

**Open and Distance Education for Development, Unity and
Democratic Transformation of Nigeria**

Pre-Convocation Lecture

**National Open University of Nigeria
(NOUN)**

Delivered by

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17 January 2014

Excellences,

Vice-Chancellor,

Faculty and Staff Members,

Graduates and their proud families,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I. Introduction

First, let me express my profound gratitude to the Senate of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), my good friend and dear brother the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Vincent A. Tenebe, for bestowing on me the honor of delivering this pre-convocation lecture. I am happy to be here as Guest Lecturer being an academic myself before venturing into active full time practice of international relations and diplomacy for about 2 ½ decades.

. It is always a thing of joy to rejoin the community of intellectuals, and more so as an ardent believer in the power of education to transform an individual, a society, a nation, and people all over the world.

Permit me from the onset to register my deep appreciation for the commitment of the Faculty and the students for the continuing success of the open and distance learning system in Nigeria. We are here gathered today because of you and we salute your achievements, tenacity of purpose, and enduring interest to educate and empower

our teeming population. No doubt, the occasion we are celebrating is a testament of the collective efforts, discipline and patience of both the Faculty and the students as well. I should also add the sacrifices and support of your respective families. We say thank you. Distinguished audience, I would like to crave the indulgence of everyone here present, to congratulate both the students, families and loved ones of the graduates and faculty on this great day.

Permit me also to indicate my intention to discuss the subject of this lecture holistically though I must state unequivocally that am not an expert on Distance Learning. My presentation will attempt to expatiate on the intricate and inextricable importance of education to development, democracy, good governance, unity and positive transformation of the Nigerian society, as well as the challenges and opportunities of open and distance learning. Indeed, it is useful to echo the statement of Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO that economic and political stability are now inextricably linked to improving education, and education is now becoming in some cases, a security issue, where there is huge pressure to provide education to promote stability and democracy and to avoid extremism in all forms and manifestations

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

As most of the materials for this lecture were carefully researched, I am obliged to mention very early that the recent Inaugural Keynote Address at the 7th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7) held at the International Conference Centre, Abuja, Nigeria, 2 – 6 December, 2013 delivered by my brother and former colleague, Professor Olugbemiro Jegede, the first Vice Chancellor of NOUN and the current Secretary to the Kogi State Government, was exceptionally useful. I would like to take this opportunity to salute Professor Jegede for his leadership and for steering

NOUN in the right direction during his tenure. Also, I would like to acknowledge that materials sourced from other experts and writers were quite insightful and no less important to contribute to this important discourse.

II. Open and Distance Education

Wikipedia defines open education as a collective term that refers to educational organizations that seek to eliminate barriers to entry. Such institutions, for example, would not have academic admission requirements. Such universities include Open University in Britain and Athabasca University in Canada. There are other examples around the world including our own NOUN - the first in the West African sub-region.

Prof. Fred Mulder (2013) indicated that “Opening up Education is significant for all educational sectors being an innovation where top-down and bottom-up are merging, with momentum and a clear goal to contribute to accessibility, quality, efficiency, and innovation, and if I may add, transformation. Prof. Muller interestingly discussed the demand and supply sides of open education concept and common features of opening up education as: Openness to learners; Digital openness; Learner-centred approach; Independent learning; Media-supported interaction; Recognition options; Quality focus and Spectrum of diversity.

Though Open Education and Distance Education are frequently mentioned jointly (sometimes as Open and Distance Learning), they have different meanings. Open education generally refers to institutional practices and programmatic initiatives which broaden access to learning and training conventionally offered through formal educational systems. Its main purpose is to widen access to a greater number of people through open-access resources. Distance education on the other hand is a mode of delivering education and instruction to students who are separated by time or distance

from a traditional classroom setting. The key factor here is the separation by time and distance between the learners and the learning environment.

At the higher education level, formal Distance Learning certification was pioneered by the University of London in 1858. Open education came much later, with the establishment of the Open University in the United Kingdom in 1969. It is one of the largest universities in the world with over 250,000 students and is a world leader in Distance Education (OU, 2010). In Nigeria, the National Open University (NOUN) was established in 1983 with limited activity until its re-launch in 2002. Presently it has 57,759 students, 6 schools and 48 study centres.

Open universities provide higher education using Distance Learning methods to candidates wishing to pursue higher education but are constrained by time, mobility, health disability, work commitments, etc. The rapid advances in ICT have made Open and Distance Learning methods increasingly interconnected due to an explosion of open-access resources using multimedia and internet as opposed to the traditional methods of postal, print and broadcast media. Open-access resources which are both certificate and non-certificate awarding such as the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), Coursera, MIT OpenCourseware, Khan Academy, and Udacity and increasingly relied on by top-ranking global institutions such as MIT, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania and many others. According to the UK's Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2013:5), comprehensive assessments acknowledge that MOOCs bring an impetus of reform, research and innovation to institutions where they are utilized.

This revolution in pedagogy no doubt provides Nigeria with a massive opportunity to broaden access to education across wide swathes of the population, and empower them with the technical and intellectual skills to power Nigeria's

transformation. However, utilizing this opportunity fully requires a holistic and integrated approach to the education sector. This entails:

First, there is the need to integrate the education sector with the manpower and intellectual needs of the Vision 20:2020 agenda. This would require increased investment, curricula overhaul and proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Second, a selection of institutions should be designated as specialist centres, to serve as the country's intellectual hubs.

Third, Open and Distance Learning should be positioned for mass education, adult education and support services.

Fourth, there is the need to domesticate external forms of knowledge and create local forms of knowledge.

I will now elaborate on each of these points in greater detail.

(a) **Integration of the Education Sector with Vision 20:2020**

Education at all levels must be properly aligned with the country's long-term developmental priorities as encapsulated in the Vision 20:2020 agenda, which states, inter alia, that "by 20:2020 Nigeria will have a large, strong, diversified, sustainable and competitive economy that effectively harnesses the talents and energies of its people and responsibly exploits its natural endowments to guarantee a higher standard of living and quality of life to its citizens". Higher education in particular should be oriented to serve the needs of the priority economic sectors at the heart of the Transformation Agenda. The sectors include oil and gas, agriculture, banking and finance, ICT, construction, power and infrastructure, trade, water resources, solid minerals, hospitality and tourism (NPC, 2013). This integration would require curricula overhaul

and repositioning across universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and other tertiary institutions in line with these specific needs of this agenda.

Attaining this alignment would require increased funding to the sector. As it is, government funding for education constitutes just 8.7% of the 2013 budget, less than the minimum 26% recommended by UNESCO. Unsurprisingly, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) occupies a niche in its agitation for greater funding of universities. Yet, there needs to be greater innovativeness in diversifying the sources of funds to cater to the growing needs of tertiary institutions.

To this effect, there ought to be greater private-sector participation particularly by corporate organisations operating in the Transformation Agenda's priority sectors. Financial firms for instance can partner with management and administration faculties in providing funding for learning facilities, research grants and scholarships such that students are trained for industry and academics conduct industry-relevant research. Same applies to Engineering, Architecture, Social Sciences and Agriculture faculties which would benefit tremendously from public-private partnerships with tech firms, multinational corporations and construction firms. Other funding sources could be alumni networks and endowments.

Crucially, there needs to be a proper monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure that funds, once secured, are judiciously utilised towards priority expenditure. The Federal Government recently provided N200bn for infrastructure in federal and state universities. Unions like ASUU should be at the frontline in ensuring that these funds are channelled towards research, teaching facilities and equipment, and buildings maintenance through robust monitoring mechanisms. Importantly, these monitoring mechanisms should curb the phenomenon of abandoned projects which litter tertiary institutions. Regular audits and evaluation must be carried out by regulatory bodies such as the National Universities Commission (NUC).

(b) Designating Centres of Excellence

For Nigeria to accomplish its central developmental goal of becoming a global economic powerhouse, the country's higher institutions ought to be the nerve-centres of research, innovation and the intellectual drive for the Vision 20:2020 agenda. Consequently, certain tertiary institutions should be designated as specialist centres for agriculture, engineering, economics, computer science, and other fields relevant to the priorities of the Transformation Agenda. Stanford University in the United States is closely associated with Silicon Valley, the leading hub for high-tech innovation and development where multi-billion dollar firms such as HP, Google, Cisco Systems and Intel are headquartered.

The impracticality of transforming every single university into specialist centres makes it necessary for a systematic selection of specific institutions for this purpose. One approach for instance could be the selection of one first-generation university each, per geo-political zone, and one-state university each, per geo-political zone, amounting to 12 specialist institutions. These institutions will then become intellectual, research and innovation hubs in which resources – government, multilateral, and private-sector orientated – will be concentrated. In many cases, several first-tier universities have already existing research institutes, such as the Institute for Agricultural Research at Ahmadu Bello University or the Center for Energy Research and Training at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. These would simply need to be accorded special status and where necessary, modernized.

(c) Entrenchment of Open and Distance Learning Programmes:

As noted earlier, Open and Distance Learning has great potential in re-positioning the education sector to provide the manpower needs of the

Transformation Agenda. This form of education holds immense potential for the massive spread of higher education among a greater number of Nigerians who may otherwise find it difficult to attend conventional face-to-face classes. This includes those enrolled in adult education, working class individuals, the physically disabled, married women, etc. The creation of a mass base of low to mid-cadre well qualified workforce such as administrators and managers in the public and private sector may lie with Open and Distance Learning.

Though Nigeria is the pioneer of Open Education in West Africa with the establishment of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in 1983, and several universities have distance learning programs, Open and Distance Learning is yet to be well entrenched, and its gains yet to be fully realised in the country. This is due to the problems identified which bedevil higher education in general. Distance learning suffers setbacks due to the general infrastructural deficit particularly in poor postal system, erratic power supply, ICT spread and penetration, the digital divide (Yusuf, 2006) and poor connectivity among tertiary institutions in the country which are essential for this form of pedagogy.

It is imperative for Nigeria to unlock the immense potentials provided by Open and Distance Education by addressing the obstacles to their full take off. This would entail addressing infrastructure bottlenecks particularly power supply, upgrading the Internet infrastructure, the employment of ICT and e-learning methods, and training educators on their use and maintenance in tertiary institutions. This would be beneficial not just to the recipients but would also improve connectivity among higher education institutions within the country, position Nigerian-based academics at the heart of cutting-edge research across the world, and provide Nigerians access to the vast world of open access resources.

(d) Production of Domestic Knowledge:

It is also imperative that Nigerian institutions focus on the creation of domestic knowledge. Unfortunately, the research element in the country's tertiary institutions has been on a steep decline. According to the report on the Needs Assessment of Nigerian Public Universities, "no Nigerian laboratory ranks among the top 1,000 in the world... where it is common to use kerosene stoves instead of Bunsen burners for experiments". Although Nigeria is Africa's largest country, it has only 15 scientists and engineers engaged in research and development per million persons. This compares with 168 in Brazil, 459 in China, 158 in India, and 4,103 in the United States (World Bank, 2002).

Nigeria's low research output reflects the low priority accorded to research and development by decision-makers (Saint, Hartnett & Strassner, 2003). Consequently, there is lack of research funding, the faculties are bottom-heavy with only 4 out of 10 teaching staff having doctorate degrees, the student population is also bottom-heavy consisting of more than 80% undergraduates, there is limited opportunity for professional development among academic staff and a general unpopularity of technical and vocational education training. All these have undermined the quality of research output from within the country's shores. Sadly, in some cases, even the limited research funds currently available are not fully and judiciously utilized.

As Nigeria considers various alternatives in reinvigorating the education sector, the production and utilisation of local knowledge should be a top priority. No nation in history has ever transformed itself without the development of a robust local knowledge system. The incubation of local knowledge can be attained by funding research to address context-specific problems, connectivity with the wider academic world, and greater valuation of local expertise in

government policy. As we expand Open and Distance Learning programmes, we should ensure that there is substantial domestication of the knowledge we import from other societies.

From the four main issues discussed above, there is no doubt that Nigeria must reposition its education sector to be able to achieve its core developmental goals. To do this, the country would need to address the numerous problems bedevilling the sector with innovative approaches. One of such approaches is the opportunity provided by Open and Distance Learning. Yet, the full utilisation of opportunities provided by Open and Distance Education requires a holistic approach to education reform with measures such as integration of the education sector with the country's development priorities, designation of centres of excellence, entrenchment of Open and Distance Learning programmes, and the production of domestic knowledge. These are all necessary steps for the reinvigoration of the higher education sector to cater to the needs of Nigerians and the country at large.

Distinguished Audience, Ladies and Gentlemen

III. Why NOUN?

Open University is especially suited for a country like Nigeria with population of more than 160 million people and with an education-loving society. I have been privileged to travel the world and I have seen Nigerians at work closely within and outside the borders of the country; hence, I can say loud and clear that an average Nigerian, if given the opportunity, will strive to obtain and shall always try to acquire educational credentials. Having the right education credentials, not necessarily, Bachelors or higher degrees, but professional development in nature, are apposite niches for Open Distance Learning. Whereas, NOUN has over 50 courses now, I

would like to submit that there are avenues for more tailored courses that would benefit the Nigerian labour markets in the first instance, and the larger African employment markets, if properly conceptualized and harnessed.

Today, proudly, the National Open University systems have over 132,000 students throughout Nigeria with 47 study centers. The total number of students is unparalleled and unprecedented. Such is the magnitude of coverage and access to good quality education that NOUN offers.

Professor Jegede (2013) remarked "Given the astronomical numbers to deal with, especially in developing countries, the diverse nature of the unmet demands, the constraints of resources, the need for flexible tailor made delivery of instruction with little disruption in the national, family and individual circumstances; and taking advantages of emerging information communication technologies (ICT's), the most logical pathway is by the distance education method. Distance education has been tested by almost all countries of the world as the most viable, robust, reliable, efficient, effective and cost-beneficial manner to provide massive and equitable access to education,".

NOUN's Vision and Mission

Having briefly discussed the origin and rationale for Open University and the potentials of NOUN, it would be useful to specifically appraise NOUN vision and mission statements since this would give us insights into why we are here today and where we should expect to be in the future. The NOUN Vision Statement reads as follows:

“To be regarded as the foremost University providing highly accessible and enhanced quality education anchored by social justice, equity, equality and national cohesion through a comprehensive reach that transcends all barriers.”

Furthermore, the NOUN Mission Statement reads:

“To provide functional, cost-effective, flexible learning which adds life-long value to quality education for all who seek knowledge”

From the vision and mission statements of NOUN, it is evident that the objective is to make education accessible, self-paced and affordable indiscriminately to all Nigerians everywhere, at any time of their choosing. Unquestionably, education transforms a society. Show me a developed and productive economy, and we would agree that education is the forbearer and the bedrock. No doubt, the United States has the largest numbers of patents and Nobel Prizes, and the springboard of efficient and effective technologies. Obviously, this is the product of sound education in a society that treasures and appreciates education in all its ramifications. NOUN has a role, and the institution is increasingly positioned to play greater role in the transformation of Nigeria.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Education spurs dreams; dreams spurs efforts; efforts yield results, education assists and improves results, results yield technology; technology improves productivity; productivity transforms the nation; society becomes richer and rule of law prevails; with education society democratizes, develops and transform sustainably. We can go on extending the benefits of education in a society, and as I have mentioned at the beginning of this lecture, I am an incurable optimist in the value-added implications of education and capacity of education to change, transform an individual, a society, people and a nation for the better.

Therefore, NOUN as Open University, extending and enlarging learning opportunities to thousands to improve their vocations, through distance education, is a veritable mechanism and approach to transform the Nigerian society.

IV. Education and Achievements of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The global community came together as we are ushering in the new millennium with different pledges on major issues tagged “MDGs”. From the website of UNESCO on Open Educational Resources (OER), it was clearly and justifiably stated that education has direct impact on the achievements of eight MDGs. According to UNESCO “education is a major catalyst for human development”. You will agree with me that Human Development Index is largely impacted by the level of and access to education of the people. As such, NOUN is in a good position to support the overall improvement and transformation of human development in Nigeria. With human development comes transformation.

In an exhibition at the High-level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (UN, September 2010) UNESCO demonstrated how rapid advances in education can help to achieve all of the MDGs. Hereunder are the eight MDGs:

The 8 Millennium Development Goals are:

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

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Audience

According to UNESCO, the following are the reasons education can help to achieve MDGs.

Eight reasons why education is important to achieve the MDGs

Simply put, with education:

1. More people would grow and develop
2. More people would learn and know
3. More people would be equal and just
4. More children would survive and live
5. More mothers would be healthier
6. More people would be able to combat illness
7. More people would think of the future
8. More people would work together

From the above, you will all agree with me that education has a profound and positive impact on society. With the almost limitless reach of NOUN to Nigerians and other Africans, there is the potential to achieve core aspects of MDGs.

V. Nexus between Education, Development, Unity and Democratic Transformation of Nigeria

Let us begin with some sober reflections and stock-taking. And in order to fully appreciate where we are as a people and as a country, we should consider that today we live in a Nigeria where:

- 68% of Nigerians live below the poverty line of less than \$1.25, as defined UNDP and World Bank, in terms of income povertyⁱ;
- The multidimensional poverty headcount is at 54%, the difference between the income and multidimensional poverty, being non-income related resources available to Nigerians in the latter categoryⁱⁱ; (*As you know we Nigerians know how to manage our wahala with the support of friends and family*)
- 143 out of 1000 Nigerians die before the age of 5 years oldⁱⁱⁱ;
- Maternal mortality ratio is 630 – meaning 630 women out of 100,000 die in child birth^{iv};
- Adult literacy is at 61% and only 56% of school aged Nigerians, that is from primary school to tertiary institutions are enrolled^v

ⁱ <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NGA.html>

ⁱⁱ <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NGA.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NGA.html>

^{iv} <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NGA.html>

^v <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NGA.html>

- Primary school enrollment dropped from 103% in 2005 to 83% in 2010 (primary school enrolment data can be higher than 100% due to enrolment to primary school)^{vi}
- The primary school situation is alarming because if Nigeria continues on this course, the literacy level should even drop further in the coming years due to the drop of enrolment in primary school;
- All these put Nigeria at 153 among countries on the HDI at 0.471, the highest since the HDI was introduced in 1990 and lower than the sub-Saharan Africa average of 0.475^{vii};
- Thus with all our wealth, Nigeria belongs to the low human development category where its 2012 HDI (0.471) is higher than the global average value of that the category of 0.466, but lower as noted than the sub-Saharan Africa average^{viii}.
- Nigeria is ranked 16th on the Fund for Peace Index of Failed States with the 5-year trend showing that the situation is deteriorating^{ix};
- Transparency International ranks Nigeria 144 (out of 175) on its 2013 corruption index^x;

^{vi} <http://data.worldbank.org/country/Nigeria>. 'Gross enrolment ratio. Primary.Total is the total enrollment in primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population of official primary education age. GER can exceed 100% due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged students because of early or late school entrance and grade repetition.'

^{vii} <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NGA.html>

^{viii} <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NGA.html>

^{ix} <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2013-sortable> & <http://ffp.statesindex.org/images/fsi-trendmap-2008-2013-hires.pdf>

Ladies and Gentlemen – Dear Graduates,

The above figures and data are cited in order to highlight the situation we find ourselves in today. We may have issues with some of the organizations that collect these data and/or produce these reports. I am sure some of these reports are distasteful, particularly the notion of a failing state which measures:

- Demographic pressure;
- Group Grievances;
- Human Flight;
- Uneven Development;
- Poverty and Economic Decline;
- Legitimacy of the State;
- Public Services;
- Human Rights;
- Security Apparatus;
- Factionalized Elites;
- External Intervention.

Objective or subjective, it is obvious that we have serious concerns in most of these areas and anyway the Nigerian situation is assessed, the life of the ordinary Nigerian

^x <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/> & Corruption Perceptions Index 2013

is nasty. And indeed, to paraphrase Thomas Hobbes the lives of very many Nigerians nasty brutish and short.

Dear graduates, fellow country men and women,

Let us start a meaningful and consequential discussion on the plight of Nigerians and the trajectory of our beloved Nigeria, and not about the figures or the reporting organizations, so that together, we as Nigerians can work to change the trajectory of our beloved country.

If Nigeria Vision 20:2020 is our development agenda, then we – particularly ‘educated’, the graduates – need to embrace it now more than ever and ensure that all Nigerians are carried along. For our destiny is tied to one another. For instance bad roads does not discriminate between the person in a Mercedes Benz, a Kia or public transportation, poor healthcare services also does not discriminate – only few Nigerians can afford to fly overseas for good medical treatment and not all that fly out end at destinations with good services.

The Federal Government claims to be working to achieve Vision Nigeria Vision 20:2020 through two (2) broad objectives:

- A. Make efficient use of human and natural resources to achieve economic growth and;
- B. Translate the economic growth into equitable social development for all citizens.

Credit should be given where it is due for everything is not entirely doom and gloom in our beloved country. Your graduation is a significant ray today and for the future of Nigeria for it adds more great minds everywhere in Nigeria.

Where do we go as a people and a country from here?

If we are honest with ourselves, then we have to conclude that under the current political, governance and accountability environment in Nigeria, Vision 20:2020 is not achievable in the next 20 years. Simply put, we should not and cannot afford to keep on doing the same things, and then expect different results.

The most dangerous disposition we have, and have accepted is to approach Democracy in Nigeria as Government for the people and Government of our turn. Our great Chinua Achebe noted that “A functioning, robust democracy requires a healthy educated, participatory followership, and an educated morally grounded leadership”.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Graduates,

In his essay on Democracy as a Universal Value, Amartya Sen, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize for Economics argued that the rise of democracy is one of the most preeminent developments of the 20th Century as an acceptable form of governance. He further argued that when democracy is considered from an economic development context, that is including economic and social security. Political and civil rights give people the opportunity to draw the attention forcefully to general needs and to demand appropriate public action. He further noted that “the response of a government to the acute suffering of its people often depends on the pressure that is put on it. The exercise of political rights (such as voting, criticizing, protesting, and the like) can make a real difference to the political incentives that operate on a government.”

Sen added that democracies enrich the lives of its citizens in at least 3 ways:

1. Political freedom is part of human freedom and exercising the right of political participation adds value for human life and well-being;
2. Political participation has an instrumental value of expression and debate;

3. Democracy gives a people the avenue to learn from one another.

To which I add, as noted in my opening remarks at the 14th edition of the Anyiam-Osigwe foundation lecture series, held at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), on 28 November, no democracy endures or successfully reproduces itself if it does not speak to the developmental aspirations of the citizenry, both material and non-material. These aspirations encompass participation, inclusion, consultation, representation, accountability, rule of law as well as the all-round and incremental improvement of the welfare of citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Graduates,

We need to re-establish Democracy as Government of the people, by the people and for the people before we can seriously expect any meaningful change in the trajectory of our beloved country. Simply put, democracy brings about how we are governed. And how we are governed brings about development, in our own case, as aptly established in our Nigeria 20:2020.

Today, I have not dwelled on overtly comparing our beloved Nigeria with the South Koreas', Singapores' or Brazils' of the world because the situation we find ourselves in today is our problem.

We are the healthy educated, participatory followership and we have to take our democracy more seriously to bring about the Nigeria we want. We cannot afford to be indifferent to our plight and expect some divine intervention. As the saying goes, "God only helps those that help themselves."

I have also not dwelled on corruption, largely because corruption is the result of poor governance. To eliminate the scourge of corruption we must shed our indifference and de facto acceptance on how poorly Nigeria has been historically governed. Like

corruption, poor health services, the state of education, the security situation all over Nigeria, unemployment, uneven development and lack of sufficient electricity are all symptoms of poor governance.

But make no mistake, as the World Bank notes, ‘pervasive corruption is particularly damaging to development.’^{xi} But if we address how we are governed, we will also succeed in dealing corruption a fatal blow and create the space to meet our development aspirations.

As we earlier considered, “governance consists of the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them”^{xii}.

Nicolas Berggruen and Nathan Gardels in their book “intelligent Governance for the 21st Century” argued that “governance is about how the cultural habits, political institutions and economic systems of a society can be aligned to deliver the desired good life for its people.

They further qualified that “good governance is when these structures combine in a balance that produces effective and sustainable results in the common interest” of its people^{xiii}.

^{xi} World Bank, *Managing Development: The Governance Dimension*, Discussion Paper, Washington, DC. 29 August 1991, p.5-7.

^{xii} <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#home>.

^{xiii} N.Berggruen and N. Gardels, *Intelligent Governance for the 21st Century: A middle way between West and East*, Cambridge: Policy, 2013, p.10.

In its Discussion Paper on Managing Development: The Governance Dimension, the World Bank notes that “poor governance is readily recognizable. The key symptoms are, inter alia:

- Failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private, hence, a tendency to direct public resources for private gain;
- Failure to establish a predictable framework for law and government behavior conducive to development, or arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws;
- Others include priorities inconsistent with development, resulting in a misallocation of resources, rent seeking; narrowly-based or non-transparent decision making.

It concludes that “Citizens need to demand good governance. [and that] Their ability to do so is enhanced by literacy, education and employment opportunities. Governance need to prove responsive to those demands. Neither of these can be taken for granted^{xiv}.

There are additional factors which impede broad-based and sustainable development in Nigeria. In a recent review of Nasir El-Rufai’s book, *Accidental Civil Servant*, Dr. Obadiah Mailafia, former Deputy Governor of Central Bank drew attention to some key ones. According to him, “while growth averaged over 7 percent during 2003 – 2007, the indices of poverty and unemployment continued to worsen. The World Bank described the phenomenon as ‘jobless growth’. The civil service, in spite of the rhetoric of reform, remained a Byzantine behemoth characterized by graft, venality and sloth. The privatization programme was not the great success that El-Rufai would have us

^{xiv} World Bank, *Managing Development: The Governance Dimension*, Washington, DC.: 29 August 1991, p.5-7

believe. The steel sector, which is the foundation of national industrial-technological, is in complete shambles. Failure to resolve the problems of NITEL has meant that we have mobile telephone to the detriment of national backbone carrier and fixed-line national telecommunications network.”

Dr. Mailafia also observed that “overwhelming dependence on petroleum for the bulk of our revenues remained a stumbling block. Failure to provide electricity for the majority of our people is something for which we ought to feel real shame. By now, someone ought to have been put behind bars for the over \$16 billion that was invested in the power sector, with absolutely nothing to show for it. And the fact that we needed trillions of naira to rescue the financial sector in recent years meant that we did not know the full extent of what some people were really up to with regard to our much vaunted ‘banking consolidation’ exercise of 2004-2006.”

And according to another source, “Nigeria’s development efforts have over the years been characterized by lack of continuity, consistency and commitment (3Cs) to agreed policies, programmes and projects as well as an absence of a long-term perspective. The culminating effect has been growth and development of the Nigerian Economy without a concomitant improvement in the overall welfare of Nigerian citizens.”

“Nigeria’s inability to decisively tackle most development challenges such as poverty, unemployment, security, and deplorable state of infrastructure has been largely attributed to bad governance in all its ramifications. These include political governance, economic governance and effectiveness of institutions.^{xv}”

^{xv} National Planning Commission, *The Transformation Agenda: 2011 – 2015, Summary of Federal Government’s Key Priority Policies, Programmes and Projects*. P.6.<http://www.npc.gov.ng/vault/Transformation.pdf>

These words are from the Transformation Agenda: 2011 – 2015, Summary of Federal Government’s Key Priority Policies, Programmes and Projects. Hence, these challenges and plight of Nigeria is not lost on the Federal Government but as Thomas Jefferson said “Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves, therefore, are its only safe depositories. And to render them safe, their minds must be improved to a certain degree.”^{xvi}”

Dear graduates and graduates everywhere in Nigeria,

To paraphrase Charles Dickens, the situation in our beloved Nigeria indeed represents “the best of times, it is the worst of times, it is the age of wisdom, it is the age of foolishness, it is the epoch of belief, it is the epoch of incredulity, it is the season of Light, it is the season of Darkness, it is the spring of hope, it is the winter of despair”. It is indeed a Tale of Two Nigerias. Our challenge is to have a Tale of One Nigeria: united, peaceful, prosperous and democratic. And in order to harness our collective aspirations for ourselves and for generations yet to be born, we must shed our indifference and think of ourselves as Nigerians first and do what is best for Nigeria, for ultimately a well governed Nigeria is good for all Nigerians. One thing is very clear; a functioning, robust democracy requires a healthy educated, participatory followership, through the exercise of political and civil rights to draw the attention to general needs and to demand appropriate public action. Nigerians must demand and expect good governance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

VI. Concluding Remarks

Permit me to begin to conclude where I began. Education, more so, open education, is a recipe for national development and transformation. Therefore, relevance

^{xvi} National Planning Commission, *The Transformation Agenda 2011-2015, Summary of Federal Government’s Key Priority Policies, Programmes and Projects. P.10*

and crucial place of NOUN cannot be over-emphasized because a learning nation is a nation that can envision ennobling possibilities, develop and empower its teeming population for a wholesome multi-sectoral transformation.

The technologies and emergent platforms, Open University concept, Open Educational Resources (OERs) hold tremendous potentials to build capacity and enhance skills, improve knowledge acquisition, management, sharing, and deployment all of which ultimately develop deepened democracy and enthrone security and stability to the nation. In this regard, NOUN has a clear role to help steer the nation towards transformation, unity and democratic transformation.

The late Nelson Mandela once said “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. This statement underlines education’s catalytic role in societal transformation. Basic literacy, technical skills, socialization into a higher education ethos and production of knowledge are critical to society’s development. The Industrialization of Western Europe from the 18th century and the East Asian Tigers from the mid-20th century went hand-in-hand with rapid rises in literacy rates, formal skills acquisition and the expansion of higher education within their respective societies.

As Nigeria marches towards its vision of becoming one of the top 20 economies by 2020, education must be a core component of this agenda, to provide the needed manpower and intellectual stimulus to drive sustainable development. The increasing peculiarities of urbanization and advancements in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have made it imperative for societies to be more innovative in pedagogical approaches, delivering the best quality to the highest number. Specifically, Open and Distance Learning should be an important avenue for the attainment of higher education by a vast number of Nigerians and for the transformation of the country.

Since independence, Nigeria has made significant strides in education. The number of universities increased from one in 1960 to 74 public universities and 45 private universities presently. Similarly, the number of students enrolled in tertiary institutions has increased from under 15,000 in 1970 to approximately 1.2 million today.

Despite the improvements, severe challenges bedevil the higher education sector, with dire consequences for Nigeria's transformation ambitions. Having 10.5 million children out of school, Nigeria retains the unenviable top spot with the highest number of out of school children in the world, according to UNESCO (2012:3). At the level of higher education, the problems are equally profound. Without dwelling extensively on these well-known issues, I will list a few of them. They include inadequate and decaying infrastructure such as derelict lecture theatres, staff offices and student hostels which are sometimes up to 200% below needed capacity, under stocked libraries and laboratories with obsolete equipment; high student to staff ratio; a bottom-heavy academic staff distribution; unstable academic calendars due to strike action; problems of management and governance; funding shortfalls and the poor research element in higher institutions. These are all contributing to the declining quality of education.

Worryingly, regional disparities make these challenges particularly acute in various parts of the country. For instance, more than 90% of the 45 private universities in the country are located in southern states. However, the poor quality of public education is generally the same across the country. Unless urgent and massive remedial actions are taken, the Nigerian education sector is clearly not poised to provide the manpower and intellectual support for its ambitious social and economic Transformation Agenda.

Specifically, Open and Distance Learning faces many challenges including:

- Inadequate financing
- Graduation rates has to be increased

- Inadequate technology & digital divide
- Outreach & Public perception has to be improved
- More customized and modularized courses are needed
- Expansion beyond Nigerian borders
- Need for Public-Private Partnership (PPP)
- Collaboration with conventional Universities & ICT Associates
- Research

But there are also opportunities to enhance the goals, reach and means of NOUN. Without much ado, it would be useful for NOUN to critically analyze the challenges raised. Other areas would be to establish digital library, use more OERs and create courses on and avenues for vocational studies and continuing education. I would like to suggest that NOUN should explore the possibility of Free Open Learning of Mathematics, Computer studies including coding, and basic sciences. If we could partner with major ICT and mobile telephone companies and National Associations of Computer Science & ICT in a Public-Private-Partnership, NOUN may help many students across the country that have no trained teachers in these areas. Indeed, we could also use the same open learning approach to re-(train) many unemployed youths on skills directly useful in small and medium enterprises, trade and self-employment. In so doing, open learning could help reduce youth unemployment. Employing Open Learning to train our youths is a wise investment in the future of the nation.

Promoting science and technology at secondary levels using open learning technologies and resources serves a veritable mechanism to transform the country. In addition, we may use the same platform on basic civic education and democracy, which is

lacking in our curriculum today. Therefore, the Federal and State Ministry of Education and Information, in partnership with NOUN and within the framework of PPP, we can revolutionize the transformation of our great country.

Perhaps, it may also be useful to recommend a triennial review of the Open University systems with a view to strengthen delivery on the core values, mission and in the light of the rapid transformation in technology. Experts in open learning and ICT, students and general public could participate in open consultation for improving open education (university) system.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I cannot finish this lecture without addressing today's graduates of NOUN.

To the Graduates of NOUN

As a father and academician, I deem it appropriate to give some words of encouragement to you. Dear Graduates, NOUN has equipped you with the knowledge and sophistication to chart the progress of your future. The education you received will help you think well so that you can achieve better in life.

Please raise your head high for your achievement. Celebrate modestly for what your desire, discipline and dedication have offered you. Remember you are shaping not only your destiny, but those of the people who are looking up to you as role model. Keep the flag flying and keep on learning as a life-long process. Share the light and advantages of education to someone, all and sundry. Please remember to share and explain to others the simple phrase "learn to earn".

Your education at NOUN expects you to demand and contribute to good governance. Your education at NOUN expects and positions you to be a good citizen. Your education at NOUN expects and positions you to transform the Nigeria society for

good. Your education at NOUN has transformed you and endowed you with capacity to envision possibilities. Think Big. Think Global. Act Local.

NOUN has indeed trained you for the Dickensian best of times and not the worst of times.

NOUN has equipped you with the knowledge and sophistication to choose what Dickens called “age of wisdom over the age of foolishness; the season of Light over the season of Darkness”.

NOUN has inculcated in you the foresight to understand that injustice anywhere in Nigeria is injustice everywhere in Nigeria.

March forward with the belief and confidence that NOUN has prepared you to participate in the Nigeria we aspire for, a Nigeria where Nigerians think and act as one people able to lead a good and secured life full of choices, opportunities, the means to live a long and dignified life is possible. I feel sure that you share my unshakable conviction that the best of Nigeria is yet ahead.

As a father, I would like in closing to wish all the graduates good luck in all your future endeavors.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Graduates and their Parents, please accept my very best wishes to you all and your loved ones, for a Happy and Prosperous New Year 2014. May God bless you all and bless our beloved Nigeria.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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