

UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA  
44th Convocation Lecture  
Rebuilding the Nigerian Dream: Mapping the Building Blocks

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When the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, opened formally on 7th October, 1960 – six days after this nation's independence – it was with a spirit of hope and optimism. The same spirit pervaded the Eastern House of Assembly on May 18, 1955, when Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe gave a speech seconding the motion introduced by the Eastern Region's Minister of Education (Azikiwe, 1961). In the words of Dr Azikiwe:

"The immediate aim should be to develop the character, initiative and ability of the youth of the country, so that they may be reliable, useful and intelligent in the rapidly-changing life and circumstances of their own people. In other words, the aim of education is to develop the manhood and womanhood of the rising generation for the sake of their people. Anything narrower than this must lead to a stagnant and menacing flood of unemployed and unemployable youths.

He further said in the course of his speech:

It is my fondest wish that when the University of Nigeria ultimately becomes a reality, our young men and women will find opportunities for gaining experience in life's battle, so that lack of money will not deter them from obtaining higher vocational education in any of the faculties or institutes of the university. I hope that the training in self-help and the experience in self-reliance will make them more confident of themselves and enable them to puncture the myth of the proverbial lack of initiative and drive of the part of the Nigerian worker. With those momentous words our own dear Zik seconded the motion for the establishment of what was then called the "Palm Kernel University" as that the large portion of the income of the Eastern Regional government came from the palm kernel. Indeed, the founding of the University of Nigeria was a momentous step taken by the Eastern Region at that time to place the region on a sound and competitive footing for the training of its manpower. However, many doubted the capacity of a regional government struggling to keep up with the pace of growth in the demand for primary and secondary education to implement this grand dream. Story had it that on the day this motion was being moved it was feared that Mazi S.G. Ikoku, who was the leader of the opposition Action Group, was going to oppose the motion for the establishment of the university. Knowing his strong intellectual make-up and erudition, the ruling NCNC party had to come up with a plan on how to ensure that Ikoku did not raise his objections to the bill.

So a strategy was hatched. After the motion was moved and seconded, an NCNC member of the house – in his speech to support the motion – said that the idea of this university was to make it possible for those who didn't have any opportunities to go abroad to be educated in Nigeria. It is also intended for those who, after their fathers had spent a fortune educating them abroad, would not come back to contest and defeat their fathers in political elections.

As planned, this statement infuriated Mazi Ikoju who stood up and attacked the NCNC member in turn causing uproar in the house. In the midst of the furore, the Speaker of the House put the question of the university and all the NCNC members chorused "Aye!" and the bill passed without Mazi Ikoju having the opportunity to put the Eastern Regional government on the spot.

The establishment of the University of Nigeria held out great promise. A promise beautifully encapsulated in its motto: To Restore the Dignity of Man. The restoration of the dignity of man, I believe, has remained the focus of this great institution and, indeed, the goal of the Nigerian state.

As you graduate from this institution, you have been endowed with the academic rigour that this institution is known for. You have been provided with the tools of learning. The deep urge to question, to search for knowledge and to satisfy the curiosity of your mind has been planted in you. As you march out of the gates of this university, you are leaving behind the statue of the lion and the years you have spent in the beautiful hills of Nsukka and Enugu to go into a world lacking the protection that academia provides. You are marching into the reality of our dear country Nigeria.

Many past convocation lecturers, political analysts and political commentators have said so much about Nigeria and today I have decided to join them. But I am not interested in rehashing the trouble with Nigeria, to paraphrase Chinua Achebe, but in finding new opportunities for the restoration of the dignity of man. To remind you that the most abundant resources are sometimes right under our feet.

Let me share with you the story of Bata shoes. The Bata shoe company was founded by a family from the Czech Republic at the beginning of the 19th century (Wikipedia, 2014). In the 1970s Ken Burnett, a writer, was travelling through rural Kenya and saw children wearing this brand which was relatively unknown in the US (Burnett, 2011). It turns out that at the end of the nineteenth century, just as colonial Africa was opening up as a market, manufacturers of shoes across Europe sent representatives to various countries in Africa to see if there might be opportunities there for their products. All these representatives went back with the same answer: 'Nobody in Africa wears shoes. So, there is no market for our products there.' Except for the Bata representative who went back saying: 'Nobody in Africa wears shoes. So, there's a huge market for our products!' Today we are all familiar with Bata shoes.

Nigeria today is a nation punching below its weight. As of 2013, our population stood at 173.6 million and our GDP at N80 trillion or US \$521.8 billion. Our nearest competitor, South Africa, has a population of 54 million and a GDP of US \$350.6 billion (CIA, 2015). However, though Nigeria's population is more than three times that of South Africa's, its GDP is only 1.4 times greater. Brazil, which at 202 million people has a more comparable population to Nigeria, has a GDP of US \$2.246 trillion. More significantly, as of 2012 Brazil's poverty rate was 3.8% while Nigeria's was 33.1% (Emejo, 2014).

We are well behind in many other areas as well. With only 180,549 km<sup>2</sup> of roadway, we have fewer roads than we should. South Africa, by comparison has 362,099 km<sup>2</sup>, Indonesia has 437,759 km<sup>2</sup> and Brazil has a whopping 1,751,868 km<sup>2</sup>. As you well know, we generate far less power than we should. In 2011, Nigeria only generated 27 billion KWh. In the same year South Africa generated nearly 260 billion KWh while Indonesia generated more than 182 billion and Brazil generated nearly 532 billion (CIA, 2015).

However, side-by-side with comparable nations, Nigeria looks like a country of missed opportunities. A country on a trajectory that is not promising. But like the Bata story, there's a huge market for the products of our great Alma Mater and that is the opportunity.

A Financial Times of London article earlier this month announced that fashion and lifestyle magazine, Cosmopolitan, will be launching Cosmopolitan Nigeria, its first online-only edition in Africa. According to the company:

"Nigeria was chosen for the "digital first" debut for several reasons, including its young, English-speaking population, the lack of competition and increasing consumption fuelled by economic growth. [Parent company] Hearst [Magazines International] said nearly three-quarters of the population has a mobile phone, more than a third of Nigerians are mobile internet users and mobile commerce is widespread.

The country was also considered to appeal to advertisers looking to reach a new pool of consumers. The site will begin running adverts "in a number of weeks", [Duncan] Edwards [Chief Executive of Hearst Magazines International] said.

"Sub-Saharan Africa is of great interest to our advertising customers," he said, particularly to personal goods groups such as Unilever and Procter & Gamble, whose product ads are omnipresent in women's magazines.

Last year Heineken NV, the world's third-biggest brewer, announced that it was increasing its investments in Nigeria. Heineken, which is the majority owner of Nigerian Breweries, is confident that our market, based on our population growth and rising urbanisation will increase its beer consumption and ultimately boost profits (Atuanya, 2014).

Nigeria has many things going in its favour. We are regarded as Africa's largest economy, with an annual growth rate of 6 to 8%. As Cosmo pointed out, we have one of the largest mobile phone markets on the continent. And nearly 40% of our population has access to the internet. That is almost as much as South Africa at almost 47% and far higher than Indonesia at only 16%. Even Brazil has only managed to connect 53% of its population online (CIA, 2015).

The most virulent critics of Nigeria are Nigerians. When two or three Nigerians are gathered, their topic is usually Nigeria: Its missed opportunities, its poor outcomes and, particularly, the giant strides of other countries. A few years ago Nigerians celebrated one year of no blackouts in Ghana. Even though no such celebration took place in Ghana. They talked about how the Ghana Cedi was equivalent to the US Dollar even though it was just a decimalisation. Now that the Cedi has turned out to be one of the world's worst-performing currencies, losing nearly 300% of its value within a couple of months, and blackouts have become a common feature in Ghana as its budget deficit balloons, the Nigerian media has curiously kept silent. I don't see any media commentaries on the fact that Ghana has fallen back to the International Monetary Fund (Talley, 2014), and indeed to Nigeria, for assistance.

The criticism of our education system and the lamentations about the so-called Nigerian Factor notwithstanding, the Nigerian Diaspora has been singled out as one of the most successful black Diasporas in the world. In the United States, Nigerian-Americans dramatically outperform Americans in terms of income. In their book *The Triple Package*, Professors Amy Chua and Jed Rubenfeld explain that Nigerians are over-represented in the field of medicine, higher education, law and investment banking (Chua & Rubenfeld, 2014). Almost 25% of Nigerian households make over \$100,000 a year; only 10.6 percent of black American households overall do. Five percent of Nigerian American households earn over \$200,000 a year; the figure is only about 1.3 percent for black America overall. The median Nigerian American household income is \$58,000 a year; the national median is \$51,000. In 2010, Nigerian men working full-time earned a median income of \$50,000, while the figure for all U.S.-born men was \$46,000.

Why are Nigerians so successful? Because of the way we raise our children. According to

the authors, we Nigerians possess the three traits that breed success: a superiority complex – an idea that we are special in some way; insecurity – the fear that if we don't work hard we will fail; and impulse control – the ability to delay gratification in the short term for better outcomes in the future. Even if you had never attended this august institution, by virtue of being raised Nigerian, you already have the tools for success.

Dear graduates, I'm happy to announce that you have won the African lottery. The lottery you have won is the fact that you are born in Nigeria, a country with demographic dividends, natural resources and the most progressive human resource base on the continent. Nigeria offers unlimited opportunities for growth and advancement.

Our resilience and resourcefulness as a nation has pulled us back from the brink of disaster when many other nations would have crumbled. We survived a civil war and several military dictatorships each time returning with lessons learned that we incorporated into new iterations of our Constitution. After the civil war we gave the world the phrase: "No victor, no vanquished" and The Three Rs – Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation. And nine years after the war Dr. Alex Ekwueme from the Biafra side became the Vice-President and Edwin Ume-Ezeoke became the Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, an example of the Nigerian spirit.

Learning from the lessons preceding the war and the challenges of the parliamentary system of government the 1979 Constitution came up with a presidential system of government. After the June 12 crisis and the death of Chief MKO Abiola, in a true Nigerian spirit, a national consensus of zoning the presidency by region allowed two South-Westerners, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and Chief Olu Falae, to emerge as the major candidates for the 1999 presidential election.

The management of the federal character system led us to create the Federal Character Commission. The agitations of the Niger Delta people led us to set aside an extra 13% derivation from the Federal Allocation. Mitigating for the weakness of the state structure in Nigeria, we created the six zonal structure that has continued to guide government intervention in physical and social services.

You belong to a unique country, an exceptional country that has remained an example of unity in diversity. A country that has harnessed the characteristics of its diverse groups to weave a coat of many colours that may yet become the African Success Story that the world is yearning for.

You belong to a country with a "youth advantage." Our nation accounts for 47% of West Africa's population and most of them are young and working-age. Earlier this month a report from the McKinsey Global Institute showed that declining population growth in the world's 20 largest economies over the next 50 years would shrink the pool of available labour and reduce the rate of growth in the world's economic output by 40%. Among the 20 nations studied, only Nigeria, whose recent demographic patterns shows a continued growth in our population, would see its employment and GDP growth increase over the coming half-century (Manyika, et al., 2015).

However, when you leave this hall you will be entering a world in which our nation – despite its vast resources and advantages – is yet to perform at its highest potential.

So what can be done?

Many believe that the cure for Nigeria's ills lies at her head – at the national and federal level. But if you ask any builder what is the strongest point in any structure, they will tell you it is the foundation. To realise our potential we will attempt to map out the building blocks for rebuilding of the Nigerian Dream. The dream that Dr. Azikiwe, in his speech at the debate for the establishment of the University of Nigeria, eloquently alluded to. The dream of the

populace for a renascent Africa. A Nigeria that is a pathfinder and a shining example for the black race. That dream is achievable. That dream is not lost. What we need today is to rebuild that dream.

When the founding fathers of the United States of America said in their declaration of independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," it was an ideal because many in that room had black slaves in their houses and their farms. They did not include women because women at that time did not have the right to vote or own property. But the statement served as an ideal upon which generations of Americans have stood to fight for the expansion of individual rights, for civil rights and the empowerment of women.

Thus, the obstacles for the realisation of the Nigerian dream should not be lamented but should rather provide the impetus for collective action towards its achievement. That ideal Nigeria that we prayed for in the third stanza of our old national anthem:

"O God of Creation,  
Grant this our one request,  
Help us to build a nation  
Where no man is oppressed  
And so with peace and plenty  
Nigeria may be blessed"

And also in the first stanza of that same anthem:

"Nigeria we hail thee,  
Our own dear native land.  
Though tribe and tongue may differ,  
In brotherhood we stand,  
Nigerians all, and proud to serve  
Our sovereign Motherland."

So arise O compatriots and obey the call of Nigeria and build a nation where all Nigerians aspire to the highest heights and realise our full potential.

At the foundation of the building blocks of this dream is the local government. The local government system began in 1976 through the Local Government Reform Act of that same year and it was reflected in the Federal Constitution in 1979 (Olowu, 1986). Today there are 774 local governments across the country. According to the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, the main functions of a local government council include:

- Collection of rates, radio and television licenses;
- Establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds and homes for the destitute or infirm;
- Licensing of bicycles, carts, canoes and wheelbarrows;
- Establishment, maintenance and regulation of slaughterhouses, slaughter slabs, markets, motor parks and public conveniences;
- Construction and maintenance of roads, streets, street lightings, drains and other public highways, parks, gardens, open spaces, and public facilities;
- Naming of roads and streets and numbering of houses;
- Provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refuse disposal;
- Registration of all births, deaths and marriages;
- Assessment of privately-owned houses or tenements for the purpose of levying tax rates;
- Control and regulation of: door advertising, the movement and keeping of pets of all description, shops and kiosks, restaurants, bakeries and other places for sale of food to the



public, laundries, and the licensing, regulation and control of the sale of liquor.

- Provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education; and
- Provision and maintenance of health services.

Total federal allocations to local governments across the country in 2012 totalled N1.5 trillion – a figure that has been increasing year on year since 2009 (Finance, 2014). However, most local governments dedicate the bulk of their allocations to recurrent expenditures of salaries and administrative costs – rather than on capital projects such as education, health, public maintenance, and of course record-keeping. A research article published in the *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* analysed local government budgeting in Nigeria from 1995 to 2011 and revealed that local government councils are adequately funded through the statutory monthly allocations from the Federation Account. They had adequate internal revenue generation sources, as provided for them by the Constitution. The article noted that: “...much of the cries from the local government administrators in the country that this level of government is seriously under-funded and therefore, not capable of discharging its constitutional duties effectively and efficiently, are nothing but a façade.”

Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State, proposed a 2015 budget of N1.7 billion that dedicated over half of its expected allocation (53%) to recurrent expenditures. Of the remaining money dedicated to capital projects, 10% went to works, 9% went to education, and 8.5% to health. Less than 1% of the budget totalling N3 million was given to information and communication technology (ICT) (Oyediran, 2014).

Looking at the amount devoted for ICT, it was not surprising that a cursory web search for local governments in Nigeria produced no results. In fact, the Yewa South Local Government in Ogun State is the only one that has a website – and even that is starving for information. Neither their annual budget nor any of the services they provide are online. Even the states with the highest GDPs, led by Lagos State, had no information on their local governments. We met a black hole. That black hole can only be a cover for the mismanagement of over N1.5 trillion sent to local governments annually.

But managing a transparent public institution requires making information readily available. For example, the Cape Town municipal government has a website where information on its budget is accessible to citizens. Taxpayers can even find information on how their taxes are being spent by the government.

One of the building blocks is the issue of citizen identification. However, a key component of citizen identification is the registration of births and deaths. That simple function given to our local governments has been so neglected that about 70% of the 5 million children born annually in Nigeria are not being registered at birth, according to a UNICEF 2007 report. The report notes that:

“Birth registration is the first step towards recognizing a child’s inalienable right as a human being. Globally the births of more than 50 million children - which represent more than 40% of total births worldwide - go unregistered each year... [These children] have no birth certificate and, in legal terms, they do not exist. Their right to an identity, name and nationality is denied and their access to basic services is threatened.”

This has not occurred because of a lack of trying; Nigeria has made deliberate efforts to keep track of its population. In fact, its first conscious effort to have a universal system of registration of births and deaths began in 1979 when the Federal Military Government at the time issued the Births and Deaths Compulsory Registration Decree 39. The decree was aimed at establishing a national and state registration hierarchy, and included the appointment of a Registrar-General (Ola, 1984). The federal government’s 1992 Decree 69 on Vital Registration stated that: “Registration shall be carried out free of charge, within a

period of 60 days from the date of birth” and most recently, Section 5 of the 2003 Child Rights Act states that: “Every child has the right to a name and the birth of every child shall be registered. (The Law Library, 2015)”

However, poor organization and lack of access and transparency means that our population figure of 173.6 million is in fact simply an estimate. More accurate records based on birth and death registration at the local government level is essential. There is no way a nation can plan for the future when it does not even know its own population trajectory. Every process of reform requires data so we must move away from estimation and assumption and begin to plan based on facts.

India’s Identification Initiative is one of the world’s most ambitious identification programmes, according to Sunil Bharti Mittal, the Chairman and Group CEO of Bharti International in an essay titled “The Promise of Connected Growth”. Under the Direct Benefit Transfers initiative the government can send cash electronically to recipients of various public subsidies. The national ID system and the electronic transfer system have also curtailed transfer costs and eliminated the massive leakages associated with such disbursements in the past (McKinsey & Company Inc., 2013).

The correct identification of our citizens is at the heart of our security system. It is the building block for the construction of a middle class that can create capital and consume goods. It is the key to maintaining authentic national criminal and prison records. It is also a fundamental requirement for reducing money laundering, illicit fund transfers and the consumption of the proceeds of corruption. No successful modern state in the world today operates without a credible citizen record.

One of the building blocks is creating a one-stop shop for birth and death registration, voter registration, and driver licensing and registration will reduce the time that citizens spend on these services by almost 70%. Building a minimum of three of such centres in each local government nationwide – an investment of N10 million per centre at a total of N22.2 billion or 1.45% of the annual allocation – will also have the direct benefit of creating more than 20 graduate jobs and 30 vocational jobs per local government in Nigeria. A total of 38,700 direct jobs.

So if you young graduates work with your local government and the National Population Commission, we can utilise our nascent broadband capabilities and innovate to bring a credible birth and death registration system that will enable economic growth and security to Nigeria.

Let me give you an example. In Kenya, an initiative called the M-Farm (M-Farm Ltd., 2015), founded by a young woman named Jamila Abass, helps users check market prices for various crops in real-time. Such information was previously very difficult to access. The initiative removed middlemen from the process and allowed small farmers to get together and market goods at volume as well as to use their collective buying power to get discounts on items like fertilizer. Equipping farmers with better access to markets and information has made agribusiness a more attractive option for young people and enabled a quiet revolution in that sector of the country’s economy.

To bring all tiers of our government into the 21st century, we need to digitize information and make records available to all citizens. Digitizing public records will accelerate our economic growth and facilitate job creation. According to a recent report, digitization provided a boost of \$193 billion to the global economic output and created 6 million new jobs in 2011 (Wamda, 2013). The ICT strategy of the Jonathan administration is already doing this through the establishment of the Government Contact Centre which provides a roadmap for other tiers of government. The centre encourages online interaction between the

government and its citizens.

The proper collection and digitisation of records at the local government level will also open up new avenues for generating revenues from taxes. Last year the Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, noted that only 12% of our GDP comes from taxes – and most of that from taxing large corporations and oil companies (NAN, 2014). In fact, only 4.8% came from non-oil sources. By comparison, South Africa gets 25% of its GDP from taxes and Brazil gets 38.9% (CIA, 2015).

The digitisation of records will even help combat corruption. A great example of this can be seen in how the Federal Road Safety Commission's National Vehicle Identification System database helped save the Petroleum Equalisation Fund N14.4 billion between January and November 2013 (Kasali, 2014). Before that, fraudulent petroleum marketers would divert petroleum products, issue fraudulent bridging claims on waybills of undelivered products and use multiple number plates for a single tanker. Tagging individual trucks with a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) meant that only trucks that had been properly identified and approved could pick up and deliver products at depots.

The most remarkable thing is that we have all the tools we need to begin this digital revolution right now but we are simply not putting our resources to the best use.

Part of the local government's function is the naming of our streets and the numbering of our houses. Using modern geo-mapping technologies and tying them to the automated land registries that our state governments are supposed to provide will unleash billions of naira worth of what economist Hernando De Soto calls "dead capital." In his book *The Mystery of Capital*, De Soto estimates that there is about USD \$9.3 trillion in worth of undocumented land within impoverished and emerging economies.

The absence of records has also made it difficult for Nigeria to build social trust and modern infrastructure. There's no way to verify one's identity outside of one's locality. Thus, a bank in Lagos cannot reliably lend to an applicant in Enugu. However, the Abuja Geographic Information System (AGIS), which some other states have adopted, could serve as a path to a national land and property databank.

The effort to name our streets and number our houses would create over 15,000 jobs nationwide. Geo-location at the local and state level would allow us to unleash the Nigerian credit market. Land and property could then be used as collateral to obtain mortgages and business loans. The economic boost from that alone would be immeasurable. It will also limit the high speculation that has become the hallmark of the Nigerian urban property market and lift the veil of ownership of properties that serves as a safe haven for looted public funds. At the national level these missing building blocks have become a major obstacle to the security of lives and properties. Boko Haram has exposed the weaknesses in the foundations of our state and challenged its capacity. Indeed, a side effect of our adaptability in the face of difficult issues has been the absence of rigour in our institution-building and policing capacity. The insurgency is an existential crisis unlike any other before destroying many of our underlying assumptions about ourselves. Before Boko Haram, Nigerians were unanimous that suicide bombing was alien to our culture and our way of life. Today the insurgency goes as far as using women and children as suicide bombers, and kidnapping and attacking civilian populations. No more watched only on CNN and other foreign channels, such horrors have become our everyday reality.

Within an hour after the attack on the newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* earlier this month, French authorities were able to identify the terrorists and within a few days were able to track down their accomplices. They showed us the perpetrators' pictures and the records of their entries and exits from Paris, as well as their visits to Yemen. If Nigeria is to tackle its own security



crisis with such efficiency, it must drag its security infrastructure – from intelligence, law enforcement, judicial system, the prison system and the national defence system – into the 21st century. That effort can only be hinged on the building blocks of a modern nation.

So, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, a law rings true in all of nature: that birds of a feather flock together and I believe that in Nigeria we have been congregated because we possess the same tendencies, strengths and weaknesses. Lamenting our fate and criticising our situation will not change the situation. We need ideas. We need new ways of looking at old problems. The world is changing fast; we are faced with increasingly multifaceted problems that will require complex solutions. Your job as young graduates is to create these solutions through your critical thinking skills. I am asking you to take a view of the landscape and see that there is a great market for shoes in the bare-feet walking all over. Behave like Bata shoes and seek the opportunities not the obstacles.

The world of tomorrow cannot be defined by the problems of today. The trajectory of growth will not go in the linear fashion that western societies have gone. The story of NITEL, and how cell phones changed the way we communicate and interact by providing access where landlines failed, is a model for how not to shape the future using yesterday's technologies. Facebook is a testament to how innovation has changed the idea of the village square. Uber, the taxi-hailing app, has gone global changing the way we move from point to point. Who knows? Today's driverless cars may even change the concept of vehicle ownership. As print newspapers enter global decline and the rise of digital information sharing, everybody has become a journalist through social media.

We may lament the absence of physical infrastructure in Nigeria, but who knows? It may be the opportunity to leapfrog to a new set of dynamic infrastructures that are not constrained by legacy systems. As we build new cities, our energy requirements may not be the megawatts that we are currently expanding, but may come from the free natural resource of the sun. If the Wright brothers in their bicycle shop could have foreseen that their efforts could lead to aircrafts with over 400 passengers flying 18 hours non-stop, I wonder what their attitude would have been?

A young man approached a wise old man and asked, "What is the easiest thing in the world?" The wise man replied, "To give advice." I have exercised my right to choose the easiest thing in the world hoping you will find value there in. Exactly 20 years ago I was in this hall as a young, idealistic graduate eager to conquer the world and what I have received from the University of Nigeria; I have shared freely with you.

Now that you have been found worthy in knowledge and character, do not divorce character from knowledge. For in all technological advancements, in all the progress of mankind, the basic principle of sowing and reaping has remained constant. The basic law of gravity has remained constant. The basic law of homogeneity has remained constant. Character, which is of the spirit, is eternal and will ultimately determine your stand in the complex interaction of visible and invisible forces which define the role of the human being in nature.

As you leave this hall to begin the journey of self-actualisation the questions that must be plaguing your minds are where do I start? Where do I go from here? What do I do next? The answer is simple start with the first opportunity that comes your way. Don't wait for that job you consider worthy, every experience counts. Volunteer, serve, contribute your skills at any opportunity and ensure that you do not leave gaps in your resume. Don't forget that where you start from is not a determinant of your end point. Don't be found doing nothing, it is a recipe for failure.

You live in a world with endless possibilities. Take a deep breath and open your mind to it.

Stop focusing on the blockage at the neck of the bottle and start looking at the gaps and opportunities at the bottom. Today, each and every one of you has the opportunity to break from the status quo and go in a new direction.

Ask questions but do not be content with easy answers; look out for opportunities and grab them. You have to begin to see these challenges as opportunities otherwise the future will remain a book you are not ready to open.