



OLABISI ONABANJO UNIVERSITY,

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**“State Universities in Nigeria: Problems,
Prospects and Our Common Future”**

By

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“State Universities in Nigeria: Problems, Prospects and our Common Future”

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1. Preamble

I would like to acknowledge the great honour of being chosen to deliver the 27th convocation lecture of this University. I consider this to be a hybrid convocation lecture because it is not a Commencement Address in the real sense of it even though it is being delivered not as a stand-alone event as in many other universities, but a lecture that is strictly constrained by that circumstance. I hold the conviction that a Convocation Lecture, unlike a shorter Commencement Address, affords the speaker the opportunity to espouse the intrinsic academic characteristics of erudition and boldness in the perception, dissemination and preservation of the truth, academics being “custodians of the unfettered search for truth”. I have elected to speak on **“State Universities: Problems, Prospects and Our Common Future”**, and I intend to be truthful and firm in the content of the lecture. My goal is “to address higher education generally but zeroing in on state universities, in relation to their mandate, and hence, relevance to local, regional, global human progress and the overall development of our terrestrial ecosystem.

I must acknowledge the effort of the successive Vice Chancellors in providing needed leadership to drive the vision of the founders and proprietors of the University. After serving my 5-year tenure as Vice Chancellor at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, incidentally my alma mater, my 2-term 6 years tenure as the Secretary General of the Association of Vice Chancellors of ALL Nigerian Universities, as well as the Committee of Pro-Chancellors has given me a rather privileged vista of the tripartite differentiated universities in Nigeria, namely Federal, State and Private Universities. Such a vista was no mean asset, as it sent me back to the school of life-long learning, Nigeria and her universities being such very complex mix, but exciting and good study subjects. Established in July 1982 as Ogun State University, Olabisi Onabanjo University now has a student population of about 20,550, and has had a thoroughly checkered historical trajectory of development. It is definitely a very fascinating multi-campus institution. I am seizing on the great opportunity of this lecture to X-ray my honest appraisal of State Universities. Of course, whatever type or grade of university we are talking about, there are some common features or some concurrence on what a university should be. Hence, we shall commence our discuss in this general context of a university, and why nations and states need them.

But then, first things first. We are gathered here because some lucky Nigerians are celebrating their exit into the larger life, having been molded, baked in the oven of knowledge and transformed into privileged men and women. Let me congratulate the graduating class of 2016/2017. This is their moment, as they receive their degrees and awards at the ceremonies which commenced two days ago. I beseech them to go into the world and excel, even though these are no easy times in Nigeria. Year in year out, we churn out several graduates from our universities, just as the available jobs out there shrink by the day. They should therefore don their creative thinking hats if they must truly excel as earlier admonished. The emerging trends, though slowly, of graduates either singly or in teams, starting off their own innovative enterprises is the way forward, and I commend such personal development and fulfillment pathways to you. Examples of such successful brands that readily come to mind include; Jobberman, To-let, Move me.com, Garden Ventures, etc. I hope your own exploits will add to this list, and gradually bring hope and succour to assuage the hopelessness and consequent resort to crime and criminality which pervades the land by our youths.

2. Introduction

Nigerian higher education system, especially the university system and indeed the nation itself are at cross-roads. The problem of relevance of higher education to national development aspirations, the

delivery of good governance, and equitable distribution of the benefits of an ‘expanded economy’ (We claim to be the largest African economy before recession struck), persists. Our dilemma was compounded by falling crude oil prices (which almost nose-dived to \$25 per barrel until recently), on which Nigeria’s earnings largely depend, and the reticence/sluggishness in the diversification of the economy to embrace more productive sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture etc, which in any case is the inevitable way forward. This is not mentioning revelations of the inexplicable mindless plundering of the national wealth by a few elites who had access to power in the last few years, and the wars against insurgents, terrorists and rascals of all shades. Now the bubble is all bust, and the centre can no longer hold. **At times like this in other climes, universities, as centers of knowledge generation, propagation and appropriation, have risen to the rescue of their nations** (goggle examples in the university cities of Manchester, Liverpool, Coventry and Newcastle upon Tyne, to mention just a few). Even though the Nigerian university system suffered considerable structural, near irreversible damage in the period 1980-2000, the nation is learning to look up to her universities for succour in the management of its economy in what is now termed “post-oil era”. In the course of the lecture, we shall elaborate on these keywords/key points.

3. University Productivity: Attributes, Products and Distinguishing Features

What makes a university great? From the huge literature on higher education and development, it is now clear that universities, as engines of growth and development, have the obligation to impact their stakeholders, their immediate environment, their nations and regions, the global community and indeed humanity, and the terrestrial ecosystem (Faborode, 2017a). To provide a holistic schema for understanding the complex concept of the mandate of a university and what can emblemize it as a world-class institution, Salmi (2009) proposed a conceptual model of the alignment of ‘key factor/features’ to collate and summarise the characteristics of world-class universities into three broad but complimentary groups (as in Fig. 1 below), namely:

- A high concentration of talent (faculty and students);
- Abundant resources (to offer rich learning environment and to conduct advanced research);
- Favourable governance – that encourages strategic vision, innovation, flexibility, and not encumbered by bureaucracy in decision making and resource management.

All the three factors must interplay effectively, but it is governance that breaths essence into all the efforts of the proprietor and stakeholders, for without good governance, all their efforts at securing abundant resources and recruiting talents, will end in vain or at best under-achievement.

The groups of features or attributes are depicted by the three big circles in Figure 1, with their interplay yielding the three **products of the academia**, namely; **(i) manpower in terms of graduates, preferably highly skilled goal-getting graduates** (who work to accentuate the value of the other two products), **(ii) research outputs in terms of the Ps – publications, patents, prototypes, products and policies** and **(iii) impact on society and development in terms of knowledge/technology transfer**. Institutions regarded or classified as **World class universities** are those who produce a good blend and mix of all three, which combine to give them high visibility on account of their overall impact on their community, nation, region and indeed humanity. They are depicted by the dark core of Figure 1. With globalisation and the accentuating driving force of the internet, the impact of such institutions and hence their fame is felt globally, I mean all over the world, and their brand resonates across the globe.

3.1 Relevance or Fidelity to Mission

Let us pursue this contention further to deepen the discourse on the mandate of universities, by asking “**why do nations need universities**”? or in our specific case for this lecture, “**why does a state need universities**”? Universities have never been as crucial to nation states as they are today. There is

indeed now a global understanding that higher education is a key driver of growth and development, as it engenders the creation of knowledge and innovation which are vital in steering sustainable development, including reducing poverty, improving global health and enhancing national and global prosperity and competitiveness.

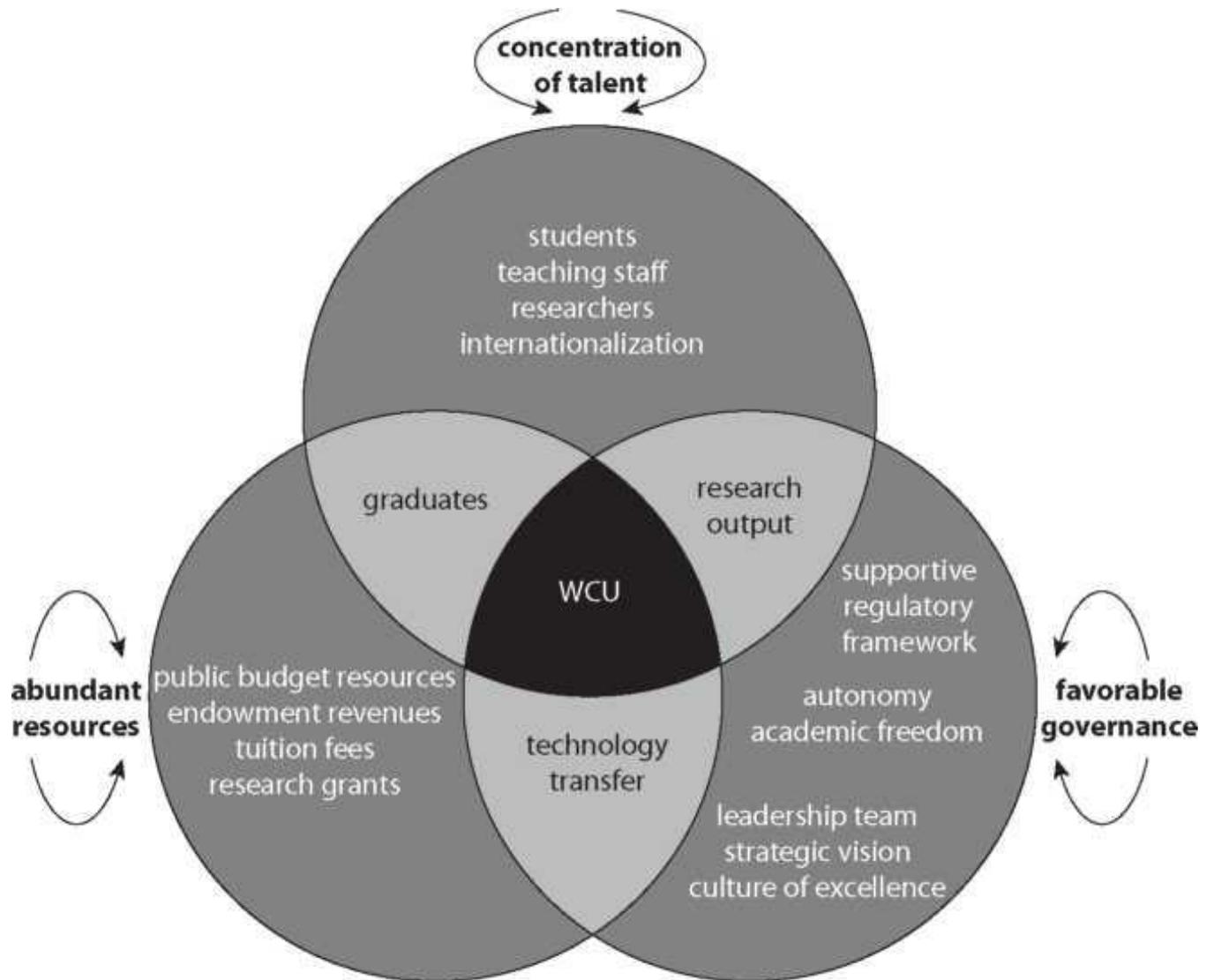


Fig. 1. Schematics of Factor Groups that Make an Impactful World-Class University through Alignment of Key Factors. Source: *Salmi, 2009, p32*

The grouse we have with Nigeria and indeed many African countries is that we do not seem to understand the purpose of universities, hence we do not allow those who do to spearhead our national development strategy, rather we continue to encumber, degrade and subjugate them. Thus, our universities, having been thoroughly subdued, now struggle to conjure relevance, yet the society wants them to compete with universities that have all the conducive ingredients to attain world-class status. Thank goodness that we now have clarion calls from leaders of such “born-again” global institutions, such as the World Bank and IMF, that have continued to emphasize, to African Leaders, including specifically, President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, the need to invest in human capital and knowledge for these are the drivers of modern economic development. Such investments are to be prioritized ahead of the usual vainglorious “white elephant” projects that dot the African landscape

as failed or abandoned, resulting in callous waste of our resources. This is one of the unacknowledged explanations for the failure of the Nigerian state in spite of divine endowments of huge human capital and abundant material and mineral resources.

To reinforce this view point and emphasize that the third function (knowledge/technology transfer) is the most important as it derives from the goodness of the other two (quality graduates and research outputs), Oyelaran-Oyeyinka (2014) put forward a very illuminating perspective on the attributes of top-class universities, using parameters that define the practical knowledge/technological relevance of universities to the mission of national and human development. Four attributes, namely; knowledge creation and knowledge dissemination, knowledge infrastructure, centre of inventive activities and facilitation of knowledge convergent systems were utilized. In spite of its enslaving potentials in a skewed world economic order, globalization, and the emergence of ICTs and other new technologies have helped in the coming together of several technological techniques to provide wider applications in industry and society. *The term "convergence technologies" (CT) has been used to describe this phenomenon defined as "the synergistic combination of nanotechnology, biotechnology, information/communication technology and cognitive sciences"* (Roco and Bainbridge, 2003; Lenoir, 2004), and GIS (Juma, 2011). For instance, if we take the biological sciences and biotechnologies knowledge base, there is a convergence of techniques and practice that encompass genomics, molecular biotechnologies, agricultural and industrial biotechnology. In the material sciences and technologies, we have advances in nanotechnology, smart materials, high-performance materials and advanced catalyst materials. The benefits attending to convergence include new organizational production structures and gains in communication. ICTs in particular substantially enable and amplify the breadth, reach and timely application of other technologies.

4. University-Industry-Government Partnership and the Innovation Value Chain

4.1 Universities as Centres of Research and Innovation

The key role of science, technology and innovation policy (STI) Policy is to fuel Industrial progress. Though innovation fuels manufacturing, innovation is not an activity for or by itself, hence we need to properly establish this link; a firm innovates to create a new product, process or gain a new market superior to what exists in quality and price. STI policy essentially links the laboratory, the design offices to the factory through the convergence of scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, humanists and consumers to create new markets locally to raise GDP. Thus, we need to build a professional alliance to turn the current crisis in Nigeria into an opportunity to revive industrial production. The way out for us is to gradually move our systems out of poverty (which cohabits with negative elements such as ethnicity, religion, federal character, disadvantaged states etc), towards wealth creation paradigms (preoccupied with entrepreneurship, innovation, productivity, competition, prosperity, etc) This is a task for Nigerian research/innovation/think-tank entities, led by the university system.

Analysis of the 2016 World Economic Forum [Global Competitiveness Index](#), showed that Africa was lagging behind in higher education and training, innovation and technological readiness, and attributed this to several challenges including occurrence of large population of inadequately educated workforce as well as insufficient capacity to innovate (WEF, 2016). Consequently, Zomahoun and Green (2016) have advocated for the development of an ecosystem of innovation in the mould of an African innovation pipeline or in other words an effective African innovation value chain, noting that "the African Union's Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 - STISA (NEPAD, 2016) aims to address Africa's transition to an innovation-led, knowledge economy", with focus on how African nations can create and sustain an ecosystem of innovation, particularly growing from higher education institutions.

In our work, exploring the concept of the innovation value chain, we are beaming a powerful searchlight on the specific role of universities. Our construct of the innovation value chain entails the transition from how **policy** (political vision, legislation/laws, research and innovation funding etc) and the entire **national/global environment** (fiscal, monetary and industrialization policies, globalization etc) shapes a country's **human capital, education and research management** to generate knowledge and innovation, to how **innovation uptake** is managed by the National System of Innovation (NSI) to instigate the **impact** that grows and builds a nation sustainably (Faborode, 2017b). This is schematically depicted as in Fig. 2 below.

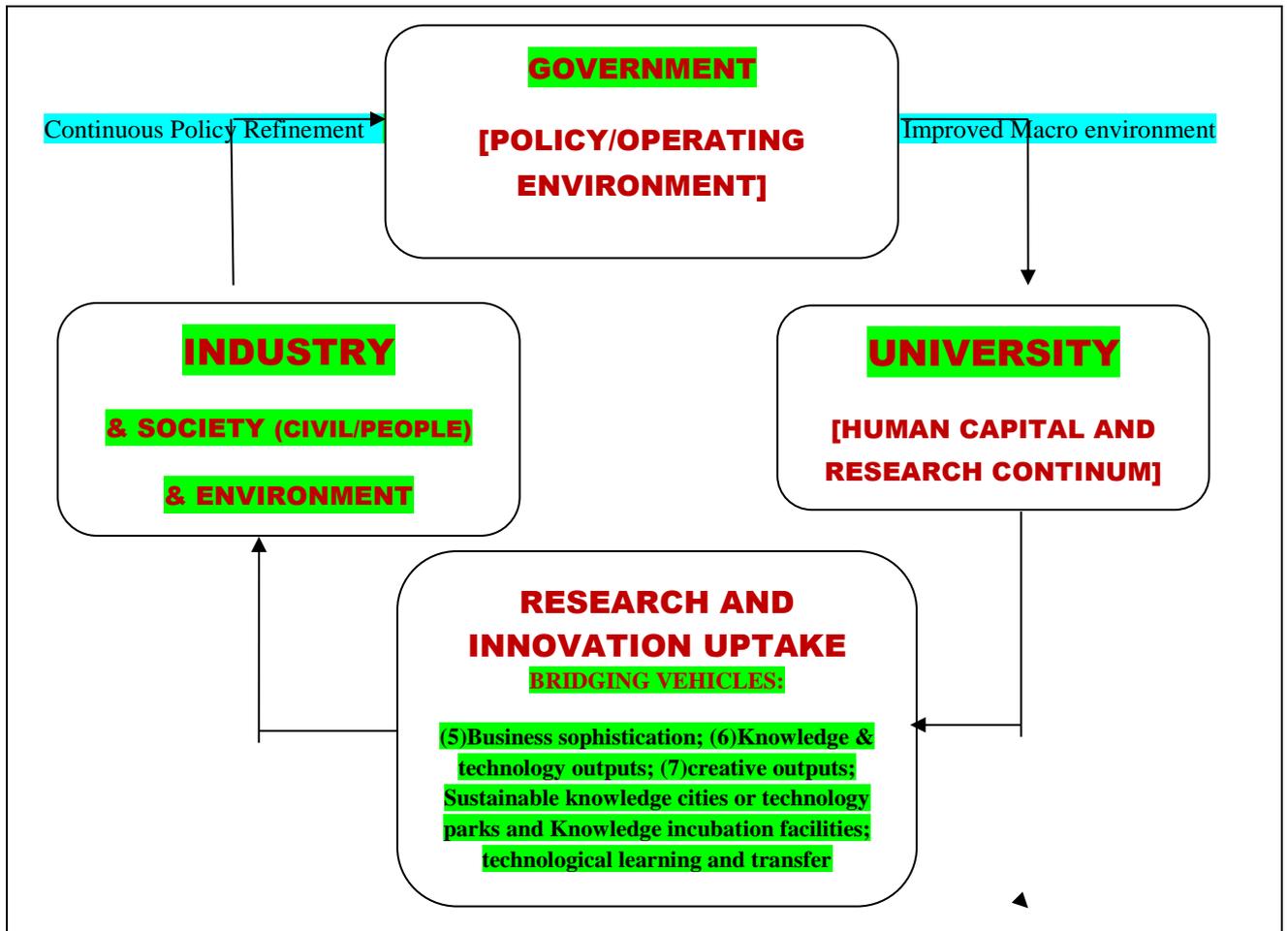


Fig 2: Schematics of the Innovation Value Chain Impacting Industry, Society, the Environment and Our Common Future. Source: Faborode (2017a&b)

4.2 Research and Innovation Uptake for Development

Under research uptake and innovation is the need for the concepts, structures and processes (business sophistication; knowledge & technology outputs; creative outputs; sustainable knowledge cities/technology parks and knowledge incubation facilities) that will instigate and facilitate technological learning and hence **technology transfer**. It is the ability of an entity to cause this to happen that leads to technological progress, as technological learning is at the core of technology transfer. The immediate and ultimate impact of fully traversing the innovation value chain include socio-economic development; economic growth; poverty reduction, nation building; employment generation, which are structurally better reinforced by **technology acquisition and transfer**.

Countries that score very high on the global innovation index, GII, are those who have accounted well for all the 84 parameters encapsulated in assessing their mastery of the complicated but reassuring trajectory of the innovation value chain (WIPO, 2016). There are no circumvents, but the trajectory can be modified, varied or shortened by new and emerging knowledge, such as through convergent technologies (Roco and Bainbridge, 2003; Lenoir, 2004; Juma, 2006 & 2011; Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2012; Faborode, 2017a).

From the foregoing, we vividly see the intrinsic place of lateral technology transfer in the innovation value chain. When construed to also include some element of knowledge transfer as a precursor to technology transfer, then we see that causing it to happen requires careful planning and orchestration from human capital development, research conception and prosecution, such that in the case of agriculture for example, farmers are integrated into the planning process right from the beginning (Faborode and Ajayi, 2015). The lesson in this for universities generally and universities of technology in particular is that the **research and innovation uptake function** which should be their hallmark and most distinguishing feature, **requires specialised/independent structures (or Special Purpose University-Industry Vehicles, SPUVs)**, and there are several models including university ventures, incubation centres, knowledge parks, innovation cities, etc that should not impair their basic research and development function. Hence, governance of such entities must be handled by experts, and separated from academic functions. Academics must face their teaching, research, graduate supervision and leave enterprise management to people with requisite professional expertise.

Let me briefly recall a PhD thesis I examined in the year 2015 at the Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi. It was on food packaging, a very good work with great promise of industrial uptake. I recommended that the University pursue this prospect so that the benefit of that research will not remain on the shelf but permeate into practice in the community and the nation at large. That is what universities are there for. Today, the supervisor of that thesis coordinates the export of yam from Nigeria, leaning on the outcome of that work.

4.3 Research Centres of Excellence

The emergence of the World Bank sponsored African Centres of Excellence, ACEs (see Table 1) and their performance has ignited hope that we really can have top rated research institutes that will be able to compete favourably with others in Africa and indeed the world. The ACEs are to be developed as top-rated research universities, in consonance with the Bank's notion of world class universities. To the World Bank, "All world-class universities are research universities, and they always play a critical role within the tertiary education system in training the professionals, scientists and researchers needed for the economic development and generating new knowledge in support of the national innovation system" (World Bank, 2002).

In a comprehensive report prepared by the NUC on the 10 Nigerian ACEs in November 2016, it was noted that they had enrolled a total of 2,413 PG students including 454 regional students, a clear departure from the past in spite of our subsisting national security challenges. They had generated US\$ 6,377,917.84 from industry collaborations, and have top-rated equipment for all Nigerian staff and PG students to have access, and the number of publications emanating from them had grown considerable. There is a new mid-term assessment report that we have circulated to all universities, so that their staff and students can avail themselves of the top-class facilities available for research, data handling and global networking at these centers. It is also note worthy that a good number of the centers have mounted capacity enhancement trainings and workshops to equip the next generation of scientists and academic leaders with skills that will enhance their productivity and fulfillment.

Table 1: Nigerian African Centers of Excellence (ACEs)

S/No	Lead Institution	Project Title	Scientific Discipline
1	Redeemers University, Ede	ACE for Genomics of Infectious Diseases	Health
2	African University of Science and Technology, Abuja	PAN African Materials Institute	STEM
3	Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	Centre for Agricultural Development and Sustainable Environment	Agriculture
4	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	ACE on Neglected Tropical Diseases and Forensic Biotechnology	Health
5	University of Jos, Jos	Phytomedicine Research and Development	Health
6	University of Benin, Benin City	ACE for Reproductive Health and Innovation	Health
7	University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt	ACE Centre for Oil Field Chemicals	STEM
8	Bayero University, Kano	Dryland Agriculture	Agriculture
9	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	ICT-Driven National Science Technology and Knowledge Park	STEM
10	Benue State University, Makurdi	Centre for Food Technology and Research	Agriculture

It is instructive as indicated in the Vice Chancellor’s 7th Convocation Address that Redeemer’s University Centre for the Genome of Infectious Diseases (ACEGID) came first of all the 19 ACEs in West and central Africa, and it is turning out to be a novel world class centre of excellence, having been instrumental in the diagnosis of the first case of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in Nigeria. ACEGID scientists also successfully sequenced the Ebola virus from Sierra Leone, and have indeed developed a rapid response diagnostics tool that could detect Ebola virus in less than 10 minutes. Publications from their work are finding space in top impact journals such as *Science*, *Nature*, *New England Journal of Medicine* and *Cell*. They have so far assisted the University to secure global research partnership and funding in excess of three (3) million Dollars, that may soon position it as an international hub of academic and research excellence in microbial infections and human genomics. The ACE centre in Benue State University is for food technology and research, and we see it as a potential ally of Raw Materials RMRDC, working with the Federal University of Agriculture also in Makurdi, to take advantage of the convergent knowledge and practices in genomics, molecular biotechnologies, agricultural and industrial biotechnology, as well as, material science and technology advances in nanotechnology, smart materials, high-performance materials and advanced catalyst materials, etc to chart new frontiers in food science and technology. Benue State being the conceptual food basket of the nation, can have a strategic partnership with the Federal Government/RMRDC and its three universities can be positioned as the agriculture and food processing and technology centre of Nigeria.

4.4 Other University Productivity Enhancing Imperatives

- a. **Capacity building, especially focusing on the next generation of research, innovation and technology transfer leaders**, scientists, innovators, etc. A number of such programmes are emerging; the next Einstein forum, innovative graduate level teaching and research chairs, TETFund development fellowships. Universities must take advantage of these.
- b. **Encouraging international, regional and industrial research partnerships**, and engaging with academics, researchers and professionals in the Diaspora. There must be a conscious effort to exploit Diaspora potentials, as China, India and Japan have demonstrated.
- c. **Prioritising** the university's third function of visible **Civic Engagement**, such that all staff are aligned to the vision of the university in this regard, in addition to the setting up of special structures to facilitate accomplishing the set goals. Staff assessment must also emphasise and reward exemplary accomplishments.
- d. **Professionalizing the Registry/University Administration**. Professionalizing the registry will entail smarter ways of administering research, advancement, teaching excellence etc in our universities. There have been some misgivings about the capacity of the current crop of administrators to function as research administrators given their penchant for corrupting due processes, subjective bureaucracy and indolent work ethics. The modern trend is to recruit professional research administrators as distinct from traditional registry staff. However, it is our view here that in order to avoid unnecessary overloading of the support staff in the universities, it should be possible to identify and train some of the existing staff in research management different from general administration. Such individuals can then be posted to manage research units in the universities. It is indeed time that Administrative Officers in our universities and other HEIs are professionalized in the various core functions of the university such as Human Resources Management, Academic Affairs, Students Services Management, Corporate Services, Council Secretariat and Research Management. The Association of Commonwealth Universities has taken a lead in building the capacities of university administrators along these lines. The approach of the ACU training is to restore the confidence of the registry staff in perceiving themselves as being very capable to contribute to the advancement of the university. In other words, to see themselves as being critical to the progress of the university in all its functions – effective teaching and learning, research and civic responsibility.

4.5 Key Outcomes of the 2016 CVC Higher Education Summit

In November 2016, the Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities organized a higher education summit as a follow up to the African continental summit held in Dakar, Senegal in 2015, to produce a Charter and detailed action plan for revitalizing the Nigerian higher education system. The following were set as priority areas for action:

- a. **Promotion of diversification and differentiation in the system** by providing proper conceptual administrative guidelines, and a harmonized legal framework for HEIs and the sector to engender strict compliance with extant statutes to prevent mission creep and distortion of national development plans
- b. **Revision of laws and statutes of HEIs and the Nigerian education system** in relation to the regulatory and quality assurance powers of NUC, NBTE and NCCE, and the operational powers of JAMB and TETFund, which in particular, would enable all HEIs have unfettered access to its funding intervention in favour of overall quality education
- c. **Leveraging ICT as an enabler of the relevance of HEIs and driver of national transformation and sustainable development**.

- d. **The nurture and sustenance of Centers of Excellence** as game changers and anchors/catalysts of national innovation value chain through their unique commitment to research and innovation excellence and promotion of global scholarship.
- e. **Promotion of HEI's partnership and synergy with industry, civil society and the natural environment** for a better world, through commitment to the SDGs as a core mission, and enabler of a new paradigm of entrepreneurial empowerment of their products for better uptake and transfer of the output of their research.
- f. **Widening access to HEIs and strengthening institutional/programme accreditation and quality assurance**/quality control mechanisms and procedures in order to restore confidence and acceptability to the output/products (graduates, research output and technology transfer/civic engagement) of Nigerian universities and enhance their local and global relevance and competitiveness, and
- g. **Lastly, ensuring sustainable funding of education, especially higher education**, through determined increased investment by proprietors at all levels, enhancing the capacity of institutions at internal fund generation and acceptance of the principle of shared-burden of funding by all stakeholders.

5. State Universities and their Peculiarities

5.1 Benchmarking Nigeria State Universities

How are state universities faring in terms of our benchmarking attributes, namely; Research Savviness, Overall Raking/Visibility, Level of Funding and of Knowledge Resources. Of the current total of 161 universities in Nigeria, 44 are State universities, with Ogun State having the highest number of 3 along with Ondo, as well as the highest concentration of private universities. In terms of governance vis-à-vis operational autonomy and adequacy of funding, state universities are the most problematic in the Nigerian University System, and I say this with all sense of responsibility and concern. When looked at critically, some state universities present a theater of the absurd. In the particular case of Plateau State University (PLASU), which took off in 2007, though established by an Act of the state Assembly in 2005, it could not graduate any student till March 2017. As at January 2016 when an investigation panel was instituted by the NUC on the prompting of the AVCNU, not a single course had been accredited, and a self-assessment by the university faculty returned a generous estimate score of 45%. There was no single paved or tarred road on the whole campus. There was no difference between the State House and the Governing organs of the University, with critical Council meetings, dealing with university finances, held at the Government House. But for a change in the governance of the State at the last elections, the University would have had her license withdrawn and gone down under. Thanks to the current Administration in the State, which implemented the recommendations of the investigation panel and revamped all the statutory governance bodies, leading to the appointment of Professor Attahiru Jega as the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the new Governing Council.

The above case would appear to be a grim extreme of what a university should not be, but I can say that almost every state university has one such aberration or the other – inadequate funding, weak and compromised governance structures, over bloated staffing, poor level of public utilities and knowledge infrastructure – classrooms, lecture theaters, laboratories, workshops, studios, ICT facilities, etc. Education being on the concurrent list is a problem; used to advantage in gaining access to TETFund resources, and discarded when confronted with implementation of university advancement matters and staff welfare.

I cannot hide my fascination for the development of the African Centers of Excellence, ACEs, except that it has to take the World Bank, again, to show us how important, creative, strategic and transformational such high-level research contraptions can be. The African attempt at establishing the Pan African University, PAU, is yet to be fully applaudable. PAU is still struggling, conceptually, physically, financially, infra-structurally, and even in advocacy and visibility. PAU needs our prayers, if it's not to end up as another African pipe dream. However, for this lecture, my focus, and hence concern, is on the number of RCE or ACEs in any state university. Out of Nigeria's 10 ACEs, there is only one in a state university, namely, that specializing in food processing at the Benue State University, Makurdi, as against 2 in private and 7 in federal universities (see Table 1). This may be an indication of how seriously state universities take the research function, and this very disappointing. There is good news though; the third round of the World Bank bidding for ACEs, by default of North African universities, is returning to West and Central Africa. We are determined to secure more slots for Nigerian universities, hence this is an opportunity for state universities, and this University (OOU) in particular, to get viable and impactful proposals ready. You will have no further excuses. It will certainly be my joy to hear the good news of your success.

Let us also consider how state universities have fared in the ranking of universities by global agencies. First, let me clarify that NUC has no current ranking for universities. What it did was a long time ago in 2002/2003. The newly commissioned Strategic Advisory Committee headed by Prof Okebukola, of which I am a member, has only just been saddled with the task of producing a rational ranking of Nigerian Universities, and the first trial run may not be unveiled till late March 2018. Hence, any claim to NUC ranked order of universities is false, 419 and should be ignored. Now the only global rankings in which Nigerian institutions feature are the Webometric (www.webometrics.info) and 4icu or uniRank(www.4icu.org) rankings. We are yet to feature in the Times Higher Education (THE, www.timeshighereducation.com), QS (www.topuniversities.com), Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU, www.shanghairanking.com) and such other more serious rankings. Table 2 summarizes the latest webometric and 4icu rankings, showing that no state university was in the Top-10 bracket in both systems where federal universities dominate and private universities feature.

Recall that the first set of private universities came almost 10 years after States had started establishing universities. Though we still have a number of unimpressive private universities, with poor funding and governance challenges, there are at least over a dozen of them that are making giant strides and doing much better than state universities. I will give just only one additional example. Whereas Ekiti State University, after the establishment of 3 separate universities and their merging into a single one, can be said to have been in existence since 1982 (listed as the 6th State University after OOU by the NUC), with a college of medicine, is yet to establish a teaching hospital for training her medical doctors. Afe Babalola University (ABUAD) established 9 years ago in 2009 now has a teaching hospital, which may well be the best equipped modern teaching hospital in Nigeria. The hospital in indeed a classical lesson in how partnerships and collaboration can be leveraged to source for funds and resources for a university's advancement. ABUAD has equally accessed substantial funding from the African Development Bank (AfDB) to establish an industrial park as a special purpose vehicle for knowledge transfer and developmental relevance. The difference between EKSU and ABUAD in their growth trajectory is in the vision, the energy, the deep understanding of what a university should be and can do, how to utilize talents and knowledge, and how to manage scarce resources to become wealthy without being rich a priori. There are several lessons for us all, but especially for state universities in how some private universities, such ABUAD, Covenant, Landmark, Babcock and AUN, Yola, to mention a few are upcoming. Today, we revere institutions like Harvard, MIT, Princeton, Yale, etc not immediately realizing that they are private entities, but

almost seen as American ‘federal universities’, because they have almost been so accepted, with access to competitive funds and resources from federal funding agencies. But here, we continue to misunderstand the mission of our universities, and that all universities in Nigeria belong to Nigeria and should be part of our national education-for-development strategy and hence have unfettered access to national competitive funds. There are other observations that can be made from the rankings in Table 2; the subsisting controversy on the inconsistency of different rankings and their comparability. The poor position of Nigerian universities in the African and global league tables, in contrast to the dominance of South African and Egyptian institutions. I simply do not want to over flog a bleeding horse within the limited time for this lecture.

Table 2: Ranking of Nigerian Universities

Webometric Ranking					4icu Ranking, 2018
January 2018					
Nigeria	University	Africa	World	July 2017	
1	University of Ibadan	10	1099	1	3
2	Covenant University	34	2140	2	8
3	Obafemi Awolowo University	43	2267	4	5
4	University of Nigeria Nsukka	51	2463	3	4
5	University of Lagos	64	2654	6	1
6	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	68	2783	7	3
7	Federal Univ of Technology, Minna	70	2821	5	7
8	University of Ilorin	83	3118	9	5
9	Federal Univ of Technology, Akure	85	3176	10	9
10	University of Benin	109	3512	-	-
14	Ladoke Akintola University of Tech	119	3680	14	25
16	Lagos State University, Ojoo	124	3807	17	15
21	Afe Babalola University	151	4329	20	-
23	Olabisi Onabanjo University	171	4867	-	31

5.2 Implications and the Evolving Mandate and Mission for Olabisi Onabanjo University

The foregoing analysis on state universities should not be swept aside by state governance entities. Hence, state university leaders must bring them to the consciousness of their principals, vis-à-vis the need to re-strategize to face the future, through strategic re-thinking, and taking cognizance of the following additional imperatives:

- The need for serious commitment to coordinated economic planning and human capital development to mitigate serious deficits in the number of scientists, engineers, high-level expertise, and leadership in Nigeria. This is a serious “Next Generation Challenge” to which our universities must respond. For example, the Nigerian National Science Technology and Innovation (STI) plan (2012) projects to produce 2000 PhDs annually from 2013, yet no serious synergy exists between the Ministries of Science and Technology, Education and Communications Technology, not to talk of collaboration of the other key sectoral Ministries, such as Agriculture, Manufacturing, Transport etc.
- The need to bridge the innovation skills gap, by exploiting advances in ICT, business intelligence and analytics, leadership/planning, other generic skills, etc. We need to intensify leveraging on ICT for total governance: (i) embrace integrated ICT solution for all university functions and (ii) mainstream it into governance structures. The first part, I consider one of my major achievements for OAU, through TTC Technologies – a US based Nigerian Diaspora Company, while the mainstreaming aspect is pending, but is inevitable.

- Harnessing the youth bulge and the inherent demographic dividend (African Union, 2012) to mitigate dangerously growing youth unemployment and hopelessness, must be pursued vigorously, to avert presently unfolding and looming danger to the polity.
- Unpretentious national commitment to a knowledge economy where STI drives planning and implementation, and where expertise and knowledge systems - Universities, Research and Innovation Institutes are accorded necessary priority, recognition and practical engagement.
- The need for a renewed strong commitment to research: in the entire system, but particularly in science and technology. OOU is well placed to partner with any of the ACEs in Africa. There is one down the road at FUNAAB. Perhaps Ogun State should rather create high-level, high quality Centers of Excellence to address special problems for the state, the nation and humanity, than new/more general-purpose Universities.
- The need to harness our natural resources for sustainable development, through good governance and transparency in the extractive industry sector, as well as integrated development of the industrial sector, through strategic growth of micro, medium and small-scale enterprises and deliberate promotion of all-embracing knowledge-industry/civil society/environment-government partnership. Ogun is well placed to exploit the advantages of closeness to Lagos, and it gladdens my heart that this has started, but should be intensified.
- Lastly, the requirements to make the OOU strategic vision come true? - commitment (by the Governing Council, the University leadership and Community, and indeed by the State Government), abundant funding, talents (staff and students), and good governance.

The good news for OOU is that, the bad times are gone and a better OOU has been re-engineered, thanks to the immediate past Vice Chancellor, Professor Jimmy Adesanya. I was here as a witness at the first convocation of his tenure where over 40,000 backlogs of graduates were liberated, and since then there has been tremendous re-positioning and infrastructural development. You all deserve our applause, and I do want to thank the State Governor for allowing this transformation during his tenure. However, from the ranking tables, no matter whether you agree with them or not, they are there to prick your conscience, there is still a long way to go for OOU (171 in Africa, 4867 in the world). Under the new Vice Chancellor, Professor Ganiyu Olatunde, OOU must be repositioned and steadied on the path of upward ascent, with the support and buy-in of all stakeholders. The starting point is a re-jigged strategic plan that will plot your securing a Center of Excellence as earlier admonished. LAUTECH, Ogbomoso is taking the same steps with great hope, and I chaired their Council participatory retreat a few days ago. There is a place up there at the top of the ladder for OOU, please go for it.

6. What can Nigeria Contribute to Global Science?

The dazzling pace of changes occasioned by the digital transformations of the 4th industrial revolution makes it fascinating but impossible to anticipate what lies ahead. We are still coping with the disruptions of the 4th industrial/Nano-digital revolution of the internet of things and convergent technologies, and we do not yet completely know where artificial intelligence is taking us, with the emergence of thinking and feeling robots. We can only infer that our dynamic and ever changing or transforming world will continue to evolve with the exploits of knowledge, science, technology and innovation.

For us in Africa, it is the African knowledge system, our universities and allied institutions, that can come to the rescue of the continent. **Now, I talk of the Nigerian Nollywood analogy which gives us hope that we can do it. By putting African content unto the global movie/motion picture**

industry domain, the narratives have since changed, as more and more people now watch African Magic movies and this is cascading to the African music and fashion industries. Yet, we have not recognised the place of the quiet artistic knowledge revolutions in the Drama Schools of Obafemi Awolowo University, Universities of Ibadan and Port Harcourt, where the late Olarotimi, Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan and late Dapo Adelugba to mention a few, inspired a new generation of actors, actresses, producers, make-up artists and other industry professionals. *African science and innovation must emulate these developments (the developments in the Nollywood and African music and fashion industries) and situate African scientific and technological innovation in the locus of local and global transformation.* Mr Pro-Chancellor and Vice Chancellor, this is the thesis of this convocation lecture, and I commend it to our graduating class of 2016/2017. For them to go forth and excel, they must be conscious of what the Nollywood experience teaches us – innovation, perseverance, industry and fortitude to change the world around us, for our common inheritance.

7. Summary

We would like to conclude this lecture as follows, that:

- 1 Universities have never been as crucial to nation states as they are today if such nations are to be competitive in the global economy. They need their university sectors to produce and apply knowledge, and to produce knowledgeable and well-skilled workers across the skills spectrum. Universities must therefore be well funded and accorded needed recognition, and in return they must not be found wanting in responding to this crucial need that will determine their relevance and social value.
- 2 In this regard, universities generally should have the research uptake and innovation function as their hallmark and most distinguishing feature, requiring specialised/independent structures and expertise or special purpose innovation vehicles (SPIVs) that should not impair their basic academic, research and civic engagement functions.
- 3 African science and innovation must boldly emulate the developments in the ‘Nollywood’ and African music and fashion Industries, and situate African scientific and technological innovation in the locus of local and global transformations.
- 4 Globalization, in spite of its enslaving potentialities to weak nations in a skewed world order, and the emergence of convergent technologies (nanotechnology, biotechnology and genomics, cognitive science and ICTs) have provided a platform for less developed nations, through their higher education and research institutions, to be active players in the exploitation of science, technology and innovation (STI) for their development, and they must help their nations to take adequate advantage of this opportunity.
- 5 Like every other university, Olabisi Onabanjo University is entitled to aspire to be a global top-class university, once it can identify its niche and match such determination with the necessity of abundant resources, concentration of diverse global talents (staff, students and other knowledge workers) and more importantly, good governance, both internal and external.

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