on learning and not necessarily on character

development.

They noted that many innocent learners had become contaminated and polluted on arrival at the university where they came face to face with what they considered to be total freedom in the classroom, hostel and in the management of their time and resources. They were aware of the tradition of the "Havana night" in some of the institutions where naked immorality reigned. They were exposed to several vices including the falsification of school age, the promotion of falsehood, dishonesty, lies, deceit and exploitation.

The Bible says that righteousness that exalts a nation and that sin is a reproach. (*Psalm 37:6*) It was against the backdrop of this truth that *Covenant University, Caleb University, Redeemer's University and similar private Nigerian universities were founded.*

One of the recent heroes that has received the vision has been Bishop David Oyedepo. As he once convincingly put it to the Congress at the Redemption Camp of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) in 2007, "Expectation is the mother of great expectation. What you don't expect, you may not experience." His vision, like that of the other Pentecostal Churches is for the enthronement of purity and righteousness. He was specific about the vision:

Raise me a new generation of leaders, through qualitative, life-applicable and value-based, leadership skill development education embedded in sound Biblical principles thereby restoring the dignity of the black race.

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A number of Muslim organizations have also embarked on a similar process of contributing to university education in Africa through the introduction of a systematic university education programme that emphasises character training and religious instruction both at the formal and non-formal levels of education. Thus in Nigeria the *Al Hikmah University and Bukar Abba Ibrahim University are among those universities founded by the Muslim community.*

## TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Perhaps in finding a way out for the future, Africans may need to first begin to identify the sources of strength and weakness of African universities and decide to work on them. It is expedient for Africa to undertake an inventory of its old partners and invite them to return to work with the universities of Africa. And I refer here to some of those important and most helpful past initiatives of UNESCO, the Ford foundation, the British Council, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Rockefeller Foundation, and the International Development Research centre (IDRC) of Canada.

*African universities will also need to undertake a full inventory of the sources of past assistance and restore the relationship that will facilitate partnership building and collective responsibility for the promotion of universities in Africa. Africa itself must, of course, occupy the driver's seat for its own development as outsiders cannot and indeed are not under any obligation to solve Africa's problems. For as of our proverbs puts it: you only help the one who is exhausted trying to lift a luggage onto the head.*

Partnership building and ownership between the external and internal bodies among the various stakeholders in the region will be founded on the *concept of one family in the global world, sharing and caring, while not dominating or intimidating. Of course this search will be dynamic and will explore ways of how to develop a transparent and effective partnership between state, private sector and civil society, with a view to reaching common societal goals.*

We therefore need to encourage more people to have the vision for a university of the future for Africa. The future in modern African society therefore depends much more on the quiet heroism of the very few who are inspired by God. We must therefore continue to encourage the individuals, social groups, religious bodies and institutions who are prepared to commit, talents and resources in pursuit of their vision to promote the dignity of man, and raise God-fearing leaders. The last hope for the African region is a rejuvenated higher education sector.

And for this Africa does not require too many people to start the reform process. As an elder once put it, "The majority of the people in all nations alike do not consist of heroes".

To this end, the strength of the university must lie in inculcating in the growing mind of the learner, the fear of God and the accompanying purity of the spirit. Thereafter everything else will fall in line, as grace is multiplied and strength of purpose rejuvenated. These were the principles that governed successful leaders of old such as Joseph, Daniel and Moses who lived a life of change, commitment to reforms and reconstruction of their entire society.<sup>17</sup>

The 21<sup>st</sup> century calls for a dialogue of cultures, characterized by solidarity especially as globalisation continues to make the world a smaller and better place to live in. The global village makes education and training all the more important, and the university plays a crucial role. If Africa is to benefit from globalization and attain global relevance, its universities will undoubtedly have to be reformed. The university has the privilege of creating and transmitting knowledge, it is the centre of research and dissemination of information, as well as a forum for scientific exchange and cooperation. Particularly in Africa, the university should be oriented towards peace and sustainable development, not only economic development but human development as well.

African universities' crucial role in creating and sharing knowledge through research and development cannot be over emphasized. Knowledge is recognized as a key factor to human development. UNESCO, which works closely with universities, has for example moved from building information societies to building knowledge societies as information which is not converted into knowledge is not of great use. We now talk of knowledge-based societies and knowledge-based economies. During a UNESCO Regional Forum in Latin America, some scientists estimated that the amount of information available in the world doubles but we are only able to give attention to between 5 and 10% of that information. According to James Appleberry, a critique of educational development, discipline-based knowledge is doubling once every five years and it is projected that by 2020, knowledge will double every 73 days. This means that information and



knowledge are the driving forces in changing societies. Having information does not mean much unless this is turned to knowledge since we will be struggling with much information but no knowledge.

Leaders all over the world have captured these issues in many global declarations including the World Declaration on Higher Education of 1998, which called for education systems to enhance not only people's capacities to live with uncertainties but that the systems should bring about change. Reflections on these can be seen in the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), campaign for development, where human development is the core to sustain social and economic progress.

International organizations, governments and private sector groups have all coordinated their development work around the MDGs. The eight MDGs aim to cut extreme poverty by half, ensure every child has the chance to go to school and live a long and healthy life, bring discrimination against women to an end, reduce the risks of dying as a result of childbirth, control deadly diseases, manage the environment better and share the benefits of progress more equally among all the nations of the world. The goals are to be achieved not later than 2015. This cooperation is expected to produce significant development gains. In this context, African research universities are particularly involved and concerned.

All nations, whether industrialized or developing, face a broad range of challenges that will require the application of up-to-date scientific knowledge and technology. Such challenges include stimulating economic growth, mitigating environmental problems, safely adopting new technologies, and quickly responding to sudden outbreaks of new diseases. No nation can afford to be without access to a credible, independent science and technology research capacity that would help it to develop informed policies and take effective actions in these and other areas.<sup>18</sup>

It is then important to note that in the globalized society, equitable access to knowledge is an acknowledged factor for sustainable development and thus for eradication of poverty in the developing world.

The challenge is how universities, particularly African universities, could contribute through research, towards the fulfilment of the MDGs and how knowledge can be mobilized to achieve those goals.

In addition to access to knowledge in the current context of globalization, knowledge production also comes to the fore. In many African countries, economic sectors are being developed by practical needs and little by research. In the long run, new knowledge through research in science and technology is required to ensure sustainable development. This is precisely the task of universities: to highlight research in everyday life and to ensure that new knowledge is generated for long-term sustainability of society. Generating and applying knowledge requires research capacity, research utility and research productivity.

Research capacity is indeed a challenge for African universities for several reasons. These include the need of facilities and availability of trained African human resources capable of doing research. African governments should invest more on R&D, if the wide gap between the national spending of wealthy industrialized nations and poor developing nations is to be narrowed. In high-income nations, the number of scientists and engineers averages 3,281 per million, while in middle-income nations, the average is 788 scientists and engineers per million. But in most developing nations, the number is too small to be reliably calculated.<sup>19</sup>

Enhancing Science and Technology capacity in developing countries is a necessity and not a luxury. Capacity development and investment in research capacity building is a huge task and calls for cooperation and harmonization of aid efforts among countries.<sup>20</sup>

Research utility calls for relevance of research, namely to the development agenda. African universities are crucial in designing and implementing the research that is needed to fill the gap between the concept of sustainable development and the needs of the end user. For research to be useful, universities need to remain focused and careful in choosing their research agenda. The challenge is how to bring policy needs into sustainable development research and to link the gap between the production and use of knowledge in policy and practices.

There are gaps in linking research with development priorities. African universities are not fully equipped to solve development related problems. There are weak linkages between knowledge producers and knowledge users, and between knowledge production and innovation. An important measure which could be adopted by universities is to improve the quality of their education system such that the learning offered to the students empowers them and makes them more competitive and productive in society.

Many university graduates have little entrepreneurial skills and little ability to compete in the job market. Improving the quality of education is important if the research in African universities is to be directed towards solving development related problems. Through North-South-South cooperation, it is possible to channel research and resources towards solving local problems and also bring in knowledge from other parts of the world and tailor it to the needs of people living in poverty.

Improving research productivity is another major challenge. Universities should be able to provide a better and competitive service to society through research. Shortages in research funds, facilities and trained human resources would all mean that universities should become more competitive by continuously improving their research productivity. Improving the capacity of African universities in carrying out research relevant to local and regional problems will gradually lead to better optimization of national resources allocated to science and technology.

I am optimistic that we can solve our problems if we create appropriate, effective and sustainable institutions and university systems. None of the actions and recommendations I shall be elaborating on in a little while is beyond our means.

Some salient areas for research could be:

- Protection of the environment. We are all aware of the waste and degradation being made all over the world, and with dire consequences for Africa.
- Good governance: Teachers, researchers and intellectuals

should play a primary role in analyzing the problems and proposing solutions regarding governance, democratization, institutional reform, reconstruction and reconciliation (for post-conflict countries or countries in conflict).

- New information and communication technologies based on local and contextual situations in order that countries in Africa are at par with the rapid changes resulting from globalization
- Poverty reduction in the fragile region of Africa, (and that's almost the whole of the continent) which is the most affected. This would involve crucial issues such as Education For All, gender equity, reducing infant mortality, prevention and care for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases, climate change, environment issues.

Crucial research themes would include studies on the quality of education, relevance of curricula, education and employment/unemployment, gender and equity, teacher training and deployment, resource utilization, school infrastructure, among others.

I would like to highlight that in building a system for research and establishing networks and centres of excellence in different African universities, a good option to use would be UNITWIN and UNESCO Chairs and networks. In establishing any research network, there are necessary stages:

1. Sensitizing researchers by showing them that there is strength in unity and that staying in one's ivory tower is not an effective strategy.
2. Convince political decision makers of the importance of such a network.
3. Collect funds from governments.
4. Solicit the support of the AU, NEPAD, UNESCO and other partners.

5. Establish a regional research centre in a selected country.

Research funding comes from different sources such as: the government, bilateral agencies, international agencies and partners, NGOs and individual higher education institutions. Ministries of Education also have research budgets, which usually go to the planning unit or other specialized sections such as examinations, standards, teacher education and curriculum, policy studies, educational management training.

Ministries should establish close linkages with universities and other research agencies in order to ensure that research is undertaken in priority areas and that research findings are disseminated to interested and concerned parties.

## OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Please allow me to complete my intervention by providing observations and recommendations on how to move forward and possible strategies for implementation:

1. Policy on research and development needs to be developed to make it more effective and more responsive to key challenges facing Africa such as those previously mentioned. More investment in higher education is needed to strengthen research capacity for quality research outputs.
2. There is a need to develop appropriate policies to guide proper development of higher education into strong research centres.
3. Ministries of Education should mobilize sufficient funding in order to be able to achieve its research agenda. Ministries could be more active in supporting Fellowships and Training Programmes that keep researches abreast with the latest information connected with other research and educational centres around the world. This involves promoting cooperation through North-South South or South-South exchange fellowships for doctoral

and post doctoral researchers.

4. There would ideally be a monitoring group on quality, relevance and utility of educational research.
5. African universities need to strengthen national, regional and international networks and linkages that address research issues and challenges in higher education and allow for the constant exchange of ideas. There is also a need to strengthen the links between higher education and Ministries of Education for sustainability of programmes.
6. A culture of disseminating research findings at meetings, conferences and workshops should be established, as well as publishing research. Publicising and sharing successful experiences can serve as models for researchers, policy makers and planners when using research for national development. Successful experiences in one country can be used as an inspiration and motivation for other countries. It should also be emphasized that despite problems, researchers in the South have developed many creative answers to solve critical development issues.
7. Developing and implementing a transparent accounting system in the use of research money should be considered.
8. Simplified versions of research should be made available for the different levels of education in society to develop appreciation for research.
9. Foreign aid can be made more effective by strengthening universities' capacities for knowledge production. It is important that aid money is channelled properly in order to harness knowledge, strengthen science, technology and research capacities for achieving MDG and EFA goals.
10. Make policies and practices more relevant to existing knowledge. Universities should play a central role in using the existing knowledge and experience in policy making instead of

reinventing the wheel or have the trial and error approach in policy making. Universities can disseminate lessons learned and advocate EFA as a central focus of public policy making.

11. African universities must deliberately cultivate a marketing strategy to sell their products, programmes and qualifications to the outside world, and take advantage of the cross-border higher education initiatives which both UNESCO and the OECD are seeking to encourage and promote to have a humane face and desired sensitivity.<sup>21</sup> Richard Levin has observed that:

Of the forces shaping higher education none is more sweeping than the movement across borders. Over the past three decades the number of students leaving home each year to study abroad has grown at an annual rate of 3.9 percent, from 800,000 in 1975 to 2.5 million in 2004. Most travel from one developed nation to another, but the flow from developing to developed countries is growing rapidly. The reverse flow, from developed to developing countries, is on the rise, too.<sup>22</sup>

It is imperative that African universities must resume attracting an international staff and student population of those past years when one could truly declare that they were international indeed and in truth. This is particularly important in this era of globalization and cultural diversity.

12. The universities must consciously search for relevance and appropriateness should be the watch word, not tradition, in the consideration of the core curriculum of the new age. We therefore recommend to Senates of African Universities the need to swiftly embark on the introduction of a reformed curriculum which must address the issues of self confidence, self pride and the determination not to accept the status of a second rate citizen. As Julius Nyerere of Tanzania once contended:

Of all the crimes of colonialism there is none worse than the attempt to make us believe that we had no indigenous

culture of our own; or that what we did have was worthless-something of which we should be ashamed, instead of a source of pride. Some of us, particularly those of us who acquired a European type of education, set ourselves out to prove to our colonial leaders that we had become "civilized;" and by that we meant that we had abandoned everything connected with our own past and learnt to imitate only European ways. Our young men's' ambition was not to become well-educated Africans! Indeed at that time it was a compliment rather than an insult to call a man who imitated Europeans a "Black European."<sup>23</sup>

There should be compulsory courses to supplement those offered to meet the award of degrees in the relevant programmes: entrepreneurship, tangible and intangible cultural heritage conservation and preservation, tourism promotion, peace education, indigenous and second languages acquisition. I will even go as far as recommending that all the universities in Africa must have courses on rudimentary of history to assist the students to have some awareness of where they are coming from so that they can appreciate the contributions of the ancestors, recognise the enormous challenges confronting them within the context of the legacy of the wealth of languages, cultures, traditions, the impact of both the trans-Saharan and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonial rule in Africa, the liberation movements, and post-independence problems. It is of supreme importance that the present and future generations are acquainted with their roots and identity so that they can learn to face the future with full confidence and appreciation of how they arrived at their Ebenezer.

- 13.If African universities use the global knowledge pool through greater involvement in knowledge networks, they can enable themselves to deliver what is most expected from them, that is creativity, innovation, relevance and excellence. African universities can make themselves an indispensable tool for socio-economic development by contributing to the success of achieving the MDG and EFA goals. African universities do not



have the choice of walking away from the new pattern of global integration and the challenges facing them lest they become irrelevant, unresponsive and irresponsible. Africa cannot isolate itself in the era of globalization.

There is good news and I would like to end on a very positive note as I always prefer to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

We must also note that some of our universities have already begun preparing their students to live in an increasingly competitive global village. This is the picture being painted by Caleb University of Nigeria which has made the learning of French compulsory for all the students irrespective of the course of learning being pursued. As Professor Timothy Tayo, Vice-Chancellor of the University, explained in an interview:

We want to graduate globally competitive graduates. And if you must be a global citizen, you need to be able to speak other international languages other than English that most of us are used to in Nigeria.<sup>24</sup>

All this development is suggesting that the universities of the new century must be sensitive to modern developments, and must embark on curriculum reform.

Never before have we had opportunities to promote research in African universities in terms of political support, finance, networking and technology. The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, the priority given to Africa, EFA, MDGs, TTISSA all manifest the political interest in this issue at all levels. We can take advantage of the current opportunities focusing on Africa, on research as well as on higher education. With our many talented, brilliant and committed African intellectuals and, of course, with God's help, we are sure to succeed.

In the process Africa will be moving to a higher height of the

appreciation of its roots. As Delanyo Adadevoh recently put it:

Africa today is an eagle that is yet to soar. She needs to tell herself that she is an eagle who belongs to the sky. Every imagination that places Africa in a lower category in relation to other peoples should be replaced with new thoughts that see Africa at the centre stage in global development. The greatest challenge to Africa's development is the mind of Africans. African minds should be transformed into new minds that can dream a new Africa into existence. Africa needs leaders who have faith as well as the ability to translate their good faith into good works. The time to rethink is now! The time for new resolves is now! The time for a new action is now! May Africa soar to new heights like super eagles!<sup>25</sup>

## POSTSCRIPT

Please let me return to where I started this lecture and state that it was a special honour, privilege and joy to receive the invitation to present the third Convocation Address at this University, and I thank the LORD for all those He had used to make this happen in my life.

For one thing, this maiden visit to this university was divinely ordained for me to see at first hand what one individual with inspiration, wisdom, dedication and passion for his country can achieve within a short period. When we remember that the colonial government in Nigeria, which installed Lagos as a colony in 1861 and controlled education in the country for some 100 years, did not establish a university until 1948, when the University College at Ibadan was founded, we can better appreciate the decision to establish this university. I have been profoundly impressed by the quality of the buildings and I can begin to understand why the LORD Himself had led the Chancellor to study architecture and not history like me!

And it is my special duty to express my congratulations to the

graduating students, their parents and partners and to tell you all that it has all been worth the while. I congratulate the entire nation, stakeholders in educational development. After the struggles, the studies, periods of anxiety, expectations and investments by the students, staff and their families, the hour has come for a celebration. It is my prayer that the joy of today's celebration will never leave the homes of these graduates who have been blessed to be part of this university. I join the Chancellor in pronouncing grace and favour on you in the Mighty Name of Jesus.

I pray that this institution will continue to experience the power of the Almighty God every second of its growth until Eternity in Jesus Name.

As you all know, number three is special, it is unique, it is blessed. Number three stands out and evokes blessings. It has a particular significance.

When the son of the widow that had fed Elijah died, Elijah fell on him three times, and he woke up at the third time. [I Kings 17: 17-24]

The LORD Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane had three prayer sessions. [Mathew 19: 3-24]

We are also reminded of the breakthrough verse in the Scripture that announced the resurrection of the LORD Jesus, "on the third day". (Luke 24:7) That statement brought joy to a people discouraged by the death of their Master whom they had watched being betrayed, and, after a fake trial, unjustifiably hanged on the Cross.

Having presented my salutation to the parents and the new graduates, let me now salute the proprietor. What else other than a vision would make a man to conceive of this institution and take personal responsibility for its health, even when such vision generates controversy? What could have inspired the Chancellor to take the unusual step to appoint a woman to head a higher education institution where the male specie seemed to have established a monopoly? Was it in recognition of the role of women as true builders who care and serve as first teacher? Or was it in appreciation of the women who were the first to see the resurrected Jesus when the men were quite unsure of

what to do following the crucifixion? And how did he identify a daughter who shares his vision with demonstrable enthusiasm, commitment to the work and willingness to become a key personality in the pursuit of God's plans for this nation, its people and the global society?

I should conclude by giving thanks to the Lord of hosts Who used the Visitor, Bishop Oyedepo; the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Aize Obayan and all those who worked with her to invite me to deliver this lecture. I am particularly grateful to the Vice-Chancellor for making my task easy by the inspiration she was given for the timeless topic she gave for this lecture. It should not surprise us to know that this same topic has been identified for deliberation at the World Conference on Higher Education being convened by UNESCO, in 2009 at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris.<sup>26</sup>

I wish to thank my colleagues and associates at UNESCO, especially Lucio Sia of Higher Education Division, Mercy Ette and Augustine Ojemeke of the Nigerian Permanent Delegation to UNESCO for the professional assistance and invaluable support they offered me in the process of preparing this lecture. My primary appreciation is, of course, to the Almighty God, the I am that I am Who has graciously led my path to this historic institution. And His glory I will share with no one. I therefore return all the glory, thanks and honour to the LORD Jesus Who as the beginning and the end had planted this institution before the world was established and made a covenant with us as children of Abraham even before this country was conceived as a nation.

To Him be all the honour, Glory and adoration until eternity Hallelujah. Praise the LORD. Amen.

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