

SIXTY YEARS PLUS OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: IS PARADISE LOST FOR EVER?

A VALEDICTORY LECTURE

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Let me begin by thanking the organisers of this event, especially my Head of Department, Dr. Ayo Arije and all my colleagues in the Department of Medicine for giving me a unique opportunity to deliver my valedictory address on the occasion of my retirement from the University after working for 35 years. Valedictory addresses in my opinion are meant to review the past, point out mistakes that might have been made, provide advice to colleagues who are still in the employ of the University, and encourage them to keep the flag flying. In my own case, the send-off ceremonies are in two parts. Yesterday, we had a stimulating scientific meeting and I thank all those who were able to join us at that meeting. I now welcome all of you to the final part of the send-off programme, my valedictory lecture.

THE PAST AS A STUDENT

I came in contact with the University of Ibadan as a student in 1963 and, apart from the relatively brief period I spent in England for my postgraduate studies (February 1970 – August 1971; January 1973 – December 1973), I have spent all my working life in this University (September 1974 – September 2009) and its Teaching Hospital (Resident doctor - August 1968 to August 1974 and Consultant - September 1974 to September 2009). I have therefore been associated with this University in one way or the other for more than 40 years. The University has more-or less become my life.

University education began in 1948 in Nigeria with the establishment of this University as a College of the University of London and within a short time the new institution gained world-wide recognition as a great citadel of learning with high academic standards. The young University gained its autonomy on the fifteenth anniversary of its foundation, becoming the University of Ibadan by an act of Parliament which was passed in December 1962. According to Professor Kenneth Dike, the Vice-Chancellor at the time, *'On November 18 1963 (Foundation Day) the first Chancellor was installed and the University of Ibadan was born amidst ceremonies of great splendour'*.

I became part of the University as a student in October 1963 and, as I wrote earlier, Professor Kenneth

Onwuka Dike had by this time become the first Vice-Chancellor of an autonomous University of Ibadan. I will not dwell too much about all my experiences as a student of the University in this lecture. However I shall highlight from my own perspective what it meant to be a student of the then relatively young institution. I was notified of my admission by post about June 1963. The letter not only contained my letter of admission together with information about the University but also its location within the city of Ibadan and how to find my way to the campus. I was also informed beforehand that I would be staying in Independence Hall and I was given other instructions on what to do on arrival at the campus. With all these, there was no doubt in my mind at the time that I was coming to an institution where things were done in an orderly fashion.

Throughout my stay in the institution, we were well-looked after in a nice, serene learning environment. University sessions commenced regularly in October and ended in June after the 'almighty' June examinations which were always held in the Trenchard Hall. Even those of us in the Clinical Students' Hostel, as the Alexander Brown Hall was known at the time, were bused to the Trenchard Hall whenever we were to take our University examinations.

The sessions at the time were regular, there were no strikes, no cult activities and the infrastructural facilities were excellent. I could recall only once when there was a blackout and it lasted less than a minute. We were 80 in my class, a number considered too large at the time. Of these, 4 were foreigners, and they came from the United States of America, West Indies, India and Ghana. Among the teaching staff were many foreigners, largely from the United Kingdom, United States of America, Germany and India. All the students were comfortably accommodated on the campus.

We paid all our fees which included tuition fees (161 pound, 10 shillings and 6 pence) at the beginning of the session and, although majority of us came from poor homes, virtually all of us were on scholarships. We were fed by the University throughout our stay since our school fees included the cost of feeding.

The vacation period was three months, between July and September of each year, except for clinical students who had only one month's vacation around the Christmas season. The extra time they spent on campus was reflected in the school fees they paid annually (261pounds, 10shillings and 6pence). All clinical students were given their 3-year schedule of clinical postings as soon as they passed the part 1 MB, BS examination. This programme was followed religiously throughout the 3years of clinical training without any alteration.

Although we were admitted into the MB, BS programme after passing our advanced level/University preliminary examination subjects with good grades in Physics, Chemistry and Zoology, we were made to spend an additional six months repeating Organic Chemistry, probably to help us with the Biochemistry course. We had to pass this course in Organic Chemistry to progress in our studies although none of us had any difficulty with the subject. Afterall, it was a repetition of what we had done at the advanced level and it was considerably less rigorous compared with what the regular chemistry students had to go through to earn their degree. Their programme was largely based on regular practical sessions most of which lasted 8-12hours.

We too had no problem with our practical lessons in Physiology, Biochemistry and other laboratory subjects throughout our training in the medical school. Six of us were allocated to a body for dissection in the Department of Anatomy and each student had a microscope to himself to work with during Histology and Pathology practicals.

In conclusion, we had a standard training to become doctors at the University of Ibadan and this training in my view was comparable to that obtainable at the world's top Universities of the time. To some who might think that we were a pampered group, I would disagree and say that we attended a normal, standard University.

The Deterioration

However, by the time I emerged as the Vice-Chancellor of the same University in September 2000, the usual maladies of Universities not only in Nigeria but also in most of the West African countries were obvious. These were:

- Overpopulation and student admissions far in excess of the carrying capacity of the University. These led to congested classrooms and halls of residence;
- Infiltration of the halls and classrooms by criminals and prostitutes many of whom were non-

students. In fact the University could no longer identify its own students as there were many fake students with fake matriculation numbers;

- Radical students unionism, frequent demonstrations by various groups (workers' unions and students) many of which were violent and a nuisance to those who had business within the University;
- Decayed and dilapidated halls of residence and classrooms;
- Dysfunctional infrastructure. Water was scarce and there were prolonged periods of water outages. The University usually resorted to supply of water by tankers during such outages, a very inefficient way of supplying water to large halls housing several young people. The toilets were consequently bad, overflowing with fecal matter. Cooking of meals was done in available spaces including corridors while traders, butchers, pepper and tomato grinders, shoemakers and other artisans were freely operating within the halls of residence creating environmental and security problems for the halls. Electricity supply was very poor and communication facilities virtually non-existent. No wonder the students were restless and had become radicalised; their living conditions were simply bad.
- Student gangs often referred to as cult groups had proliferated and rivalries between them provoked violent reactions including murder. Security personnel were caught in-between these cult groups and the Chief Security Officer of the University had just been assassinated in his house before I resumed duty as Vice-Chancellor.

Simply put, Nigerian Universities had deteriorated considerably by September 2000 when I became the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan. But before I examine the causes of this deterioration, please grant me the indulgence to relate to you what happened to me before and after I was appointed a Lecturer/Consultant of this University in September 1974.

The past as a lecturer

I would not have specialised in internal medicine and cardiology, nor reached the stage of being appointed a lecturer but for Professor O.O.Akinkugbe whose interest in me as a young doctor enabled me to travel to the United Kingdom (UK) twice. The first time was to obtain the MRCP, the specialist qualification required for physicians in the United Kingdom and the second time to train as a heart specialist (i.e. a cardiologist) at King's College Hospital, London under the tutelage of Dr. Samuel Oram. Professor Akinkugbe has always had a nice habit of being a wonderful motivator.

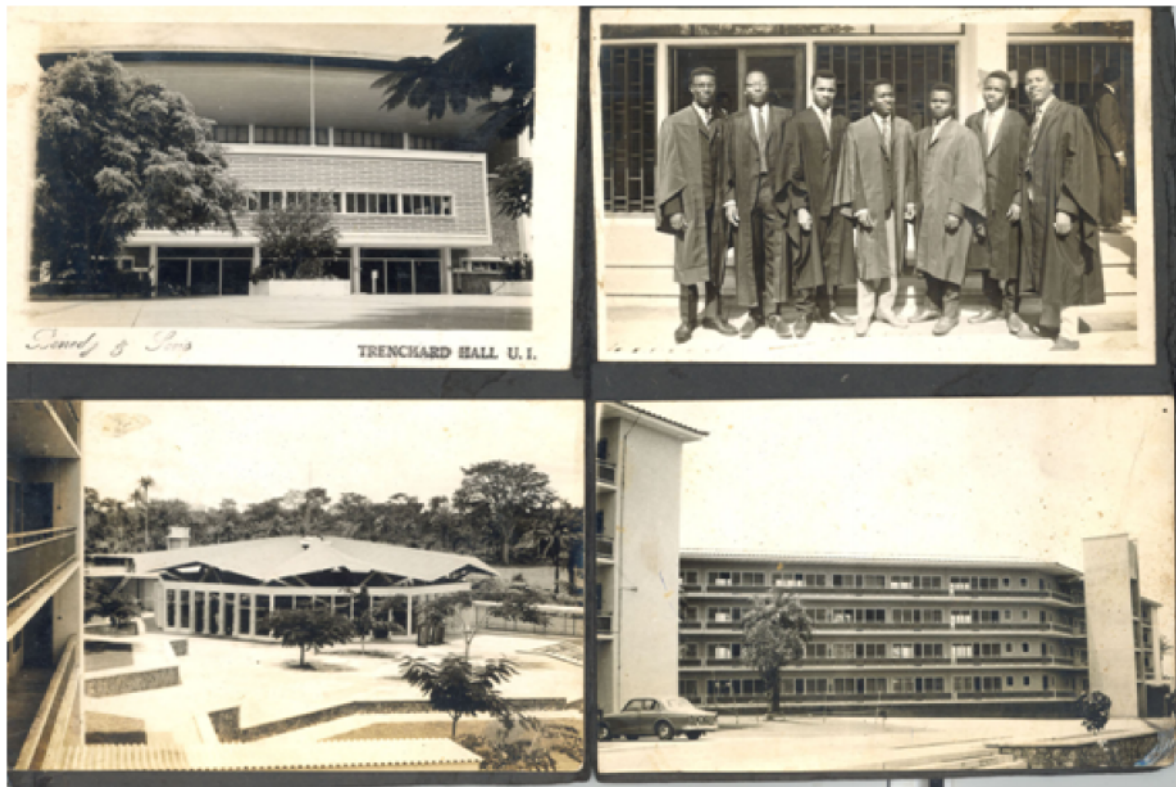


Fig.1: The days of old. (Clockwise) Trenchard Hall; myself (second from the right) and my secondary school mates during our matriculation in October 1963; Independence Hall in 1963; Cafeteria of Independence Hall in 1963

I became a University Lecturer in September 1974 at a time when there was a deep division in my Department because of the Deanship election which had just been held in the then Faculty of Medicine. Two of the contestants were from my Department and obviously staff loyalties to the two contestants caused the split. It was a difficult and harrowing time for junior doctors like me and I suffered a lot because of the suspicion and antagonism which arose as a result of the split. But for the then Head of my Department, Professor B.O. Osuntokun (Oga Ben) and the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the time, Professor O.O.Akinkugbe I would have abandoned academia altogether for a career in the private sector.

After I was appointed as Lecturer/Consultant, the University gave me a car loan within three days of submitting my application. Not only that, I was immediately allocated a house off-campus to live in. The salary and other conditions of service were so good that no one contemplated emigrating to the private sector or overseas. There was no need to do so as the conditions of service were excellent, better than what obtained in the civil service. Let me quote from an article written by Professor John Ferguson who I presume was the first Chairman of the Ibadan branch of the Association of University Teachers (A.U.T.), the precursor of ASUU, in 1964. He said:

“Thirdly, we have properly been concerned, among other things, with the conditions of service of members of staff. We undertook a careful investigation comparing salaries with university salaries elsewhere, with other salaries in Nigeria, and with the cost of living, and laid this before the Vice-Chancellors’ Committee. Our own Treasurer, Professor Bassir, is on a sub-committee advisory to the Vice-Chancellors on the matter of salaries. We have stood against the University offering differential salary scales to Nigerians and expatriates. We have been disturbed at certain anomalies in the contracts of married women on the staff, and are trying to secure identical contracts with certain reservations ensuring that married women do not get double benefits, through their husbands’ contracts and their own. We have raised, at the request of members, with the University authorities, particular cases where it is claimed that the member has not received his contractual rights. We are ready to pursue any real case of breach of contract, but the University is a good employer, and no clear case has been brought to our notice in the past year, and we naturally hope that none will arise. Alongside all this, we have taken a constructive concern over the general amenities of communal life at the University. As a result of a “private member’s motion” we issued a questionnaire, with the full co-operation of the Headmistress, on the subject of the Staff School; the results were laid before the Headmistress and Chairman of the Governors, and were helpful and constructive. The initiative of another member led to some useful proposals to develop a kind of limited local government on the University site. These are exciting suggestions; they would help in areas



(i)



(ii)



(iii)



(iv)



(v)



(vi)

which existing committees do not have time to cope with, they would involve housewives and others who are not already overburdened with committee work, and they would offer a real chance for co-operation between Senior Staff, Junior Staff and students.”

You would notice from this write-up that the academic staff union was naturally concerned with staff welfare at the time but negotiations concerning conditions of service were always with the University authorities and the Council of the University since Council was the employer, not the Federal Government. Sala-

ries were determined by the University, not the government. The University had its own retirement scheme at the time, Federated Superannuation System for Universities (the FSSU) which was very good and which was based in the United Kingdom. Many members of staff who subscribed to this scheme were paid



(vii)

Fig.2 (i-vii): The deterioration of the same facilities that has taken place by the year 2000. The toilets and bathrooms had by this time become unusable.

promptly and handsomely in foreign exchange when they retired. Unfortunately for me I joined the service of the University after an indigenous scheme, Nigerian Universities Joint Superannuation Scheme (the NUJSS) had been substituted for the FSSU. The NUJSS was however discontinued within a year of my joining the scheme and we were transferred to a new Federal Government retirement scheme which years later unfortunately turned out to be a disaster. This in my view was the beginning of the process of incorporation of the University system into the Federal public service, a process that was sealed by the Udoji Salaries and Wages Review Commission. Even now, Universities cannot commence new programmes without the approval of the National Universities Commission (NUC).

But at the time I joined the University, lecturers were entitled to annual grants on application of course for research purposes and for attendance at local and overseas conferences. Heads of Departments had enough money not only to run the departments and provide stationery to all staff; adequate materials including chemicals were also made available for students' practical sessions. Heads of Departments had departmental capital votes from which they annually purchased equipment and consumables for teaching and research.

With adequate motivation such as these everyone of course concentrated on his/her job and the result was a thriving academia within the University and, in the case of the medical school, provision of first class medical services to the populace. Electricity supply had become a little bit epileptic at the time but no one felt the need to acquire a generator. Water supply from the city of Ibadan to the University was adequate and in general, life in Nigeria and the University at the time was good. These were the days when many of the lecturers were able to travel to the UK during summer for holidays.

My promotion to the grade of Senior Lecturer in September 1976 was without hassle. But when my Head of Department, Professor E.O. Sofowora wanted to recommend me for promotion to the grade of Professor three years after, I declined because I felt I was too young for the position at 35 years of age and because this would immediately put me ahead of those who were senior to me in the department. It was my late friend Professor T.M. Kolawole who eventually persuaded me to go for the exercise because he felt I was qualified for the position with 50 publications in learned journals. I was subsequently promoted to the grade of Professor with effect from the 1st of September 1979.

The Battered Present as a lecturer

However by the middle of the eighties and during the nineties things had changed for the worse in Nigeria and the University. The economic downturn occasioned by military rule had by then begun to have a devastating effect on the country. The take home pay of public sector workers including University staff was no longer adequate and this was worsened by the massive devaluation of the naira (labeled structural adjustment programme at the time) around the mid-eighties. That devaluation had the effect of further reducing the purchasing power of Nigerian public sector workers, and making imports more expensive and out of reach.

The University was no longer able to fund routine departmental expenses through the goods and services vote. Funds could not be made available for purchase of new equipment for research. Local and overseas grants for conferences were cancelled. Students' practical sessions could no longer be held in the science-based departments.

Most of the lecturers consequently left the University to take up appointments outside Nigeria or in the private sector where conditions of service and take home pay were better. Alternatively, they devoted more time

to private business and consultancy services to earn more money and sustain themselves and their families. Administration of most of the departments became weak, probably because of the policy of rotatory headships which sometimes made Senior Lecturers and Readers head over their seniors or even over their teachers! Such heads of departments, apart from their obvious deficiencies in administrative procedures, lacked the courage to control and discipline their staff. Moreover, long-term planning for such departments was impossible because of the constant change in headships. It was therefore not strange to find that the courses of some of the lecturers were being taught by postgraduate students; these postgraduate students were moreover made to set and mark the examination papers! The lecturers who should have taught and examined the courses were busy somewhere else.

Some of the students, seeing the obvious pitiable conditions of their lecturers, voluntarily contributed money and materials for their upkeep and that of the departments. Others were in fact forced to do so by their lecturers and heads of departments. The vices of sale of handouts, sexual harassment, upgrading of marks for financial reward, late grading of examination scripts, late submission of marks and late resumption of teaching at the beginning of the semester were introduced into the Universities. Both academic and non-teaching staff became involved in admission scandals! The staff unions became radicalised and this resulted in long periods of closures as a result of strikes. The University could no longer maintain regular sessions.

With regard to provision of municipal services, the picture was no less gruesome and I had earlier described the sorry state of affairs.

In the case of the medical school, virtually every health professional – doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians, even secretaries and medical records officers fled the country to work in Europe, America, and especially the Middle East. The Middle East was particularly favoured because the health institutions there were of world standard and because they had excellent facilities. Doctors' pay was generous and all doctors were provided with free accommodation, water, electricity and adequate security. To top it all, they paid no taxes. All the Departments in College of Medicine suffered because of this brain drain. For instance, in the Department of Pathology, a hardship area, only one lecturer was left after all the Professors and Senior Lecturers emigrated and that lecturer too was bidding his time to emigrate! I was the Provost of the College of Medicine during this stressful period. In fact the entire period of my Provostship was devoted to preventing the College from collapse because of the sud-

den, massive brain drain, apart from fending off the antagonism which arose within the University following the transformation of the then Faculty of Medicine into a College of Medicine in 1980 and the promulgation of its act on the 25th of June 1984.

But since then, instead of regular adjustments in salary and other emoluments of staff in the Universities based on the cost of living, adjustments have only come after disruptive, long strikes and battles with Government by University workers so much so that this method is nowadays regarded as the only way of getting justice from Government. Councils of the Universities were often bypassed as they had no input to the determination of salary upgrades/adjustments for their staff. All the governments of the federation had taken over this function.

One must at this juncture thank all those who put their lives on line and suffered various indignities and harassment associated with frequent infractions with government while fighting for the rights of University lecturers. Without them the pay of lecturers would have become so abysmal that many more people would have deserted academia.

The question I often ask myself has always been as follows: should this be the norm? It is not in most countries I know of. This unusual method of getting pay rise for University staff began during the prolonged military rule when arbitrariness was the vogue and unfortunately this has not changed after civil rule has been re-established.

Indeed the University system is yet to recover from all the traumatic events I described above even a decade after restoration of civilian rule. The whole country seems to me to have become ossified in the dark past of military rule as no meaningful change in the behaviour of 'civilian' governments has occurred since civilian rule was restored. The country even has no appetite at present to change the unitary constitution with all its attendant problems bestowed to it by the military! There is therefore no doubt that when the present situation in the Universities is compared with what obtained when I joined the staff of the University of Ibadan as a young lecturer in 1974, paradise has been lost.

I am grateful to God for enabling us to correct the rot that we found when I assumed the position of Vice-Chancellor of this University on September 25th 2000. I am also grateful to the incumbent Vice-Chancellor Professor Femi Bamiro for continuing the process of restoration from where we left it at the end of my tenure in September 2005. Everyone is once again

proud of the state of our beloved University of Ibadan and it is my hope and prayer that this process of restoration and progress will continue. Other Universities in the country are however not as lucky as the University of Ibadan and the rot in the University system in Nigeria still persists.

Can paradise be regained?

The pertinent questions therefore are:

- Could we have prevented the decline that had been the lot of public Universities in Nigeria in the last 25 years? Possibly we could.
- Is Nigeria really serious about getting our Universities listed among the elite club of top 200 Universities in the world? I believe Nigerians are.
- Can we restore the lost glory of these Universities? I believe we can if all the stakeholders have the courage to do the right thing and regenerate them. In doing this however, some hard decisions will have to be taken.

Based on my experience as a past Vice-Chancellor of this University and having just participated in a 're-branding' exercise of a sister University in West Africa, these are my suggestions.

- We must as a priority and matter of urgency restore full (including fiscal) autonomy to all the Universities in the country. Universities in Nigeria are no longer fully autonomous as they were at their inception, and are not administered in accordance with the laws setting them up. In my opinion this is the kernel of the problem besetting University management and administration in this country. The fingers of government are in every pie of all the public Universities in the country to the extent that the Universities cannot embark on new programmes without approval from Government agencies! Majority of the strikes, financial and other problems of the Universities are traceable to Government who routinely bypasses the Management and Governing Councils to issue all sorts of instructions in form of circulars to the Universities, most of which are inappropriate, unimplementable and contrary to the laws setting them up. In many cases, financial awards to staff arising from union agitations are not cash-backed and this leads to further protests on campuses, more debts for the Universities, closures and distortion of University calendars from prolonged strikes. Invariably when trouble arises because of these instructions (circulars), the fallout is dumped on the laps of the Vice-Chancellors who are asked to 'go and sort it out'. The Vice-Chancellors are therefore in precarious positions as they are often caught in the middle of Government and union battles. Anything the Vice-Chancellors

do is perceived as hostile by their unions making them extremely unpopular with the staff and students. Moreover, Governing Councils are dissolved at will by Government and are not reconstituted for years putting many important decisions in abeyance in the Universities. Politicians who have no business within the precincts of Universities and sometimes have no University degrees are appointed as Chairmen and members of the Governing Councils and many of them come to these Universities primarily to recoup the money they spent on their electioneering campaigns.

In my opinion, most of the problems of the Universities will be solved if they are allowed to run in accordance with the laws setting them up. This in any case is in keeping with the philosophy of the present administration which has rightly laid emphasis on running the country in accordance with 'the rule of law'.

- Good governance is important for institutions like Universities, which today are large, complex bodies set up to provide teaching, research and public service. In the colleges of the earliest and medieval Universities, where a handful of teachers known as fellows taught a few students, the fellows could come together to make decisions about their institutions. However, in today's much larger institutions, where the University community is too large to make all the necessary decisions collectively, it creates an entity -a governing council- to facilitate the process. In practice, governance of Universities in modern times is bicameral; a Governing Council which looks after the overall destiny of the institution and the Senate which steers the academic programmes. Universities all over the world are in fact self governing institutions, not parastatals of governments. Since the governing councils steer the destiny of such complex, independent entities, they must therefore be made up of men and women of deep knowledge and of highest integrities.

Let me at this juncture quote a statement from a 1997 South African White Paper titled 'A Programme for Higher Education Transformation'.

"Councils are the highest decision-making bodies of public institutions. They are responsible for the good order and governance of institutions and for their mission, financial policy, performance, quality and reputation. To sustain public confidence, councils should include a majority of at least 60 per cent of members external to the institution. Councils ought not to be involved in the day to day management of the institutions as that is the responsibility of the executive management, led by the Vice-Chancellor, Rector or Principal, who is in turn accountable to the Council".

I also quote from the report of an exercise I participated in last year concerning a sister University in Africa.

“Current good practice calls for a governing body of between 15 to 30 members, with a lay (external) majority of about two-thirds to one third, with a significant proportion of the lay majority brought on to the governing body through a nominations committee process to ensure that there is expertise in areas such as finance, property management, legal matters and human resource management. Accountability for the use of public funds is normally regarded as a crucial function of a university governing body and this function is best exercised by a lay majority whose members include people with professional financial qualifications.

The original composition of Council at the inception of the autonomous University of Ibadan as stated in its act of 27th December 1962 was overwhelmingly in favour of external members thus conforming to the international norm. It was as follows:

The council shall consist of –

- (a) the pro-chancellor;*
- (b) the vice-chancellor and the deputy vice-chancellor;*
- (c) four persons appointed by the Minister;*
- (d) a number of persons equal to twice the number of the Regions of which Nigeria consists for the time being, of whom two shall be appointed by the Governor of each Region respectively.*
- (e) four persons appointed by the senate from among the members of that body;*
- (f) two persons appointed by the congregation from among the members of that body;*
- (g) one person appointed by the convocation from among the members of that body; and*
- (h) such persons, not exceeding four in number, as may be appointed by the council to be members of the council’*

Sadly this at present is not the case in most Nigerian Universities where membership of Councils is tilted in favour of internal members against international convention. The current membership as contained in the military government decree of 1st January 1993 which amended the acts of Nigerian Universities and even in the autonomy bill of 2003 is as follows:

The Council of any University shall consist of:

- (a) the Pro-Chancellor;*
- (b) the Vice-Chancellor;*
- (c) the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Deputy Vice-Chancellors in the 2003 bill);*
- (d) one person from the Federal Ministry responsible for Education;*
- (e) four persons representing a variety of interests and broadly representative of the whole Federation to be appointed by the National Council of Ministers;*
- (f) four persons appointed by the Senate from among its members;*

- (g) two persons appointed by Congregation from among its members;*
- (h) one person appointed by convocation from among its members;’*

A Council with this composition is obviously not in a good position to take an independent view of the affairs of its University. Such a Council will be more concerned with internal politics.

Moreover, membership of Councils of Nigerian Universities often lacks expertise in professional areas and, where this exists, it is only by accident of who is nominated or elected by Government. It is therefore imperative for us in this country to reorganise Council membership in our nation’s Universities to conform with international norms and best practices moreso as our Universities are aspiring to be among the top 200 Universities in the world.

The visitation panel for a sister University in Africa which I earlier alluded to also made the following recommendations concerning Council membership:

“Accountability for the use of public funds is normally regarded as a crucial function of a university governing body and this function is best exercised by a lay majority whose members include people with professional financial qualifications.”

Some of our recommendations also included the following:

- The panel would prefer to see membership of the Council expanded to over 20...”*
- The panel also strongly advocates that Council members should not be remunerated in any way and that sitting allowances for Council should be abolished...”*
- The Council should appoint its own Chairman which should be from among the external members.*

These recommendations I believe should be adopted in this country if we are serious about re-branding our Universities. They are designed to ensure that only serious people who have their own means of livelihood and who are genuinely interested in serving sit on Governing Councils of Universities.

- The Senate of the University of Ibadan has become too large and unwieldy and everyone agrees with this. But nothing has been done about it. Everyone agrees that a membership of 100, representing all shades and opinion within the academic community, is ideal. This was incorporated in the new set of laws proposed for the University by the Ohiwerei-led Council around 2003 and sent via the Federal Ministry of Education to the National Assembly for promulgation. I do not know what has happened to the document. It is probably still stuck in the Federal Ministry of Education. A Senate membership of only 100 will be more effective and easier for the*

Chairman to manage and will save the University enormous amount of money committed at present to the provision of large, bulky Senate papers to more than 300 members most of whom do not in any case attend the meetings.

- It is in the interest of all the Universities in this country to internationalise the conditions of service of their academic staff. The conditions of service, including their pay must be good enough to attract staff, as it was in the past, from outside the country to teach in our Universities. This has become rather urgent because the number of Universities in the country is increasing by the day and there is acute shortage of qualified teaching staff in all the Universities especially the new ones. Retired teaching staff who are still willing and are able to teach should be recruited and appointed as part-time adjunct staff in our Universities and given generous allowances to encourage them continue to assist. This in my view is preferable to raising the retirement age to 70 years as this will eventually have the effect of shutting out young brilliant people who wish to make a career out of academics. We must at the same time bring in experienced professionals like retired and possibly serving judges, distinguished lawyers, doctors, nuclear scientists, economists, accountants etc. to serve in our Universities as adjunct teaching staff. Such people hopefully will bring their wide experience to enrich teaching in our Universities and at the same time motivate the students.
- The decline of the University of Ibadan which occurred in the eighties and nineties and indeed other Universities in Nigeria occurred in part as a result of a disastrous mismatch between the student numbers, the infrastructure, and the facilities available for teaching and research. The explosion in student numbers really degraded the quality of our teaching and research at the time. It also encouraged cult activities and examination malpractices. Thankfully we have overcome these but I hope we shall not slip back again because of pressure from Government and the public. Other Universities in Nigeria are not so lucky.
- We should also resist any attempt from any quarter to cancel post-University matriculation examinations/assessments. These assessments have helped to sift real University materials from pretenders and have brought some sanity to our Universities. The pertinent question is: why should a University not have a say in the admission of its students? Is this attempt at keeping Universities away from conducting post-University matricu-

lation examinations in keeping with the laws establishing the Universities? The law of the University of Ibadan for example vests admission of students on the Senate of the University by stating that *'it shall in particular be the function of the Senate to make provision for-(f) the selection of persons for admission as students at the university;*'

I think this statement is clear enough. Besides this, a situation whereby the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) appropriates to itself all the fund obtained from candidates seeking admission without giving a portion of it to the Universities who also have crucial roles to play in the process of admission is in my opinion an anomaly.

- The most sensitive and problematic issue about Universities in all countries is how to fund them and, for many countries, creating an equitable fees regime has been a big challenge. There are two extreme views with regard to payment of fees:
 - (a) Free tertiary education i.e. tertiary education totally subsidised by state. This was the vogue in countries where a tiny proportion of the population had University education. But whether this could or should apply to us in this country with the huge number of students who desire University education is debatable. Opinion is divided about the policy of free education in the Universities. Some believe we can afford it in this country since we make a substantial amount of money from oil. There is enough money to actualise this policy, they believe, if we get our priorities right, if we are prudent in our spending habit and if we curb corruption. Others however disagree, citing our huge population and the demands of other sectors within the economy like health, transportation and so on which need equal or even greater attention. In their opinion, the combination of competitive entry and no or low tuition fees produces an equitable participation in tertiary education from all socioeconomic groups.
 - (b) Payment of full fees. This is the norm in the United States of America. Some of their students benefit from scholarships while others have to make do with students' loans which become repayable after graduation. Many students also work their way through University education.

All these are however difficult to implement in Nigeria because of high poverty levels and high default rate with repayment of loans.

Many countries including ours practice no or low tuition which I christen partial free education. However, the way it is practiced in Nigeria has impoverished the Universities for the simple reason

that all our governments do not fully compensate the Universities for the income lost by not charging tuition fees (Appendix 1).

But to be fair to Nigeria, this same policy is also practiced in other countries including some European countries. Many European countries have however got round this by allocating more spaces to foreign students and this has become highly lucrative for their Universities. For example, there has been an aggressive drive for Nigerians to study in Europe in the recent past because fees paid by our students have considerably helped European Universities to improve their income. Even in Ghana, a sister country in West Africa, 10% of enrolment is reserved for foreign students who are mainly from Nigeria. Foreign students in Ghana pay full academic fees and are housed in comfortable hostels where they pay full residential charges. Unfilled spaces reserved for foreign students can be taken up by Ghanaians who are willing to pay for them.

Unfortunately many Nigerian Universities are no longer in a position to attract significant numbers of foreign students as many of them are not of international standard. These Universities cannot therefore benefit from income paid by this category of students. They therefore remain perpetually impoverished.

Decades of world-wide research has however shown that *'the socio-economic profile of students in countries that charge fees while providing scholarships and loans for poorer students is more broadly based than in those that do not charge fees'*. This, except loans, was the vogue in the past when our Universities were in excellent shape. Unfortunately, this practice was abolished by successive military governments which made tuition free without adequate compensation of the Universities for the loss of this vital income. I recall when I was the Vice-Chancellor of this University that this issue was raised several times with Government but the refrain was always: *"We can only give you what we have. Make do with what you have been given but make sure you do not charge tuition fees"*. But the question has always been: how does one make do with what is given when this does not cover salaries and debts pile up in the banks?

To compound the problems of our Universities, hall residential fees were pegged by the military at eighty naira per session for each bedspace in the seventies and for many years students had resisted any upward review even when it was obvious that the amount had become ridiculously low. It was not until 2005 when an upward review was permitted by Government. This upward review was eventually effected by Senate of the University of Ibadan but I am not sure whether

other Universities have been able to do so. Of course all these factors contributed to the decline of our Universities, particularly the hostels which I had previously alluded to.

It is therefore obvious to me that Universities must be allowed to charge tuition fees while all the governments in the Federation (Federal, State, and Local) must provide scholarships and bursaries to all students to enable them acquire excellent education in Universities good enough to enter the elite club of the best 200 Universities in the world. I also expect the Education Trust Fund (ETF) with the huge amount of money available to it and companies operating within Nigeria to contribute to the education of our youths by giving them scholarships and bursaries. This was the practice in the past.

- But what must follow from the above is the establishment of active, functional academic quality assurance units, manned by full-time professionals in quality assurance and assisted by adequate support staff. This is the standard practice in all modern Universities. By paying the requisite fees to the Universities, students are entitled to receive quality education and it is the job of the quality assurance units to ensure this. The unit should be answerable to Senate through an academic quality committee under the chairmanship of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).
- I now turn my attention to the vexed question of infrastructure. As a result of the failure of our State government to provide potable water to the University of Ibadan for over 20 years, the University has had to build its own mini waterworks, with water drawn from the Eleiyele dam some kilometers from the University. The State government which ought to provide water to the University community not only charges the University millions of naira for raw water drawn from the dam but is even now asking the University community to pay more tax without making any effort to provide water for the community!

While I was making a case for assistance to the University of Ibadan by donor agencies in the United States of America some years ago I pointed out that the difference between a Vice-Chancellor operating in a country like Nigeria and a Vice-Chancellor in a European or an American University is this: while the Vice-Chancellor in Nigeria has to contend daily with lack of water and electricity for students and staff on campus throughout his tenure of office, a Vice-Chancellor in Europe or America does not bother with these things since provision of water and electricity is taken for granted. European and American Vice-Chancellors/Presidents are more engaged with ensuring

quality teaching in their Universities and must continue to attract substantial grants to the Universities if they wish to retain their positions.

There is no doubt that the amount of money committed by Universities in Nigeria to provision of water and electricity on our campuses is enormous not to talk of the constant infractions between students and management when these facilities do not function properly. My view is that this should not be so. Universities should not be saddled with provision of these basic services and State and Federal governments must be alive to their responsibilities and ensure that they provide constant power and water to the citizenry of Nigeria. Funds committed by Universities to provision of these services constitute a waste and are better channeled to academic pursuits.

- Administration of departments must be strengthened. While the policy of rotatory headships is sound, it was never intended to make junior academic staff head over and above their seniors. Discipline in a department is likely to break down when a young lecturer who has not reached the peak of his/her career is placed as head of department over his teachers! A way must be found to correct this anomaly.
- Finally, if we really want our Universities to be recognised worldwide, Nigeria should create a national research fund in the country, in a way similar to what obtains in Europe, South Africa, United States of America and all other progressive and advanced countries in the world. Grants should be awarded to researchers working on major areas of national development. In medicine for example, substantial research grants should be made available to credible researchers in the country who wish to solve the problems of malaria, sickle cell disease and hypertension, three diseases which are ravaging the populace. We should not wait until the advanced countries solve the problems for us before we do something about them.

Similarly a book fund should be established to encourage lecturers write academic texts for students in our tertiary institutions. University lecturers who thereafter issue substandard handouts to their students will have no excuse for their bad behaviour.

The University College Hospital

I cannot end this lecture without making brief comments about our laboratory in the College of Medicine, the University College Hospital. This was a great hospital in years past so much so that it was regarded as one of the best hospitals in the Commonwealth. Like the University of Ibadan its condition deteriorated during the military era. Attempts are now being

made to resuscitate her and one is encouraged by the quality of the reconstituted Board of Management headed by a scholar, Dr Sony Kuku.

My advice to the hospital is to concentrate on patient welfare first before embarking on complex, advanced medical care. By this I mean provision of good toilet facilities in the wards, clean sparkling white bed sheets and pyjamas for the patients, clean ward environment and provision of materials needed for basic nursing care and resuscitation of patients. The agony of patients who have to visit several points to make payments and collect materials for investigations and treatment must also be ameliorated.

The laboratories must be made to be more efficient. In fact our laboratories should serve as standard reference laboratories for the entire country, able to handle complex assays including viral investigations. We also have first-class geneticists working as Consultants in the hospital and their skills should be harnessed to assist clinicians in advanced patient care.

Anyone who regularly reads the intra-net of the College of Medicine would be convinced that there is a disconnect between the Consultants and the Management of the hospital principally because of lack of information. Consultants who become frustrated in the course of their duties can only solve their problems by complaining through the Chairman of their trade union, the Medical and Dental Consultant Association of Nigeria (MDCAN), to the Chief Medical Director. This is unfortunate since Consultants are the arrowheads of patient care in all hospitals. The Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) of Teaching Hospitals in Nigeria is no longer effective as it used to be in the past. In fact, its Chairman, although elected by the Consultants, has been sucked into the administration and now functions as the *de facto* Deputy Chief Medical Director of the Hospital.

A way out is to create a Consultants Forum during which the Chief Medical Director will have the opportunity to brief Consultants about the goings-on and policy directions within the Hospital while the Consultants will apprise the Chief Medical Director about their problems and frustrations. These meetings, I believe, will lessen tension within the Hospital. The forum could be held every three months in a large hall.

Finally I again plead with Oyo State Government to provide water for the hospital. It is a serious indictment on the State Government for such a national hospital to be allowed to operate without water. Nowadays, it is no longer strange to see black jerry cans

containing water tucked under patients' beds in the wards. Some patients prefer to make do with several sachets of 'pure water' also tucked under their beds while doctors and nurses borrow some of the 'pure water' to use in washing the hands before and after procedures/ward rounds! I hope infectious organisms are not unwittingly being circulated through this practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Let me begin by thanking my late parents, the Very Reverend Emmanuel Akinrolabu Falase and Janet Omolayo Falase for nurturing me to adulthood in the

way of the Lord. Both of them gave me a privileged, disciplined childhood and they inspired me to work for the Lord by becoming a Church Organist. I also thank the Lord for being merciful on them because after they lost two of their children to malaria, the Lord replaced the two children with Dayo and Ibukun even after they have given up hope of having more children. I have highlighted how Professor O.O.Akinkugbe assisted me to travel to the United Kingdom to train as a physician. He met me on the corridor of the UCH one day in 1969 and asked what I was doing about proceeding to the United Kingdom (UK) to obtain the MRCP, the qualification



Fig. 3: The Very Rev. E.A. Falase. Mrs. J.O. Falase.



Fig. 4: Ayodele and Adelola Falase



Fig. 5a: L-R: New students listening to a lecture during the orientation period in September 1963. I was one of them (see the arrow please). The 1st Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, Professor Kenneth Onwuka Dike could be seen on the right addressing us during our matriculation in October 1963.



required to become a specialist physician in that country and in the Commonwealth countries. There was no local postgraduate programme at the time. When he found out that I had no clue how I could get to Britain, he wrote late Dr. V. Edmunds, who happened to have been his boss when he was doing his house job, to take me on. Based on his recommendation, Dr. Edmunds offered me a job as a post-registration house officer in his firm. It was kind of Dr. Edmunds to do that as he came under severe criticism for giving the job to 'someone from Africa' at a time new

graduates from prestigious London medical schools were looking for placements for house jobs. I thank God that my performance at the Mount Vernon Hospital, Northwood, Middlesex paved the way for other Nigerians to work there.

After obtaining the MRCP within a year and three months of my arrival in the UK, it was again Professor Akinkugbe who arranged for me to train as a cardiologist at the cardiology department of King's College Hospital, London under the tutelage of



Fig. 5b: Thirty seven years after, I, as the 9th Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan could be seen in the top photograph addressing a new set of students during their matriculation in 2003. The Registrar of the University Mrs. Moji Ladipo is shown in the bottom photograph administering the oath of matriculation to the students. Who knows, another student among these may be addressing new matriculants as Vice-Chancellor perhaps around or even before 2040!

Dr. Samuel Oram of the Holt-Oram fame. Dr. Oram had in fact planned to retain me as a Consultant/Research Fellow in the hospital after my training but the lure of the University College Hospital and the University of Ibadan was far greater. Professor Akinkugbe has always believed in young people, particularly those with potentials and is always ready to help them. He is a wonderful motivator and I sincerely thank him.

I have highlighted how late Professor B.O.Osuntokun and Professor O.O.Akinkugbe brought me into the Department of Medicine as Lecturer/Consultant when all hopes were lost. I once again thank both of them. I also thank Professor E.O.Sofowora and my late senior friend Professor T.M.Kolawole (TK) for believing in me and insisting on putting me up for Professorship in 1979 when I was vacillating.

Professor Oluwole Akande and his bosom friend late Professor T.M.Kolawole brought me into University administration in 1980 and this paved the way for me to rise through sub-deanship, deanship, Provostship of the College of Medicine, finally to the Vice-Chancellorship of the University of Ibadan. I thank both of them.

To my colleagues in the Department of Medicine, particularly those in the cardiac unit, I am grateful for your friendly disposition at all times and for providing an excellent milieu which enabled serious academic work to flourish. I also thank all of you for arranging this wonderful send-off for me.

I must really thank the team that worked with me from September 2000 to September 2005 when I was the Vice-Chancellor of this University. In particular, I thank all my Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Professors Soji Ofi, Jim Akinwumi, Femi Bamiro and Biola Odejide for assisting me to restore the University to normal. Professor Tayo Shokunbi, a highly cerebral gentleman, ran the MacArthur Foundation grant successfully on my behalf and in a transparent manner. I regard him and Professor Doyin Soyibo as strategic thinkers and I gained a lot from their input to my administration. I must also not forget to thank Mrs. Moji Ladipo who was my Registrar and that honest gentleman Alhaji Jimoh Bankole, my Bursar at the time. Professors Fagbemi and Oluleye did a lot to establish the Information Technology unit of the University and I thank them. Professor Ayo Ogunkunle faced several threats from the students as Dean of Students but he performed creditably and I am grateful to him. I also thank the present Registrar Mrs. Tayo Ikotun who as Deputy Registrar in charge of admissions assisted us in detecting and ejecting students who falsified their

results to enter the University despite threats to her life and to Professors Falaiye and Fagbemi who provided security for us during the most difficult period of the University. I thank Professor Biodun Falusi, a brilliant scholar, a true friend and a man of high integrity for always believing in me and my capabilities and for standing by me all the time. We have been friends from our childhood and our parents were not only priests of the Anglican Communion but also classmates.

Professor Femi Bamiro is currently making us proud by his performance as the incumbent Vice-Chancellor of the University and I urge him to continue the good work.

My achievement in restoring the University of Ibadan to normal during my tenure as Vice-Chancellor would not have been possible but for the generous grants received from the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. I thank the President of the Foundation Dr. Jonathan F. Fanton who despite all odds made sure that University of Ibadan received the support of the Foundation. I am yet to see an American who is so supportive and passionate about Africa, especially Nigerian Universities, as Jonathan does.

I must thank my wife of 42 years, Dr Adelola Omolara Falase, who sometimes functioned as my co-editor, and our images, Femi and Joke, Tokunbo and Lara, Wole and Folake, Yemi, and their own images Tioluwa, Abolurin, Ademide, Ayomide, Tamilore, Adebolade and Adeoba for being members of a unique, loving and wonderful family. My wife and children bore, for many years, the inconveniences of my endless travels all over the world for scientific meetings and conferences and all the travails associated with University administrative post particularly the Vice-Chancellorship.

Finally I thank God for all He has done for me.

Please therefore join me in saying this ascription/doxology to God's praise and glory:

Now unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Modified from Jude chapter 1 verses 24-25.)

My Vice-Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for listening and good bye.

APPENDIX 1
UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, IBADAN, NIGERIA

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

Registrar

Chief (Mrs) Mojisola O. Ladipo
B.A. MILR (Ibadan) MNIM, AIPM, JP

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Ref: R/9/C.21(a)

06 June 2002

Prof. A. O. Falase
Department of Medicine
College of Medicine
University of Ibadan
Ibadan.

Dear Sir/Ma,

University's Financial Situation

It is the desire of Council that you be intimated with the dire financial situation of the University, a situation that was extensively discussed at its meeting of Thursday, 06 June 2002.

Council noted with concern, the increasing level of indebtedness of the University in order to be able to meet its salary obligations.

The University's total indebtedness as at 27 May, 2002 stands at N1, 248,435,923.44 out of which N780, 361,675.35 was borrowed over time to pay salaries. It is obvious that this level of indebtedness cannot be allowed to continue because it is not sustainable.

A typical breakdown of monthly salary is as follows:

Serving officers – Basic Salary)	
Provision for casual Staff, NYSC, etc)	98,126,081.93
Allowances	119,727,779.17
Sub-Total for Regular Staff	213,403,861.10
Pensions	54,383,782.28
Total Salary for the month	272,287,643.38

Since January 2002, however, Government had provided the sum of N164, 548,238.00 monthly. Council and Administration are making every effort to obtain the shortfalls from the appropriate Authorities.

Having considered the situation and the facts before it, Council decided that **AS AN IMMEDIATE SURVIVAL KIT**, the following measures be put in place:

- (i) borrowings from whatever source, internal or external for the payment of salaries must stop immediately.
- (ii) any project without cash backing must not be commenced;
- (iii) emoluments should be paid only within NUC subvention without recourse to borrowing;
- (iv) pensioners must continue to be paid within the NUC subvention. Thus, emoluments of serving officers and pensioners will be shared **proportionately** within the NUC allocation.

Meanwhile:

- (a) All new appointments are frozen with effect from 06 June 2002.
- (b) All casual appointments should terminate on 30 June 2002
- (c) Temporary appointments must cease on 30 June 2002

Please note that these measures are **SHORT-TERM** and subject to review. The first review will be at the **AUGUST** meeting of Council.

Council believes that as an employee of this University, you have a right to know the true situation of things and seeks your cooperation and understanding of these obviously painful decisions.

They are being taken in the interest of the survival of our University.

Thank you and God bless.

Yours sincerely,

Chief (Mrs.) Moji Ladipo, JP
Secretary to Council