

THE STATE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Delivered by

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The Government College Ibadan, Old Boys' Association (GCIOBA), the body that invited us here this morning is a special constituency of the College. I am glad and indeed very grateful that this constituency of which I am a member nominated and elected me (call it 'selection' if you wish) to be the Guest Speaker at this year's Annual Re-Union Lecture. It is a great privilege for me and I feel highly honoured to have been duly elected. It has certainly been a free and fair election as no one to date has sought redress against it.

In part, the letter of invitation to be a Guest Speaker on this occasion, stated as follows:

The Lecture will be open to the general public and so the National Executive Committee has suggested that you select national topic of your choice but in the field of education.

Restricting me to the field of education has posed some considerable difficulties. I am not a specialist in education and even if my past in school or university teaching and higher educational administration could be stretched to make me an Educationist, I have since 1971 left active university teaching and research and since 1983, active higher educational administration and planning. Therefore, whatever I say about any aspect of Nigeria's education is based on my limited understanding and experience as a casual but interested observer and certainly not as an erudite scholar who may see the topic differently. Taking my cue from the fate which seems to have befallen our alma-mater, namely that of a sharp drop in quality, I have chosen to address you on the state of Public Education with reference to falling standards and/or failed expectations.

Government College, Ibadan was founded in 1929 by the British Colonial government and run by the government until the country achieved independence from British rule in 1960. In the post-independence Nigerian set-up, the college had successively fallen under the ownership and management of the Region or State in which Ibadan is. Over the years, the quality of the college had either waxed or waned with the sponsoring government's perception of its importance.

During the colonial period, it was certainly a high quality school, very much sought after by parents and their children. I was privileged after leaving the college in 1951, to return to it in 1960 as a graduate teacher. In the early years of independence, it was still a high quality school. From the time of the civil war in 1967/70, the fortunes of the college started to slide and correspondingly its quality dropped.

I was as at the Annual Re-union of 2000. I cannot now quite remember the details of the statistics of the school certificate performance which was read out to us by the Principal of the school in his address. It was however, a very poor performance with less than 5 per cent of graduating students gaining passes in sufficient number of subjects to qualify for higher education. That figure up to the early 1960s would have been upwards of 80 per cent. It was about 90 per cent for my graduating class in 1951.

THE NIGERIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM PRE-INDEPENDENCE

Pre-independence, at the primary and secondary levels, the great majority of schools were owned by private organisations and by some Nigerians who were motivated by a sense of patriotism. The private organisations included religious bodies, town or village unions and some individuals.

The government-owned schools, such as the Government Colleges in Ibadan, Umuahia, Kaduna, Kings College and Queen's College and others established later, were relatively few in number.

Under the grant-in-aid system in which non-government owned schools received financial contribution from the public revenue, all schools thrived and operated at the level of quality laid down by the colonial government's Ministry of Education.

Most Secondary schools had boarding facilities for those students who wished. Class sizes were not more than 35 students. Students attended school punctually and their good behaviour was taken for granted.

Private schools such as Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha; Igbobi College, Lagos; Holy Child College, Lagos; St. Gregory's College, Lagos; Methodist High School, Lagos and many others, were outstanding institutions, as highly rated as the government-owned institutions.

In my years at the University College, Ibadan (U.C.I), 1952- 1957, Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha probably had more students in the University than any other school. Pre-independence, a school did not need to be publicly owned or privately owned to be of good quality.

ON THE DECLINING STANDARDS OF EDUCATION

The quality of public education has declined. The best indicator of the decline is the school certificate grades of graduating secondary school students. From about the mid-1970s, the percentage of students scoring A's and C's (excellent and credit grades) has been dropping in almost all subjects and most especially in English

Language, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. In consequence, the number of graduating students as a percentage of the total in each year who attain the necessary high grades to qualify for higher education has been declining. Most graduating students must enroll in remedial courses to gain university entrance.

There is an increasing unwillingness on the part of most higher education-bound students to take up challenging courses. Large numbers of graduating secondary school students are ill-prepared for the workforce. Many graduate without any grounding in the fundamentals of mathematics. For example, many cannot express vulgar fractions as percentages, many cannot write a simple letter for a job employment. At the primary level, most pupils complete their final year with no basic reading and writing skills.

Employers of university graduates complain of job seekers who show up with very little reading, writing and spoken ability in English. Most Chief Executives may admit that they must undertake not only the extensive correction of the subject matter of minutes of meetings, or briefs and memoranda written by graduate officers but also the language of expression to make them readable. The increasing urge by many students at all levels to cheat at examinations, in spite of the stringent laws in force is another evidence of this decline.

We hear of 'blocking' in the universities, a practice which I understand allows students to buy their grades from university lecturers.

REASONS FOR THE DECLINE

The decline in the quality of public education cannot be blamed on the youngsters alone. I believe that youngsters at any time are as talented and knowledge curious (if not more) as any previous generations.

I also believe that the percentage of lazy students is probably not greater today than it was in the past. The root cause of the decline is that political decision makers have focused too much on quantitative expansion to the detriment of quality.

It is possible to combine quantitative and qualitative development only if the available resources in men, materials, money, managerial capacity and technical know-how are adequate. Nigeria does not have any of these in any high degree of sufficiency, let alone abundance.

The decline in the quality of education has been most evident since the 1980s when the impact of the rapid expansion in the 1970s began to be felt. In the period up to the mid-1950s, before free primary education was introduced in some parts of the country, overall school enrolments were generally low and planned to grow very slowly because, as believed, only a relatively small percentage of Nigerian parents could afford the cost of educating their children.

Nationwide, up to the early 1970s, primary enrolment by the relevant age group was still below 50 percent. In the 1970s, the then military government embarked upon a vast educational programme with the take-over by the Government of all church-owned and private schools as well as the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976.

UPE was based on the belief that it could be provided for every school age child. Simultaneous with the introduction of the UPE, a corresponding capacity was embarked upon in secondary school expansion. The waiver in 1978 of tuition fees in the higher institutions greatly increased access for tertiary education.

Enrolments at all levels have since been on the increase. In arriving at its decision to take over all non-government schools, it was doubtful whether or not the government understood the full financial, material, and managerial implications of its action. The private sector already had in place a vast educational enterprise, substantial expertise in the operation of educational institutions and were geared to put more institutions in place if given further encouragement.

Overnight, the government lost all the financial contributions as well as the administrative and managerial inputs of the church-owned privately owned schools. Also, by giving the impression that Government alone could finance and manage the educational enterprise, Nigerians in general received wrong signals of government's ability. Reversing the attitudes which resulted, for example, that some tuition fees may be necessary in secondary and tertiary institutions has remained one of the greatest threats to growth and expansion of educational facilities.

The decline or the falling quality of education may be blamed on a variety of factors, including:

- (i) The pitiful insufficiency of educational facilities which is a consequence of inadequate funding;
- (ii) Inadequate parental involvement in their children's education;
- (iii) Poorly trained teachers, and

(iv) Poor school management.

The pitiful insufficiency of educational facilities at all levels (Primary, Secondary and Tertiary) is a major cause of the decline. The insufficiency is evident in the poor physical state of most public institutions with unmaintained buildings, for example, dilapidated walls, leaking roofs, as well as overcrowding in classrooms and laboratories, an alarming shortage of library books and textbooks, worn out or obsolete teaching equipment and little or no facilities for extracurricular activities.

In the universities, there is a growing generation of scholars who have not been involved in research and therefore not abreast of current developments in their fields of specialisation, because the universities cannot subscribe to current scholarly journals and other publications let alone purchase the necessary research equipment. In consequence, it may be gaining ground and may have gained ground that research is not a vital function of our universities.

The net impact of all the inadequacies in the public educational system is that pupils and students are not receiving the desired level of challenge and in consequence dissipate their energies or spend their free time on activities which do not contribute to learning.

Many students spend more time roaming the streets, watching television or socialising. Socialising in some cases lead to their engaging in antisocial behaviours: smoking, cultism, thievery and even armed robbery.

Public education has declined and is declining because most parents are not sufficiently involved in their children's education. Since education is free or heavily subsidised by the government, and movement from one grade of primary or

secondary school to the next is automatic, most parents do not care whether their children pass examinations or earn good marks.

Poor parental involvement is leaving a large proportion of children far more susceptible to the influence of their friends than in past generations and this influence has taken and is taking its toll on students' achievement. No concerted efforts made to beef up quality can succeed if pupils and students do not come to school interested in and committed to learning.

Low quality of teacher training has been and is a severe handicap to public education. At least at the secondary level and increasingly at the tertiary level, a large number of teachers are not qualified by reason of their academic background to teach the subjects assigned to them, regardless of whether or not they have degrees in those subjects.

In the education of children, a lot depends on the classroom and out of classroom interaction with their teachers. The teachers must be capable of high standards in their subjects and in their work ethics, if not, students' performance will be below average.

Pre-independence, the single honours graduate teachers taught the sixth form classes of the few secondary schools which were proved to run sixth form courses. The colonial government discouraged the proliferation of sixth form schools because Nigeria lacked the needed numbers of single honours graduate teachers.

Post-Independence, for those who wish to teach in secondary schools, the concept of combined certificates (NCE) or honours degree in two or three subjects comprising one or two specialist subjects and education has lowered the standards of attainment in each of the specialist subjects, if not in the education courses also.

The level of specialisation reached in the specialist subjects does not provide the necessary academic qualification to teach in the higher classes of secondary schools up to the sixth form. The concept of combined certificates or honours degrees by lowering the standards of attainment in each of the subjects has resulted in the universities and colleges of education diluting the secondary school system with unqualified teachers. The decline in student's school certificate performance can be blamed on the system that teaches the teachers who teach the students, namely higher education. What is needed is the reversion to the single honours degree as the required qualification for teaching in the upper grades of secondary schools.

Furthermore in the post-independence era, the social prestige of teachers and their rewards (salaries and other benefits) suffered severe setbacks as other Nigerians moved into more prestigious civil service positions vacated by expatriates and as more and more Nigerians qualified in professions such as engineering, architecture, medicine, pharmacy, accountancy which command higher rewards and greater societal influence and prestige. The teaching profession gradually became unattractive for most superior students who preferred careers in the professions or in the civil service. Most intakes into the education courses of colleges and universities represent the lowest passing grades at universities and college entrance examinations.

Prior to the 1970s, each school in the relatively small primary and secondary school system was efficiently managed by its proprietor and effectively supervised by the inspectorate staff of the various ministries of Education. In 1970, there were no more than 3.5 million primary school pupils and a total of about 350,000 students in all types of secondary schools. By 1976, total enrolments in primary and secondary levels had risen significantly to over eight million and about one million respectively.

As stated earlier, in the early 1970s, the governments of the federation assumed complete control and management of the large numbers of voluntary agency schools and with the takeover lost the administrative and managerial inputs of the voluntary agencies.

Earlier in 1967, Nigeria's erstwhile four regions were restructured into twelve states and later in 1976 to nineteen states. The creation of states led to a further dilution of teaching, administrative and inspectorate staff in all the states of the federation. States' consciousness favoured in all the states the appointment of the indigenes of a state to positions in that state. In the circumstance, relatively junior and inexperienced persons moved into positions of responsibilities for which they were ill prepared. Expanding enrolments in each state led to a further worsening of the situation.

The impact of the dilution has been felt not only in the classrooms but also in the inspectorate divisions of the ministries of Education which have hitherto remained poorly manned to the point of being irrelevant. In some situations, school heads are left alone to run their schools as they deem see fit.

LIMITED RESOURCE BASE

Post independence development in education has been largely influenced by the Ashby Commission on higher education whose report was published just before political independence in 1960. Over the years, in taking steps to implement aspects of the recommendations, Nigeria has not given sufficient consideration to the warning in the report. The report titled "Investment in Education" has as its underlying principle, the notion that:

Education has become an investment for which financing must be sought from Nigeria as well as external sources. It was no longer a matter of budgeting on what the country could afford but on the future needs of the country, which were so massive that Nigeria resources alone would be inadequate to finance them.

It is true that in the post-independence period up to the 1970s, some foreign aid (some people may say substantial aid) flowed in to support education. Foreign aid was largely in the form of overseas scholarships to Nigerians to study abroad, some equipment and building donations, supplementation by the United Kingdom government of the salaries of Britons who wished to teach in Nigerian universities and by the sponsorship of foreign experts by other friendly governments.

By the mid 1970s when Nigeria began to attract earnings from crude oil exploration, all foreign aids practically ceased. Thereafter, alongside the slow growth in the crude-oil dependent economy and the many competing demands for development in other social sectors, the national resources that could go into education naturally suffered severe decline. We all know that the universal primary education which took off in 1976 ran into difficulties within two or three years due mainly to inadequate funding.

Morning and afternoon schools became the pattern in some states as the available classrooms could not accommodate all pupils and students in one morning shift. This problem has only been solved with overcrowding of pupils and students in ill-equipped schools. We also know that since the early 1980s, the higher educational institutions, particularly the universities have been in a troubled state because of lecturers' protests and strike actions over their working conditions and salaries.

Government is accused by the university teachers of broken promises regarding their conditions of service. Strike actions have led to the loss of whole academic years in nearly all the institutions.

RETHINKING THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Obviously, worried by the problems of failing standards and the heavy financial demands, the various governments of the federation had, post-Ashby Report, instituted educational planning workshops, conferences, study panels, review committees and commissions to advise on aspects of education ranging from funding, the restructuring of curricular, the rethinking of teacher training for the improvement of their quality to the adoption of a new school structure.

The National Policy on Education adopted in 1976 restructured education into the present (6-3-3-4) system of six years of primary school, two-tier Junior Secondary (JSS) and Senior Secondary School (SSS) and four years for universities. The system of Junior and Senior Secondary Schools was to train and produce some secondary graduates with craftsmanship and technical skills.

Largely because of the severe lack of teaching and training equipment as well as the paucity of qualified teachers in the various targeted skills, all the schools had remained largely of the academic type. All that the Policy on Education seems to have achieved is the mere increase in the number of years of schooling with all primary school pupils regardless of their achievement advancing to junior secondary, all junior secondary students advancing to the senior secondary and all successful graduates of senior secondary making demands for admission into higher institutions.

The lack of job employment for secondary school graduates exacerbates their urge for higher education even by those not qualified to be admitted. The unemployment level for young adults is at an alarming level. This large scale unemployment is either an evidence of overproduction in an economy which has not grown in step with the manpower production or of an educational system which is producing graduates not required by the economy.

Since some of the reasons for the falling standards in our education are also traceable to the inability of the economy to support the educational expansion, both the overproduction and the falling standards may be warning signs that our educational development strategy should be based more on our economic realities rather than on any other consideration.

The economic reality is that from independence in 1960, we started with a weak economic base with no industrial base, a weak agricultural sector and a poor power, communication and transportation (land, water and air) infrastructure. In spite of all the developmental efforts made to improve our lot, today we remain a poor and heavily indebted backward third world country.

We see evidence of this poverty not only in the sorry state of our educational institutions but also for example, in our erratic power supply, in fuel scarcity, in delayed workers' salaries, in delayed payment of gratuity and pension to retired persons in our food imports, in our damaged roads, in our squalid environment that is polluted not by industrial wastes but by human wastes, and in organised crimes armed robbery, banditry, ritual killings, smuggling and drug dealing.

Our post-independence development strategy will seem not to have given adequate attention to the prioritisation of the overall needs and the systematic implementation of the development projects for their realisation. The goal seemed to have been the immediate realisation of all that was adjudged necessary without any regard to what was achievable given the practical realities on ground.

This is very evident, for example, in our educational development strategy. It was required to expand educational opportunities. Immediately, we embarked on a massive expansion not only within one level at a time and in a systematic manner within that level but in all the levels simultaneously and in a most haphazard manner.

For example, when the idea of a university of technology was raised and many experts doubted our ability to establish even one, we established seven. Though later reduced to four, today, they are universities of technology in name only and certainly not in their activities and promise. We decided to introduce universal primary education in 1976 and on day one; this was embarked upon in all parts of the country, from poor rural communities to all the schools in the relatively rich urban centres. We decided to expand the facilities for secondary education and many schools were bull-dozed into existence within a pace of two years between 1980 and 1983.

For example, in my then native Bendel State, the number of secondary schools more than doubled between 1980 and 1983 from below 200 secondary schools in 1979 to over 400 in 1983. We decided in 1978 to waive tuition fees in the universities and we did for all students including those who before the waiver were paying fees.

PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT ELSEWHERE

Countries which had succeeded economically devoted initial attention to a phased programme of expansion in primary education. Large scale expansion in secondary education was only undertaken much later when the goal in primary education had been successfully achieved. Similarly, large scale expansion in tertiary education followed only after the goal in secondary education had been achieved. This was the pattern of development in 19th and 20th century Europe and very recently in the Republic of Korea.

The Korean peninsula, covering what is now two Koreas, namely North Korea and South Korea (the Republic of Korea), was a Japanese colony from 1909 to 1945 when it was liberated by the Allied forces at the end of the Second World War. The partitioning into North and South followed after a bitterly fought civil war from 1950 to 1953 which involved all the major powers. The war left South Korea with most of its physical facilities destroyed and also much of her high level manpower.

In the early 1960s, South Korea with a per capital (GNP) of U.S \$100 and heavily foreign-aid dependent was at about the same poverty level as Nigeria. Starting from 1962, South Korean government development strategy focused more on industrial development than anything else. In particular, in her development plans, without de-emphasising educational development, she encouraged greater private sector participation in the ownership and running of schools, colleges and universities.

Under Japanese rule, formal schooling in Korea consisted of six years of primary school, five years of secondary school and four years of university education (six years in some professional courses such as medicine).

The Republican Education Law of 1949 specified primary education to be tuition free and compulsory. In the early 1950s, only about 60 percent of primary age pupils (six to eleven) were in schools. By the middle of the 1960s, 100 percent primary enrolment was achieved. This expansion was said to have been assisted by the injection of foreign aid which amounted to over U.S.\$100 million. Only decades later in 1985 was tuition-free, middle school (JSS) education introduced.

By this time, the investment in industrialisation had started to pay-off and the Republic had earned the name of a Newly Industrialised Country (NIC) or one of the Asian tigers. Others in the group were Japan, Taiwan, Hong-Kong and Singapore.

The introduction of free tuition middle school was on a gradual basis, first in the remote, rural and small communities and in the first year class only. Each succeeding year, efforts and the progress made were reviewed before any undertaking to expand further. With this approach, the expansion of free tuition into all the areas of the country and in all the three class-years of the middle school (JSS) took upwards of five years.

In Korea, tuition costs are borne by students in high schools (SSS) and in higher educational institutions. The Korean private sector accounts for a large share of educational provisions. In the high schools (SSS) and in the universities, over 60 percent of total enrolments are in privately financed institutions. All Teachers Colleges for the training of primary school teachers are owned by the Korean government. As earlier stated, today, 100 percent of primary age children are in school, nearly 100 percent are in middle school (JSS) and over 95 percent are in high schools (SSS).

The percentage of the relevant age group in higher education is over 30 percent. Total enrolments at the colleges and universities number over one million, Per capita (GNP) in South Korea is now over US \$10,000.

Nigeria's emphasis on quantitative expansion to the detriment of quality has not fared as well. I do not think that we have achieved 100 percent primary school enrolment of the relevant school age, while secondary school enrolment may be only about 50 percent. The current population of university students is about 500,000. This represents less than 5 percent of the relevant age group. With only about 5 percent participation rate, that is only five out of every 100 university age children are receiving education at that level, it is a fair statement to make that in university development at least, we are still at the threshold when compared with North America with over 50 percent, Europe with over 40 percent and many of the Asian countries over 30 percent.

LOOKING FOR WARD

The way forward towards quantitative expansion with qualitative improvement is for all the governments of the federation to relax their dominance in the ownership and running of educational institutions. Some governments have made or have been attempting to make halfhearted efforts, but have lacked the boldness and the political will to articulate and practicalise their intended measures in all their fullness.

It is wrong to declare tuition free or introduce low tuition-fee in poorly subsidized schools without adequate compensating grants to enable the institutions operate effectively and efficiently.

It is wrong to officially wave tuition fees while school Heads and/or Parents/Teachers' Associations are allowed to impose levies on their own volition just to have the schools in session. It is wrong to under subvert the higher institutions and leave the institutional authorities to resort to ad-hoc levies on students and their parents.

The governments, should for a start, concentrate on the adequate funding of primary education to make the public Primary schools centres of excellence. With judicious policies, the governments of the federation can even at the primary level, make the private sector schools attract a sizeable proportion of primary school age children.

At the secondary and tertiary levels, the governments of the federation should concentrate more on the capital development of the institutions through the provision of more and better equipped teaching spaces and less on the provision of their required operational rants, in the false hope of achieving complete waiver of tuition fee or keeping the tuition fee low.

The policy of total operational grants subvention directly subsidises all students regardless of their parental income. A scheme in which most students are made to bear a good proportion of the tuition costs coupled with scholarships to those who are able and in financial need ought to be given serious consideration.

Parents need to be more involved financially in their children's education. The children need to be pushed harder to show more scholarly involvement in their efforts. A fee paying policy and the availability of scholarships for those who are academically strong but financially weak, will achieve both the parental and student involvement and commitment to the education process.

It will ensure that institutions can operate at their budgeted level by charging any shortfalls in the operational grants subvention to tuition fees.

The wealthy and advanced industrial countries notably, the United States, Germany and Japan all have a high percentage of endowed and operated institutions at all levels, that is more privately-owned institutions than public institutions. Save only at the public primary school, other public institutions are fee paying institutions. The continued insistence of some Nigerians on free tuition colleges and universities even when it has become so obvious that the governments with all their available tax resources cannot support free or heavily subsidised education is inimical to growth.

Quite wisely, the federal government, through the National Universities Commission is encouraging the development of private universities. The private universities can only thrive, if the tuition fee differentials between them and the public institutions are as close as possible. For the public institutions, the governments should, on a periodic basis, indicate to the institutions what level of operational funds the institutions can attract from the public tax revenue and allow the institutions to charge to the students any shortfalls in their operating budgets. If this point is considered, payment of tuition fees will not be a peculiar Nigerian condition. In fact, it is the waiver that is a peculiar Nigerian condition.

It may seem contradictory, given the current high unemployment of university graduates to plan for further expansion in the university system. Arguments which link students possible employment at the end of their studies with their qualifications should not be a criterion for assessing expansion of access.

University education is an advantage in job procurement. It also has a social value even in the absence of a job.

Those with higher education are more able than those without to be masters of their thoughts and beliefs. Short-term economic conditions which signal an over production of graduates may require that the graduates reduce their aspirations and accept jobs which appear modest in relation to their qualifications. It also requires that employers should employ people in jobs for which they may appear over qualified. Human knowledge continues to grow.

Only those educated near the frontiers of knowledge are able to keep abreast with developments in their areas of interest. For these reasons, higher education can no longer be regarded as the end and conclusion of studies. Rather, the conclusion of higher education enables those who have it to continue in their studies so as to be in a position to maintain their contribution to the welfare of society. Nigeria has no choice but to expand the opportunities for the higher education of her citizens.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The constituency of any educational institution is broad. It comprises the community, village, town or city where the institution is located, the institution's founders and the government which grants it license to operate. The constituency also includes the members of the public who pay taxes and the parents who pay fees. The Alumni Association is a special constituency because in addition to its involvement in the life and welfare of the institution, it provides continuity between generations of students.

The main reasons for the falling standards of education are of financial and managerial origins.

Owing to competing demands in other equally vital and/or more important social sectors, the share of the public revenue that the governments can devote to educational development is insufficient for the large numbers of institutions under their control. Also, the various ministries of Education are not sufficiently endowed in human and material resources to effectively carry on with their work of effective supervision of the institutions.

No curriculum changes, no instructional innovation, no restructuring of the educational system, no rethinking of plans, no toughening of standards, no retraining of teachers and no level of teachers' salaries will succeed in arresting the falling standards if the institutions continue to lack the sufficient funds for their effective operation and if they are not effectively managed.

Hitherto, not much has been done to involve the members of the constituency of each of our public institutions in the running of the institutions. The Parents/Teachers Associations, on their own, have made remarkable efforts in some institutions. The involvements of other constituency members need to be formalized and nurtured.

The neighbourhood communities and alumni associations in the effective and efficient running of the primary and secondary schools should be accorded formal recognition and encouragement.

Tax payers, as members of the various school constituencies, should expect and be ready to pay higher taxes. In addition, all parents have a special responsibility for preparing their children for school work through tuition-fee payment when demanded and by stressing the importance of education and the need for their children to stay away from trouble making.

The governments of the federation that earlier in the 1970s halted private participation should now institute programmes and incentives for greater private sector participation in educational development.

The governments should also revamp their tax administration machinery to boost their ability to contribute towards education. A boost in the economy and the creation of many more jobs through industrialisation is a necessary condition for more tax revenue as well as for the expansion and strengthening of education.

Finally, measures should be put in place to attract, train and retain persons of good academic standing in the teaching profession.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is imperative that we now arrest the declining conditions of our schools, colleges and universities. It is equally important that we improve on our earlier reported high standards prior to the 1970s. The country has been able to improve on her standards of achievement in sports. Professional, technical and academic education can be no less important.

ABOUT THE LECTURER

Abel Ibude Guobadia was born on the 28th of June, 1932, in Benin City, Edo State. He attended CMS Primary School, Benin City (1939-1945). He entered Government College in 1946 on a Government Scholarship and finished with distinction in 1951. He was admitted to the University College Ibadan in 1952, also on government scholarship, and obtained a B.Sc. degree special Honours in Physics in 1957. With USAID scholarship, Abel Guobadia started at the University of Pittsburgh, USA, and obtained M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees in Experimental Solid State Physics in 1964 and 1966 respectively.

Abel Guobadia was House Master of Swanston House from 1960 to 1961. At various times from 1967 to date, he occupied various distinguished positions including Senior Physics Teacher; Senior Lecturer and Head of Department of Physics; Executive Secretary and Pioneer Director of Planning, National Universities Commission; State Commissioner of Education and later, Finance and Economy Planning in former Bendel State; Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Republic of Korea and Nigeria's First Resident Ambassador to that country.

Chief Guobadia was the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from 1999 - 2006. He is a distinguished Science Teacher and has published several books and professional papers. He is a Fellow of the Science Teachers Association of Nigeria; Trustee, Science Teachers Association of Nigeria; Chairman, Planning Committee, All African Association of Science Teachers and President, Science Teachers Association of Nigeria.

He was, amongst others, Member of the Governing Council, Usman Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto; Member of the Governing Council, Igbinedion University, Okada; Pro-Chancellor/Chairman of Council, Edo State University, and Member, Governing Council, West African Examinations Council (WAEC).

Sir Guobadia is an active member of Abuja Branch of GCIOBA, He is happily married to Mrs. Florence O. Guobadia, Deputy Registrar of WAEC and they have four children.