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Rebuilding Our Falling Walls: University Education & Human Capital Challenges In Africa The Way Forward

**Text of a lecture delivered by
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Introduction

I thank the Chancellor, Management, Senate, Faculty and the entire staff and students of Covenant University for this invitation to deliver one of its Convocation lectures. I feel humbled by the letter from the Vice Chancellor which refers to my passion for academic excellence and for my ‘worthy contributions’ to the development of education in our fatherland. Particularly flattering is the reference to my introductory remarks during my last visit to Covenant University. When I stated *inter alia*: “*That the problem of Daffour, the incessant internecine wars in Africa caused by lust for power and money, the helplessness of the UN to provide necessary instrument to stop the struggles, the problems within the African Leadership, the exploitation of mineral resources in Africa without improving the lifestyle of the masses, now (it) becomes obvious that the problems of Africa can only be solved by us, as we learn to understand ourselves and map out our new strategies for change and development.*”

I see this meeting as an opportunity to examine a more important instrument for developing our human resources which we must use to solve our problems. So please accept my gratitude and thanks for your kind remarks. It is my sincere hope that this address will prompt us to some action that would lead to activities that will begin to transform University Education in Nigeria. Hardly a week passes that Nigerians through the print or electronic media do not criticise our universities. The criticisms include falling standards in University Education, inadequate funding of the universities, unfair policies, examination malpractices, the sale of hand-outs that virtually replaces teaching, low quality of graduate output, increasing numbers of unemployed graduates, student riots, ASUU strikes, atrocities committed by student secret societies, impersonation in examinations, corruption, etc. The change in policy which allowed the establishment of private universities in 1990 was a welcome development as the policy was perceived as a worthy patriotic response to improve university education.

These observations and opinions in the media highlight the timeliness of the topic we are to examine today, namely: “how to rebuild the falling walls of university

education” so that we can tackle the problem of development using professionals, graduates qualified and skilled from our universities.

Covenant University is poised and ready to ***“Raise (a) new generation of leaders, through qualitative, life – applicable and value-based, leadership skills and development education embedded in sound biblical principles thereby restoring the dignity of the black race”***.

Let us bear this in mind as we begin to identify the falling walls of university education. The paper will underline the fact that a major role of University Education is to produce highly educated, skilled, professional men and women of good character, who can provide services, create knowledge and develop new initiatives to improve the standard of living in any country. This was the aim of the founding fathers of the nation and even though we may have derailed, it is still our objective. It will also touch on the major challenges confronting African countries, and how these may be eradicated or substantially reduced. The way forward will include strategies which can be effectively pursued to introduce changes in university education; such changes should be sustained so as to impact and improve the entire university system.

Our Falling Walls

What are the falling walls of university education in Nigeria? One is tempted to reel out a list that includes inappropriate policies, insufficient or unsuitable physical infrastructural facilities, poor planning, decisions based on tribal sentiment, managerial incompetence within and outside the university, ineptitude of leaders and inadequate finances. Many universities lack sufficient physical facilities and amenities. Libraries with books and current journals are not always available. Computers, electronic machines and instruments, and well equipped laboratories are insufficient or not available. Science equipment are insufficient, reagent chemicals and specimens may not be always available. Curriculum in some subjects may be obsolete, irrelevant or not current.

Some corporate bodies have been known to set up an extra year of intensive coaching for newly qualified graduates of our universities as a condition for employment. An increasing number of graduates cannot find employment and many are forced to take up unskilled labour in order to survive. Young professionals are leaving the country for different reasons. The numbers of non-teaching staff in universities are too large, and a financial burden. Records are not computerized, thereby promoting inefficiency in the system. The inefficiency affects knowledge adversely.

Our foundation universities were conceived and established as mayoral townships which in practice has considerably reduced funds available for the main objective of university education namely teaching and learning, because given the changing times, manpower is dissipated on non-academic matters. We must remember that Ibadan did not anticipate the accelerated admission numbers; neither did Ife and Nsukka plan like Ibadan.

There is acute shortage of teachers in the university, new universities are being founded to introduce and initiate new courses needed for the changing times but without adequate planning. Given the better opportunities in the private sector or even in the country's civil service, universities do not now attract the most brilliant minds into teaching.

Many university lecturers have to survive by taking up part time teaching in other universities often. With 18 to 24 weekly teaching hours, these teachers can hardly carry out any meaningful research. Even if they were so inclined there is not enough research undertaken by university staff especially in the sciences. Funds are limited to undertake research and a large number of staff sell handouts to students rather than teach (thereby recycling information and not introduction of knowledge or new skills). Students often therefore demonstrate insufficient understanding of what they learn. Teaching carried out by part-time teachers is undesirable and unsatisfactory. Many teachers are not really sufficiently qualified to teach in the universities and their emoluments and fringe benefits are just insufficient to encourage research.

Teaching, learning and research within the university are disorganised when political wrangling, economic insufficiency, administrative harassment or ineptitude affect the leadership within the university. Some members of university councils are political appointees, who merely receive their stipends, and contribute little or nothing to the University.

A Vice Chancellor is first amongst equals. He/she must be creative, intelligent, capable to lead and manage an academic community. A Vice Chancellor may also be a friendly, kind, nice and popular person who just carries on with the majority demands of Council, Senate, Ministry or other related bodies like the NUC and JAMB or in the case of state universities. Problems arise when the former type addresses the major functions of the university efficiently and thus rocks the boat. This may result in misunderstanding amongst the Principal Officers, Staff and Council or even learning becomes the even pace of university.

In conclusion, it is obvious that there are “broken walls” or problems in the universities. They apply to policy, management, academic pursuits, physical infrastructures, emoluments, student welfare and in the pursuit of the direction or non-direction that the proprietor may have provided.

University Education and Human Capital Development:

I had the opportunity to study a research programme under the famous University of Chicago Economist, Jean Bowman. The research carried out in Puerto Rico compared the contributions of cohorts of students who had received only four years, just eight years, and complete twelve years of formal education. The last group contributed more in quality and outreach, demonstrating competence in their workplace and contributing more to the Puerto Rican economy.

There was no doubt that those students with twelve years of formal education were very good.

This may be a minor example, but it is very useful illustration that links improved productivity with a higher level of education even at secondary education level.

Human capital is the accumulation of resource that can bring about socio-economic transformation of a country. Human capital refers to the technical and professional competencies that can be demonstrated by an educated person. Developed countries regard the education provided in universities as a benchmark for training professionals, researchers, doctors, lawyers, bankers, accountants, economists, technologists, scientists, etc. It is constantly demonstrated that when a country has a high level of professionals, the more complex the level of skills that country can provide. Such countries provide better physical infrastructure, better health facilities, better physical communication facilities, more jobs etc for their people.

All of these mean a higher standard of physical and material comfort. In addition and this is most important, such countries can achieve more in global competitive situations. They can advance faster against others. Most developed countries have long history of university education which has helped build cadres of well-tested professionals in every field of human endeavour. They continue to improve their universities and form partnerships between research in the university and industry. Thus, they continue to improve on their level of manpower or their human capital.

If a country cannot invest in developing its universities it denies itself the presence of highly trained, skilled, knowledgeable persons who are creative and who can initiate changes that will improve its people standard of living. Until we develop our universities to produce educated, intelligent professionals with specialised skills, we cannot effectively harness their skills, their knowledge, expertise and

intelligence. We need to improve our country. We face the problems of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, poor roads, poverty, inefficient transportation services, poor health, absence of infrastructure etc. We are at the mercy of the climate. We cannot provide education for the majority of our youth. We cannot harness the skills, bargaining power to compete effectively in the international market. We cannot effectively manage our own rich natural resources. We are too greedy and tribalistic to effectively govern our country.

We buy ideas from others and use such ideas resulting in the creation of white elephants. We cannot even harness our competences and human expertise to provide electricity or use our own oil and gas to improve energy for our industry and comfort. The importance of human capital in the development of a country cannot be over emphasised.

As the importance of human capital was being emphasised, mention was also made of the greed, lust, tribalistic characteristics which make ineffective or at least reduce the level of productivity of human capital. We must also not forget, in fact we must emphasize that, as we educate and train persons, we must also ensure that they imbibe values such as honesty, hard work, truthfulness and fairness. They must have integrity to rise above the divisive tendency of tribalism and nepotism which could warp decisions they make.

We can now spare some time for the development of higher education in Nigeria where planning for a purpose was carefully followed by the British. When university education was no longer purposefully planned, bearing in mind the financial constraints, we entered a new and rather dangerous phase. We are still there now.

The purpose of University College Ibadan in Nigeria, just as in Legon, Ghana and Makerere in Uganda was to build an elite group of indigenes who could, sometime in the future, form the necessary manpower or human capital to slowly but steadily develop their country as guided by the colonial powers. To this end the British carefully planned and made important decisions about management, finance, curriculum, social welfare of staff and students.

University College Ibadan followed and retained special relationships with University of London but residential Halls followed the pattern of Cambridge and Oxford. The subjects included Religious Studies, Latin and Greek, and Arts and Science subjects mainly. Areas such as Economics, Law, Political Science, and Business Administration and Technology were left out. Medicine and Engineering were to be established partly in Britain the mother country. Teachers were mainly

British and remuneration was most attractive. The higher echelon of University College of Ibadan staff received emoluments that put them beyond the civil service staff level. The budgetary allocation of Ibadan was well calculated to fall within the financial limits of the Government. The rules and regulations all aimed at ensuring good teaching and welfare of staff and students and all this was carefully executed by the British for Nigeria. But there was criticism from the indigenous political leadership group about the small number of student intake, insufficient number of indigenous staff, the absence of course offerings in Economics, Finance, Law, and Technology. These criticisms must have been noted but appeared ignored as Ibadan followed a sedate well-planned existence and expanded slowly.

Slightly more than 12 years later, not a significant period in the life of a nation, the political leaders were in a position to assume the mantle of leadership and make their own decisions on what type of university education they thought was needed for their country. Between 1960 and 1962, University of Nigeria, University of Ife, and Ahmadu Bello University had all been established. Regional Premiers put into practice their ideas of the type of manpower, or human capital they desired for their regions. The consequent financial responsibility was high, for the regions and the Constitution were re-examined; university education became a concurrent responsibility between State / Region and Federation. The region shed the financial responsibility of the new type of Universities with heavy, expensive new academic sections. They also grew more rapidly than Ibadan and required extended infrastructure.

The Federal Government, as it had done for Ibadan, also now established a University in Lagos. It was to be an institution basically to train professionals and especially those young persons in the junior cadre of the civil service who might not otherwise have had the advantage of university education.

The Federal Government also had the insight to introduce the Distant Learning Unit, an innovation to cope with the accelerating demands for higher education.

It is unfortunate that this innovation, throughout the 1960s was ignored until sometime in 1977 or 1978, as a well-planned Department or College of Distant Learning in the University of Lagos as early as 1964 or even 1965 would have reduced the direct intake into the then existing universities.

If, in addition, the faculties of Engineering, Science and Business Administration in Lagos had cooperated with external bodies and their external students, the problem of increased admissions into the “Mayoral Universities” and the consequent financial drain on the economy could have been reduced.

It should be reiterated that in the early days, higher education was carefully planned. Even the Greater Triumvirate of leaders emphasised the manpower needs. But each emphasised its own regional needs. Unfortunately the Federal Government could or did not encourage or ignored education because of tribal sentiments. However, this development was not prompted by Government. But ignoring the Distant Learning Unit was in my opinion the result of priorities misplaced possibly due to ethnicity.

The unfortunate events from about 1965 which culminated in the civil war brought changes in University Education. The new Mid West Region also eventually established its own University in 1970. The Government of Nigeria as we are all aware created more states in the country. These states also demanded Federal presence and so, more Federal Universities were created. However financial admission problems were crippling because of huge cost of higher education and its impact as it reduced the education budget. It also created another problem, there were not enough Nigerian trained teachers to meet the demands of the new Universities. As into the regions the political leadership appreciated the financial costs required and quickly shifted this to the Federal Government.

The arts, social studies, business administration were strong only by 1970 did Benin expand into petroleum, chemical and production engineering, dentistry and pharmacy.

The country discerned its need for technology education and endeavoured to introduce Universities in technology at once. Of course it did not succeed. All the same before 1980 the country had established 24 Federal Universities.

It tried to obtain a World Bank loan but failed to use more than one third of the loan. Particularly the first generation universities could hardly meet social welfare conditionalities of the loan and the younger universities failed to meet the academic conditionalities. We may just add too that our poor understanding of the agreement and even worse attempts at procurement and distribution contributed to losing the loan.

Challenges in the African Continent

The United Nations in its UNDP Human Development Report for the year 2000 states eight major Millennium Development Goals. Briefly these include poverty, illiteracy, women empowerment, health, world trade activities & the environment. Most African countries have a lot to do to meet the conditions to improve the socio-economic levels of our people.

Low literacy rate slows down development and remains a major obstacle to socio-economic transformation of a country. In particular, the discrimination against the female child in terms of access to education has remained a major challenge. Today the female child's education still cannot access primary school in some African Countries. This results in a smaller number of women who can have university education, thus lack of education continues to be a source of poverty to women and to the entire continent.

Low literacy rate and poverty are intractable challenges confronting every African country, together they deplete the countries' manpower and is a burden since their productivity is very low. Poverty and low literacy have debilitating effects on development. Illiterates are not useful in attempts to increase or transform socio-economic situations except they received some training. They can be a burden and distraction from efforts of developments. Poverty and illiteracy promote ignorance, fuel corruption and deny the poor of their basic rights in the society. The poor find it more convenient to exchange their rights for paltry sums. They remain a major problem in attempts to hold fair elections in this budding democracy.

Economy Restructuring

There are fundamental changes taking place in the world. We need engineers, in oil and gas, computer engineers, etc. These pose human challenges to us. We do not have trained sufficient number of skilled entrepreneurs to participate effectively in the emerging markets. We have not sufficiently added value to the raw materials (i.e. natural resources) that are available in Africa, nor have we a critical mass of Africans in any of our countries who are fine-tuned and skilled, to participate effectively in the global emerging markets. All these pose varying degrees of human capital challenges to governments in Africa and in Nigeria.

We are just emerging from military dictatorships to democratic governments and are still ensuring that the masses have sufficient education to be free from hunger and literate enough to understand the issues involved in making political choices.

Dynamics Of The Population

Globalisation and technology and information technology are bringing changes in the approach to human capital development across the globe. In particular, countries are making their human capital development more relevant to their economies. Consequently, acquisition of new knowledge and new skills especially

in the applied sciences, and information technology has become the vogue. This also poses new human resource development challenges to African governments. It is a major exercise to carefully redefine the problems posed by globalisation, technology, particularly information technology and to introduce their applications into the curriculum, given the rapid increase of students and the decreasing number of teachers.

Market Driven Education

The time is here for a change. University education must be market driven and tailored to the needs of Nigeria. We must educate, train and equip psychologically a new breed of youth who place emphasis on education and new skills in the applied sciences for individual and national self-reliance. In all major sectors of human endeavours, especially in production, processing, marketing and for competitiveness in the Agro-Allied sector, bio-technology, engineering, telecommunications, information technology in particular, “the broad band internet”. These are areas that must be included in our University curriculum but this is expensive and we must plan adequately to cooperate and reduce costs.

Democracy & Education

Democratisation across the world is a major challenge to many countries in Africa. Democracy emphasises respect for both the rule of law and the people’s inherent rights to decide the terms of their governance through the ballot box. Democracy has its cost implications and human resource challenges (such as electoral challenges and accompanying frictions), especially in Africa where there is mass poverty and high level of illiteracy. But its dividends, which include economic liberalisation, also have implications for human capital resource of the country.

Allied to democracy is the need to inculcate and strengthen the culture of peace, democratic principles of representation through free and fair elections, tolerance for opposing opinions and honest service to one’s community and country. We must also build capacity to further strengthen them to adequately man those democratic institutions that will ensure free and fair elections. Finally university education would be an advantage to appreciating these ideas and the processes that should promote free elections.

Human Rights Must Be Inevitable

Related to the issue of democratisation of governance is Human rights. The long years of military dictatorship has further contributed to the slow eradication of human right abuses. The new political leaders as well as the generality of men in uniform need to appreciate that we are in an age of the rule of law.

Socio-Economic Situation

In Africa, the command type of economy, which embraces government ownership of major enterprises, has been the practice since independence. In the last decade, however, a wave of economic restructuring has been sweeping through the continent in response to similar changes in other parts of the globe. The new trend emphasises market driven economy and the emergence of the private sector as the driver of the economy as Government provides the enabling environment. In response to this, many African governments have established privatisation agencies to privatise and commercialise hitherto government owned companies and parastatals. Unfortunately, the job losses arising from such exercises have not posed new human capital challenges to governments across the continent. Such challenges include the payment of pensions to those who lost their jobs in the privatisation exercise. Universities have a major responsibility to assist the country provide opportunities for those retrenched persons to acquire new skills and knowledge.

Health

A healthy population is a wealthy population. Although malaria remains the major killer in Africa, the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to take its toll across the Continent and many African countries, unfortunately, have several other diseases like leprosy and river blindness. These diseases reduce the ability of Africa's work force to give their best at work; they also reduce the life span of their victims. We need more medical practitioners.

Education And Women Empowerment

Closely linked to low literacy and mass poverty is women empowerment. There is discrimination against women empowerment across the Continent. The bias against women education also has its roots in some of our cultural practices, but many have been embedded by 19th Century treatment of women in Europe. Most parents prefer sending their male children to school for cultural and economic reasons. Many governments have practices to empower women, but breaking the glass ceiling has not been easy. However in some non-science professions like Law and Administration, the pace is improving and women continue to show competence in government and in the private sector.

But how do we confront the myriad of human capital challenges in the Continent?

Charity At Home

Charity must begin at home. We must chart the type of future that we want and work towards achieving those dreams. Often African governments look towards the advanced economics for solutions to their problems. All countries have their

own problems. Expatriate help is provided, and is usually at some cost to us and great benefits to them or their countries. We must therefore rebuild our human capital mainly from our universities and in our countries. Our international partners can offer advice and funds, provided we learn to bargain and without too many strings as we progress on the path of respect and human dignity.

The Federal Government was and could be pressed into assuming the responsibilities of university education by political leaders in each State.

Inadequate Funding And Universities Establishment

The objective of establishing more universities after independence in 1960 leaned very heavily on the fact that the political leadership expressed pointedly that universities be cited in their Regions. They relinquished the financial responsibility of these to the Federal Government.

The people still clamoured for university education and with the political re-arrangement of Nigeria from 4 Regions to 12 States, then to 19 states, every State wanted its own University. Perhaps, over-confident of the presence of mineral oil and gas and the catapulting prices of these products, the leaders were not sufficiently cautious in their planning. Funds may have been available, the human capital necessary to expand university education was not available. Worse still, the lower sections of the educational system were expanding very rapidly.

Even before the Federal Universities increased to twenty- four, the system had begun to feel the financial strain. In passing, we should note that with the establishment and expansion of university education, other tertiary units like Colleges of Education and Polytechnics were also being established by the government. States that felt the federal universities did not serve sufficiently the needs for manpower, (or perhaps wanted to achieve a political advantage) established their own State Universities as well. Thus, the popularity of university education was phenomenal. The military government jettisoned a major financial burden. It stopped financing board and lodge by fiat.

When in the subsequent Republic, the Government attempted to establish seven Technical Universities, it quickly reversed itself and closed four. There were no sufficient staff and funds to maintain them. The years between 1970 and 1999 were very difficult years. Nigeria was shot into limelight by the presence of oil which made the Nigeria economy boom for a while. It was also affected by our mismanagement of the wealth and downturn of the world economy.

Brain Drain

The universities could not provide enough teachers or they could not even provide enough manpower to teach in the ever expanding number of universities available. Worse still, the downturn in the economy contributed to the phenomenon referred to as brain drain which witnessed many professionals left the country for better paid Jobs in Saudi Arabia, Britain, USA, Canada to work as medical doctors, nurses, engineers, university lecturers. This brain drain phenomenon has affected the universities seriously. Worse still was the brain drain from the university into the private sector where the emoluments and fringe benefits were attractive.

Meandering Period

Perhaps the worst years for our universities were the 80s and 90s when the presence of secret societies or cults brought in much indiscipline, violence, examination malpractices and other bad behaviour. There is quite a parallel with the changes in the Nigerian society as wealth from known and unknown sources became the order of the day. This is mentioned here because of a period of over three decades of uncritical lackluster management of the country. The academics did not particularly show any creative ability to change the university system.

The Way Forward

My first suggestion in addressing the way forward is to emphasize the need to create awareness for all Africans, rich or poor, young and old in rural or urban areas that education is **not free** and cannot be free. Some one or an institution must pay. We must further create awareness that when all contribute in kind and cash, then the educational institution is better staffed, has materials for learning which improves the quality of education, supports more research and ensures that teachers are well paid. Poorly paid teachers who are not skilled at their job cannot provide quality education. Finally, we can all suggest strategies and assist governments to devise new ways to increase funding of education generally and for university education in particular, directly or indirectly.

Federal Universities desire to be autonomous. Autonomy goes with a certain amount of responsibility. However, a first step is to have a correct knowledge of the complete and correct costs of tuition for students in any undergraduate course annually. This must be calculated as is it done in developed countries so that a plan can be worked out over perhaps a ten-year period to enable us work out sustainable financial schemes that are fair, especially to students from poor homes. The Federal Government will relinquish authority over the Federal Universities. Gradually, universities move towards autonomy at their pace and assume more of the financial responsibility for their institutions.

There must also be clear guidelines regarding the staffing of any department or faculty so that quality can be maintained. Each faculty or department must have its full complement of staff so that full academic training will continue and ensure that staff and students are providing and receiving quality education. Tutorials and seminars and practicals must be fully accommodated in the programme. Similarly, classrooms, laboratories and libraries must be fully utilized. Neither space nor time should be wasted. The universities must learn and teach their students by the staff demonstrating their own ability to use time and space efficiently.

A major problem in our Universities has always been that of **equity**. Admission into the university must be fair within State and Federal institutions. But even more important is the fact that a student who is really and truly university material must not be denied admission for financial reasons. Basic minimum requirements must be met by all universities. Senates and Faculty Boards must ensure strict compliance with rules and regulations. The Federal Government, using its wealth of financial experts, should work out financial schemes whereby *bona fide* students can borrow money for board and tuition. The interest rate must be low and not all banks will have the privilege to participate in the scheme. Now the responsibility of the student is to maintain at least a level that ensures that he can remain in the university for the stipulated degree time period. He will not be allowed or in any way encouraged to carry baggage full of carry-over courses as is now the case amongst some students. The discipline encouraged in such a process will ensure the both staff and students take university education seriously. There must be time for play and for diligent study. Hopefully, we would reach a time when laptops and the Internet will be available to all university students.

The quality of teaching must improve and each faculty/department must have its full complement of staff. There are existing ratios for this already. Professors must encourage young colleagues to produce workbooks or notes which expatiate on issues. Collections of such works in each department can be edited annually until good texts are finally produced and published. Such publications owned by the contributors add value to teaching.

Each university faculty may build internal publications for staff and students which can be further edited annually to build a compendium. Handouts and private arrangements whereby most staff teach in one or two other universities must be sanctioned.

Every university must maintain a well-equipped Guidance and Counseling unit that also assists the students with those problems that are strictly outside the competence of their student teachers.

Financial allocation to each university must be clearly related to development and research. The budget of each university must be carefully worked out and tailored to meet the courses in a three to four year plan to meet the needs of manpower. University Vice Chancellors, Councils of Universities and Alumni, have a major responsibility to canvas the private sector and the international community for assistance in kind and cash. This has implications for the leadership, Vice-Chancellor, Pro Chancellor and ordinary members of Council. They are to be men and women of integrity who are experienced scholars, businessmen or who really understand the purpose of university education.

Persons should not be appointed to Council because they are political party members. Immediately after independence strong feelings of tribalism or ethnicism especially among Nigerian leaders influenced university education. It has grown worse especially with indiscriminate membership in council.

A Nigerian policy to improve science education states that admission of students into universities must be 60% Science and 40% Arts or Humanities. We have never practised the policy, perhaps this is now an opportunity for government to grant permission only to private science and technology-oriented universities.

We must improve the quality of teaching and ensure that university teachers are considerably increased in number. The present practice whereby teachers sell copied handouts and teach in 2 or 3 universities on a part-time basis is not in the interest of learning. Research must be increased, staff encouraged to research or have their appointments terminated. Drastic diseases desire drastic cures. Where does the Private or State University come in. It will be necessary to have uniform standards with regard to ratio of staff and students, quality laboratories, research output and more regions set for external examiners and assessors at all levels for all universities. Department and faculties that fail to meet laid-down standards must be shut down and the teachers and students redeployed. Standards for establishing new universities must include most importantly the presence of full-time complement of staff for any department or faculty. Categorization of university must be undertaken by the NUC or any other small unique body established by the President who is the Visitor to all Federal Universities. Standards must be set university by university and especially department by department. A University may be poor academically but may have a high social or society value. Its treatment by the government or by the society would obviously be different. The information department of a University may be first class but it has no standing in English; it would be suicidal to send a student there to study English. The evaluation should be available on the Internet. To meet the decreasing numbers of staff, many universities have worked at training programmes to

increase numbers. However, given the economic situation in the country, it might be needed to build a larger base of student training that provides them with a master's programme.

No doubt it would still require Federal Government. Universities must become autonomous but a plan should be worked out by Alumni staff, senior persons from the Federal Government and politicians, staff, retired or former staff, who may be referred to as stakeholders, to work out a financial plan where over a period anywhere from ten to fifteen years, present Federal Government universities become autonomous. Autonomy must go with responsibility and there must be a representative body from the stakeholders just cited to manage its autonomy. Autonomy cannot mean that Federal Government continues to be financially responsible for the University.

Whilst thus engaged, they should be given a bond, like opportunities to the universities for a few number of years, like three or four, and given the opportunity to choose other jobs outside the university.

Many young teachers especially women would prefer such programmes and when they feel the need, leave the universities. I believe a pool of teachers / lecturers in such an outfit could achieve their PhD and yet be comfortable with returning to the universities.

In the recent past, it would appear that there has not been much rigour demanded especially in discipline. It is necessary to ensure strict discipline and compliance with the rules and regulations of the universities, especially where academic work is concerned. This act might attract more teachers as well as students. Universities must work hard to reexamine their own departments and faculties annually and bring themselves to recommend either improving weak departments or having them removed.

University of Lagos suggested the collegiate system. It argued that it would be easier to attract public support and business entrepreneurs. Some professional faculties therefore could have practices that improve their own incomes to develop and achieve autonomy. Some of the recommendations might require legal assistance, but it might be best for all in the end.

All the universities in Nigeria must have a *vision* and a *mission* which should guide with the type of learning they propose for the graduates. The Federal and State Governments have the duty and responsibility to ensure that their universities are guided by such vision statements. The leadership must emphasize these at all times

for the university. With regard to private universities, their visions and missions should have been carefully analyzed to continuously accredit their performance. National Open University of Nigeria (N.O.U.N) has a grave responsibility to promote Science Technology and Information and Communication Technology. The best way it can serve the nation is to make a solid breakthrough in science and technology.

The funds expended on it must be for Science and Information Technology or else it would become like a recently used political slogan "*More of the same*".

Finally I have refrained from talking about our moral and religious values. Our private universities are taking care of this issue and the Christians and Muslims have clear interest in promoting their religion in their various universities. But it is my strong belief that the behaviors of staff as they teach and use time and money expeditiously, would have imparted good behaviour and honesty to their students.

I thank you most sincerely for listening to my address; may the good Lord bless you all as you leave this place and continue to impart this wisdom to the Chancellor, the Management, the Senate, Faculty, the entire Staff and Students, especially this second batch of "Eagles" from Covenant University.

Grace A. Alele Williams