

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AND PROGRESS  
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

An Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Ibadan  
on Wednesday, 24 April 1974

by

J. A. MAJASAN

*Professor and Head of the Department of Education  
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria*

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

1974

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

PRINTED IN 10PT. UNIVERS ON 12PT. BODY  
AT THE IBADAN UNIVERSITY PRESS  
NIGERIA MARCH 1975

# INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AND PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

## I

### INTRODUCTION

I REGARD this as an appropriate opportunity to make the meaning of Education clearer to many more people in this community and elsewhere and to broaden the thinking of non-specialists on the discipline. Education is new as a discipline in Nigerian Universities, having been properly introduced in 1963 with the coming of degrees rather than diplomas in Education.

The tragedy of its introduction, however, is that those who assisted in putting it there by the side of History, Mathematics and Chemistry thought of it only as a thin professional veneer on those subjects to aid secondary school teaching. As a result, whenever Education is mentioned in our Universities most people think more of pedagogy than of the balanced development of the individual or the intricate branch of knowledge indicated by the term. This brings into useful focus here a short but very revealing exchange between me and an Economics Professor in a Lagos hotel a few years back.

"Where is your next stop, Mr Roving Professor?" I inquired at lunch table.

"I should ask you", he said, "because Education Lecturers and Professors are never there on the campus, we teach their students and they only return for a few weeks' teaching practice before they go again. I wonder what they do".

"We educate", I replied promptly. "You give the poor students indigestible abstract knowledge unrelated to real life before you fly away leaving us to make men and women of them before you return. For with the application of philosophy, psychology,

sociology, self-discipline and communication methods, we enable some of these students to use whatever useful knowledge they acquire from you".

He showed an appreciation of my argument but determined to remain unconvinced. Economists seem to be traditionally stubborn !.

A large number of academics used to think poorly of Education whether as a profession or as an academic discipline and would always prefer their colleagues in Education to profess a traditional subject like history, geography or physics before their scholarship is acknowledged. I believe that this has now become a thing of the past with the clear demonstration of proven ability in scientific analysis and creative thinking among genuine Education scholars. The more spirited of the critics still say, however, that if one removes philosophy, psychology and sociology from the conglomerate there will be little left to be called Education. This, of course, is a very narrow and antiquated argument, because all true scholars now realize that most subjects as we know them are conglomerates and that a scholar merely picks a small section of his own conglomerate to develop, expand and relate to life. Who of the non-specialists among us would think that geographers, traditionally well-known for the definition of islands and archipelagos, contours and world climatic regions could ever propound solid theories on social order through the analysis of cities and their characteristic expansion? (I refer to the last Inaugural lecture by Professor Akin Mabogunje). The emerging theory now is that the more complex your conglomerate, the more informed you are and the easier it is for you to specialise with understanding and good judgement.

### *The Logic of Education*

We live in an infinite world of animate and inanimate objects, the animate comprising simple and complex organisms beginning with the amoeba, the simplest, and ending with Man, the most complex. Each unit lives and reproduces itself in its own peculiar ways, most of them by instinct but Man through a complicated reasoning faculty. Some of them can vary their characteristic ways of living by training which enables them to acquire specific

skills for the modification of training. Man, however, is in a unique position because of his reasoning faculty, his gregariousness and his social system. He cannot afford to rely exclusively on training like the lower animals because his own reasoning faculty may often direct him to modify the training he has received for certain situations. And yet he needs this training to conform in many respects with the social system without which he cannot satisfy his gregarious instinct and, as a result of which, he may not develop fully as a human being. Hence the logic of education.

Man must not only be trained to conform, he must also be given the opportunity to develop his reasoning faculty which enables him to modify his training to fit him better into his social system. Thus an engineer who feels helpless to improvise to assist his village in an emergency which touches on his profession is merely skilled but not educated. A teacher or a doctor who breaks his professional code of conduct in dealing with his wards or clients is not an educated person however proficient he may be professionally. Thus, it is highly desirable to educate all human beings in order to get the best out of them in the day-to-day interaction that is so necessary in our social system.

Education has thus become a basic activity of mankind everywhere. For it is the process by which all human beings acquire beliefs, knowledge and skill as they go through life. It goes on formally and informally, perceptibly and imperceptibly and has been regarded as the main process of transmitting dynamic culture and socializing the individual throughout the ages. In this simple form it was conveniently domestic and informal. But with urban revolution in China and in the Nile Valley more than 5,000 years ago the administration of the resulting economic surplus and the necessity for extensive calculations gradually led to the emergence of institutional training. And with the coming of institutions like priests' colleges and later schools, the organization of education became specialized and formal. It also became a discipline to which sages were attracted and the wise men of Egypt, China, Greece, Rome and even of modern times have spent considerable time and energy on the analysis of its purpose, organization and functional relationship to the economy, polity, religion and kinship of the people.

A number of these wise men have attempted to summarize their convictions on the purpose and functions of education in short definitions which have guided succeeding generations in their approach to its organization.

## II

### DEFINITIONS

It would be unprofitable even if it were possible to give all the definitions here. To summarize all of them to make sense would equally be impossible; so a few representative ones which have direct bearing on our theme of indigenous education have been selected. Speaking in a crowded hall during his inaugural address at the University of St Andrew's in 1867, John Stuart Mill observed, among other things:

Education, moreover, is one of the subjects which most essentially require to be considered by various minds and from a variety of points of view. For, of all many-sided subjects it is the one which has the greatest number of sides. Not only does it include whatever we do for ourselves and whatever is done for us by others, for the express purpose of bringing us somewhat nearer to the perfection of our nature; it does more; in its largest acceptation, it comprehends even the indirect effects produced on character and on the human faculties by things of which the direct purposes are quite different; ...whatever helps to shape the human being; to make the individual what he is, or hinder him from being what he is not, is part of his education.

(John Stuart Mill, 1867)

We wish to call your attention here to the many-sided nature of education and also to the part expected to be played by interaction with other people and the importance of the environment.

Meeting at Oxford in 1937, the Conference of Churches in an attempt to guide the laity and lay down general principles for its members organizing school education all over the world defined education as follows:

Education is the process by which the community seeks to open its life to all the individuals within it to enable them take part in it. It attempts to pass on to them its culture, including the standards by which it would have them live. Where that culture is regarded as final, the attempt is made to impose it on the younger minds. Where it is viewed as a stage in development, younger minds are trained both to receive it and to criticize and improve upon it.

(Oxford Conference of Churches, 1937)

Here again we wish to invite your attention to the many-sided aspects of education, the specific reference to the community and its dynamic culture and the part expected to be played by the youth.

F. C. Happold, in his book, *Towards a New Aristocracy*, seems to have summarized this very beautifully by saying:

Education comes not primarily through words, but through situations, not primarily through instruction, but through a pattern of living, not primarily through courses of study, but through an intangible spiritual atmosphere created by the community. (F. C. Happold, 1943)

This brings us face-to-face with our responsibility as educators and urges us to take stock to see whether by our past performances we have really been educating those sent to us for education. Whitehead clinches it all in his *Aims of Education*, by saying:

What we should aim at producing is men who possess both culture, and expert knowledge in some special direction". (A. N. Whitehead, 1929)

So we see that unless we infuse the culture of the community into our education programme we are not really educating the youth as we found we ought to do under 'The Logic of Education' discussed above. What is apparent from this is that conscious efforts must be made not only 'to open its (the community's) life to all individuals within it' but also make them go through

'a pattern of living' and 'an intangible spiritual atmosphere created by the community'. How do we do this? It can be done only by identifying the type of education we can mix with Pure and Applied Mathematics and Organic Chemistry to make men and women of our students. This is indigenous education, which we have to integrate into our institutional system of education in whichever way possible. Then comes the question, what is indigenous education?

### *Indigenous Education*

Indigenous Education is not easy to define because of its dynamic nature even though most of us understand what is so designated. It is cultural education, the mainstay of any group of homogeneous people. In colonial language it is often referred to as 'native' or 'primitive' education. Such derogatory terms are used to break the psychological resistance of indigenous peoples to make them accept alien superiority and reject their own cultural background.

It is, however, education that serves to transmit the folkways and mores of a people and emphasize the human values of the arts and the sciences alongside progressive enlightenment and refinement enriched by experience and understanding. It is the type of education that gives anybody confidence and enables him to explore the unknown firmly based on his home ground. It is therefore the education that develops and adjusts itself to the slowly changing nature of the people's physical environment to enable them enjoy fuller life. When it is carefully organized and given the place of honour it deserves it helps to absorb the shocks from the clash of cultures and strengthens the potential of the individual members of the group. As we shall see later, groups that take full advantage of its strengthening power quickly become high achievers both individually and collectively.

In the African context, it includes a good knowledge of the traditional institutions and their acceptance even in modified forms. Some of these are kingship, chieftaincy, family unit, age-grades, customs, manners, beliefs, knowledge, values, laws, language, music, art and crafts. It also includes the knowledge



and acceptance of how social life is regulated through a complicated system of taboos and social boycotts. It is based on three very sound principles, the belief in the oneness of society, morality as a way of life and knowledge that is practical and useful. It seeks to make every citizen a useful and co-operative member of the society and gives him expert knowledge in some special direction.

It has been severely criticized for repression and the inhibition of critical reasoning in children. While this is a genuine criticism for most ethnic groups in Africa, investigation has shown that there are a few exceptions where mothers are bound by custom to pay the greatest attention to the questions and free exploration of children below the age of five. This needs confirmation and publicity through more extensive research but what is being emphasized here is the scope of indigenous education in the African context.

### *The Challenge of Modern Times*

However adequate indigenous education may be within the context of the developing countries it has to be looked at more carefully if citizens of such countries wish to operate at the international level. And this is one of the main reasons for the title of this lecture. What effect will retaining or jettisoning indigenous education have on developing countries if they wish to operate effectively in the modern world? To be able to answer this question satisfactorily, it is necessary to look closely at some of the challenges these nations have to face in operating at that level.

As you all know and as we are daily reminded by our mammy-waggon drivers, 'NO CONDITION IS PERMANENT'. All societies face challenges and react to these as they develop. Therefore, no society is static. The changes that occur in these societies have been classified into two categories of slow and rapid by Margaret Mead, who has set out examples from her extensive study of simple societies like the Samoans of Samoa Island, the Antlers, an ethnic group of the plains Indians of North America, and the Manus of New Guinea. She has given examples of each category particularly one of the rapid category in which

an entire community, grandparents, parents and their grandchildren took on a new life when provided with new living models in a new culture.

The challenge of modern times has sent adults back to school for new knowledge and to test the fundamental principles underlying items of their culture. The result will enable them to grapple with the tenets of a new culture which will put them consistently in the learning situation. The challenge of the scientific age requires the individual to adjust for survival and development and the group to modify its approach to its environment and its conception of progress. There has been so much increase in the volume of scientific information within the last fifty years that not only the individual but also the group has been drowned in the wide ocean of scientific knowledge already created. Thousands of people have been frustrated as individuals at work either because they have unsuccessfully resisted the onward march of science or because they could not keep in step with the tempo of scientific development as it affected their lives. Some have been put out of gear socially while others have suddenly found that they had become misfits because they could not understand the machine language in their places of work.

The strains and stresses resulting from such situations are normally high and could be very harmful to the individual's mental health as analyzed elsewhere by many social psychologists and psychiatrists including our Thomas Lambo. Although such cases of mental frustration are greatest in urban areas among the age group between twenty and forty and in the rural areas between the ages of forty to fifty-five, every age group has been shown to be fairly represented. Using homicide rates as indices of these strains and stresses our Behavioural Science Research Unit here at this University found that the majority of criminal homicide offenders fall within the age group of twenty to forty and that there is a predominance of male over female offenders. Nowadays, people's needs increase phenomenally but there is little opportunity to make enough honest money to cover these needs. Meanwhile, some people spray ill-gotten money around to the discomfiture of hundreds of very poor but honest workers who also want the good things of life.

The challenge of modern times on groups is no less discomfiting than on individuals. Groups have been completely disorganized at the coming of the application of science, and ethnic cohesion has been undermined through the ignorance of the working of modern science and technology. This has often generated conflict among groups, with corresponding anxiety and frustration among the members. Science and modernism suddenly removed traditional authority without substituting a co-ordinating force thereby leaving the weak without the necessary protection. Most of the developing countries are in such a situation and so they find it difficult to get a firm basis for progress.

### III

#### THE BASIS FOR PROGRESS

But what is progress? We dare not take a philosophical view of the term here so as not to be involved in the controversy between the ancients and the moderns whose controversy has been going on since the seventeenth century on the question of who is wiser and whose authority should be accepted. The ancients argue that as forefathers of the moderns they are older and wiser and should be accepted as authority. The moderns, however, liken the situation to that of individual growth: that just as the individual grows older and presumably wiser as time goes by, so does humanity. "The so-called ancients are really the young men of humanity, and those alive today are the true ancients. They stand on the shoulders of their predecessors and can see farther, therefore, their wisdom and authority must be greater than those of their predecessors". This sounds logical in science but whether it is in philosophy is still unresolved.

We can accept however, that in broad terms progress means the successful solution of specific problems to the advantage of mankind, such solution leading to the rejection of some attitudes that have characterized human communities throughout their history. This may lead to the control of diseases, improvement

in farming methods, increased productivity, improved communication and the spread of literacy. Two things which have important bearing on our theme stand out clearly from this definition. The first is the successful solution of specific problems, and the other, the rejection of certain attitudes for new ones. These two have always been and will continue to be strong bases for progress in human society.

Finding successful solution to specific problems involves the identification of the problems and the possession of the dynamism required for pursuing the solution, therefore, it can only occur in virile communities conscious of their responsibility as innovators. Thus any community that desires to survive and develop must pull itself by its boot straps to identify its problems and actively engage in designing suitable solutions. It is abundantly clear from the lessons of history that self-reliance, self-criticism and self-help are the characteristic qualities of nations that make genuine progress.

The rejection of unprogressive attitudes for new and healthy ones is basic to progress for it allows for the ferment of ideas which promotes achievement. And as David Apter puts it, "When a whole group of nations are animated by a common desire for achievement, who is to deny them utopia?" (Hanson and Brembeck, 1966, p. 223).

### *Culture and Progress*

Since indigenous education is centred on the exposition of culture it will be proper for us to examine briefly the relationship between culture and progress as we have analyzed it with regard to developing countries. Culture is the distinguishing characteristic of a society as a whole and although complex in its ramifications it is an embodiment of the values of the society. Hence the reference to it in any standard definition of Education.

History has shown that no nation can progress satisfactorily without due regard to its cultural background. Evidence abounds that when a nation is desirous of making genuine progress, it closes its borders to foreign cultures, reorganizes its own, and builds further progress on it. The examples of Japan, Russia and China are still fresh in our minds. Each of these became

first-class world powers within half-a-century just by paying enough attention to cultural education and bringing in aliens into their systems for specific purposes. Any country that does not give the place of honour to its cultural background will continue to be "developing" without ever being "developed". The Jewish case is even more spectacular, for without a physical home but with their culture solidly embraced they contributed so much to world progress before the coming of Israel. The English boast, that World War I was won on the cricket grounds at Eton, is a triumph for tradition and culture.

On the individual side, psychologists agree that there is a high correlation between high achievement and good knowledge of and confidence in one's cultural background. For Africans in general and Nigerians in particular indigenous education fosters certain personal attributes which have been known to aid high achievement in the Western type of education. Some of these are mystic contemplation, effortless satisfaction, belief in the omnipotence of thought, easy spontaneity and cordial inter-personal relationships. It has also been shown that when Africans attempt to suppress their culture to westernize, the result has always been disastrous. One only needs to read Thomas Lambo's report on the social and health problems of Nigerian students in Great Britain to realize the pathetic truth of the situation. The story is told of a Chemistry graduate in Africa who was going in for a viva for a higher degree. A chair nail caught his pocket and a talisman dropped on the floor. His two mates were stunned, gazing at each other. He quietly picked it up and mumbled, "Not that I believe in it but I was persuaded to use it!!! This shows how difficult it is to get away from indigenous culture. Unless the individual is his real self he cannot perform at his best.

This does not, however, mean that unless we cling tenaciously to worthless traditions we cannot progress. It means that unless we mix the old with the new in the right proportions we cannot make satisfactory progress. As Brembeck puts it, "Somehow, education for change must teach people to perform the most difficult task of standing with one foot in the past, the other in the future, and still feel comfortable in the precarious present.

It must in a sense make them 'bicultured' rather than 'decultured'. Education can do this only if it is tied squarely to the contemporary realities of culture and is prepared to teach people to deal with them". (Hanson and Brembeck, 1966, p. 229.)

#### IV

### THE LIMITATIONS OF OUR INSTITUTIONAL EDUCATION

From all the definitions examined earlier, particularly the epigrammatic one from Alfred Whitehead, came the call to tie education squarely to the contemporary realities of culture. Unfortunately that is exactly what is missing from our present institutions of learning, either primary, secondary or tertiary. Everyone knows that we are being educated every minute of our life and that what we receive at school, college or university is only a small fraction of our total education. We are supposed to be exposed to such experiences in such institutions to guide us during the much larger part of the education process which goes on outside their walls.

But from experience we find that most of our primary schools are mass-producing semi-illiterates who neither digest the bookish knowledge given them nor appreciate the value of their culture. They are so far removed from their society that the original purpose of local culture transmission is lost. Instead they transmit foreign culture which is not properly understood. The high schools in their turn seem to be farther removed from the society than the primary schools because the content of instruction is geared to making them serve as agents of a foreign culture with very little or no room for initiative and flexibility. The type of education that a child should get between the ages of eleven and fifteen should be one that will excite his potentialities and make him reach out into useful experimentation under a competent guide and not one that is geared to examinations. Our universities need more thrust in the area of scholarship, inventiveness and leadership. They are not close enough to our culture for regeneration and the application of modern science and technology to its

tenets. John Diekhoff put it concisely when he said, "It is not enough for the University to be ahead of the world in knowledge. To fulfil its leadership function, it must seek to bring the world along, so that the knowledge of the laboratory and the library is current among those who apply it in government, in industry, in the military, in the professions, and especially in the schools. And in its classrooms the University must catch up with the changes it has helped to bring about in the lower schools. If it continues to lag in its teachings, it cannot escape responsibility for the world's lag". (*Journal of Higher Education*, 1964, p. 188.)

The limitation suffered by these institutions derives mainly from three sources: the society, the government and the teachers themselves. First, the society in that it does not know whither to go and therefore does little or nothing to influence policy. If the society wants examinations to have secondary assessment in our institutions it will do it by placing more emphasis on what a person can do rather than on his papers. Secondly, government does not animate activities in the institutions with enough grants, equipment and impetus. Thirdly, teachers are not devoted and know little of the culture they are supposed to transmit with the appropriate pruning. Thus our institutions are severely handicapped in playing the role for which they are established while these three important agents bow to one another at the action entrance waiting for who is to go in first.

### *Meeting the Challenge*

The simple message of this lecture is that if developing countries want to meet the challenge of progress profitably in modern times, they have to restructure their system of education through their culture. As was mentioned earlier this depends on three agents, the society, the government and the teachers. These are the agents on which the developing countries should rely for meeting the challenge. Let us take Nigeria as a leading country among the developing nations and begin with the teachers as catalysts to see how they are helping to meet the challenge. My department is moving in five directions to help meet this challenge. First, to make the idea of indigenous education real and relevant, I undertook a pioneer work on

Yoruba Education as a precursor to the analysis and consequent synthesis of the Nigerian culture. This idea has caught on and some of the large ethnic groups are now being studied to facilitate the required synthesis. For, as a leading developing country in Africa, this country can assist in identifying the useful characteristic features in the African culture like those enumerated above to use them profitably in acquiring modern technology. Even the belief in the supernatural from which we all struggle so hard to free ourselves is now being considered to a certain extent to be an advantage in the present-day world of cut-throat competition. Although the belief in the supernatural can lead to an unscientific attitude and therefore constitute a deterrent to the achievement of excellence in the Western type of education, it can also be a moderating influence on the excessive callousness of those in authority who wish to ride rough-shod over the interest of others in a society like ours.

Secondly, my department is actively participating in an Africa-wide revision of the content of the Foundations of Education to make the history, philosophy, psychology, sociology and the theory of education which our students take to qualify as teachers in our environment reflect our culture and aspirations as developing countries. This project is being sponsored by the Association for Teacher Education in Africa (ATEA).

Thirdly, we are working on a project designed to vary the old approach to education in the primary schools. Its objectives are:

- (a) to introduce a new approach to education whereby parents and local experts in the community can contribute directly to school education in areas which they know best and which will enrich children's education, particularly the appreciation of their environments;
- (b) to work out by means of research, the methods of delivery of education suitable for different environments within the country, e.g., among the rural farmers, the roving cattle-rearers, the inaccessible communities in the riverine areas and the complex population in the urban areas.



We have named the project the Ibadan Rural Education Model and Ibadan Urban Education Model (IBREM-IBUEM Project) to reflect its philosophy and it is being proposed to the Rockefeller Foundation for sponsorship.

Fourthly, we are actively engaged in studying another approach to learning in the traditional primary schools. Ife is experimenting on using the mother-tongue to teach all the traditional subjects in the traditional primary school. We are looking beyond the mere change of the medium of instruction to a more indigenous approach to the organization and content of primary school education.

Fifthly, we are actively assisting the Department of Adult Education and other agencies being employed to make indigenisation a successful reality through programmes designed for adults who without a high Western education can be assisted through indigenous education to make individual progress and thereby enhance the progress of the country as a whole.

I must mention here to the credit of all my colleagues in the Department and Institute of Education that we are able to pursue all these projects vigorously in the most friendly and co-operative atmosphere because we agreed to adopt the indigenous method of administration appropriate to the household of a big African chief with several wives, several children, several brothers, sisters, brothers and sisters-in-law, cousins-in-law and even strangers from other ethnic groups all working happily together for the good of the group.

I hope that the example of my department, though largely inadequate, partially covers what is expected of teachers in meeting the challenge. Let us now see what governments have done, are doing or propose to do to meet the challenge. What the governments of Japan, Russia and China did is now history, what Sekou Toure, Sadat, Nyerere and even Amin are doing on behalf of their respective governments are on the pages of the newspapers. But again to come nearer home, what our government is doing and proposes to do is symbolized by the indigenisation decree. We hope that this will be pressed to its logical conclusion, and that our institutions will be given

every opportunity to produce men and women with the required initiative to take over not merely in the western tradition but in an indigenous way which will increase output, confidence and quality, and an expansion which will baffle our pessimistic critics.

The governments of developing countries owe it a duty to their people to finance research adequately in their respective countries. It sounds ridiculous that the mother-tongue experiment at Ife is being financed by an outside agency and that our own projects here at Ibadan are being hawked outside the country. The most effective way of assisting this country to meet the challenge of progress in modern times is to encourage men and women of ability, probity and vision to engage in worthwhile research. The Ministry of Education and Fine Arts in Addis Ababa was addressing all developing countries, particularly those in Africa, when in a survey published in 1961, it says, "our culture, with its highly developed school of poetry, music and theology . . . has much to contribute to our way of life today, in linguistic and artistic beauty, in subtle reasoning, and most of all in concepts of dignity, morality and religious duty. The reconciliation of modern economic preoccupations with this calm unhurried contemplation of eternal values must be the constant concern of all who are engaged upon educational tasks . . . Our contribution to the world's cultural prosperity will be superficial and banal unless it is permeated with our own special sense of the past and its continuance as present reality".

After the government come the people, the society as a whole which should always be the final arbiter. The society perpetuates whatever it accepts as custom or tradition. With determination it can reject what it does not want even if its government wants it. If, for example, the society no longer wants the present emphasis on certificates and diplomas, all employers can agree to insist on all prospective employees passing their own tests whether or not they hold certain certificates. Within three years from such time, the extensive cheating, forging and all sorts of evil practices connected with obtaining certificates now would have been forgotten without government buldging an inch about it.

In meeting the challenge, individual members of the society will have to co-operate in checking corrupt practices and reviving our moral code of behaviour with the assistance of the government and the teachers. Without going back into our culture to pick up the *modus operandi* we may not be able to face the future. Harry Gideonse warns all developing countries thus, "The relation between economic growth and educational development is not merely a question of formal education. It is also a question of the type of education—or formative conditioning—which is informally but pervasively the fruit of growing up in a given culture. There is need—and the example of Turkey is suggested—in which the most important requirement for economic development is a religious reformation which will give adequate moral recognition to material and physical motivation". (Hanson & Brembeck, 1966, p. 183.)

## V

### PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

From the analysis of both the challenges of modern times and the serious limitations of our present institutions, it can be seen that the problems of achieving our desired goal are many and diverse, some of them in-built while others are external. Of the in-built, the most important seems to be the small ethnic divisions within the developing countries which make the homogeneity of culture embarrassingly difficult. Some of the ethnic groups approach the question of lingua franca or official national culture with such pettiness and immaturity that one wonders whether they are serious about making any progress at all. But I think that if some of these things are approached through genuine research, patterns will evolve. Sometimes, however, people become so loyal to their clans and so disloyal to national interest that they doubt research, reject advice and throw away reason! But such people are few and far between.

Another in-built problem is that of the characteristic slowness of business either with regard to taking decisions or implementing those already taken. This is proving to be a very chronic

disease in developing countries and it is one that will continue to keep us in the status quo for a long time to come or even bring deterioration in the status quo. We seem to forget as developing nations that time is against us. We are trying to achieve in a few decades what others achieved in a number of centuries and we still think that we have all the time to implement the decisions of an expert committee or the findings of a research project. Many of our friends abroad often think that what we need to take quick decisions and implement recommendations fast are benevolent dictators. But how do you get rid of them whenever they stop being benevolent?

The problem of organising what should go into institutional education as part of instruction is a real one. But the Ibadan approach with the support of the Association for Teacher Education in Africa (ATEA) is a guide. If developing countries organize area councils on culture and national ones develop from these, research findings can be considered objectively and the content of indigenous culture to be integrated into school, college or university curriculum can be easily determined with experts from such institutions.

Another major problem which cuts across it all is external, arising from the onward march of what may be described as a 'world culture' or sometimes known as the universal youth culture. There are two dimensions to this as Sir Arthur Lewis pointed out to the meeting of Commonwealth Vice-Chancellors here in Ibadan a little while ago—the spread of a universal youth culture and the emerging culture of subject specialists. He referred to the growing problem of young people all over the world modelling themselves upon the young people of California whose dress, drugs, music, dances, religions and attitudes to parents and teachers now set the fashion for young people throughout the rest of the world. "If the young of all tribes make themselves a common culture, then all other cultures will die out", he concluded. This may not be an entirely accurate forecast but there is real danger in the way vices reach our youth from abroad through modern mass communication media so that it will be an uphill task to contain them exclusively within their culture. Even Japan which we mentioned

earlier on as a good example of a country which had absorbed Western science and technology without affecting its traditions is now rapidly westernizing itself through the action of its youth. However, Japan has passed through the stage we are now in, and we too can only afford to accommodate deviates after we shall have got through it. Our main problem now is how to get through that stage before we have too many deviates.

The second dimension to the problem is the emerging culture of subject specialists. Mathematicians, physicists or groups of other specialists all over the world now seem to believe that they have more in common among themselves than with their kinsmen within their tribes; that is to say, the Japanese physicist, the German physicist and the Nigerian physicist have more in common with one another than any of them has in common with the coal-miner in his own country. If this catches on, then there will be a new re-alignment on profession or occupation rather than colour, physical features or geography, and we hope then that there will be no cause to run away from the domination of one group, possibly the surgeons this time, as we are all trying to do from the Western world at the moment.

However, the prospect is not all that gloomy because most of the nations of the world aspire to contribute something to world culture and this will always serve as an impetus for digging into their past to bring out something peculiar to them. The rise and fall in world leadership indicates that the universal youth culture can only be temporary as leadership rotates; today Britain sets the fashion, tomorrow America, next day Japan and the day after, Nigeria. The residual will always be a refined modification of indigenous culture provided it is cultivated. Since the argument is not that we should isolate ourselves in our culture but that we should make it dynamic by introducing new theories and new instruments to make it effective in a modern age, the chances of success seem to me to be good. Moreover, the amount of current interest in every facet of African culture, particularly in Ifa Divination, Indigenous Art of Healing, Art and Music, is a good sign of things to come.

Let me conclude by urging you to sit back and review your knowledge and competence as University men and women in the present world setting and see whether you have enough protection to challenge the present world order with success without a firm background in your own culture which you can only get through a re-vamped indigenous education.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY