

NATIONAL AND BEHAVIOURIAL TRANSFORMATION

A Keynote Speech by

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Protocol

Thank you for giving me the privilege to speak at this special event, 2019 Founder's Day & 4th Matriculation Ceremony of MCIU's Class 2023 – **Future Stars**. I have been asked to speak on a very timely and appropriate topic in this season in our nation, namely: **NATIONAL AND BEHAVOURIAL TRANSFORMATION**. The first question we should ask ourselves is: Why is national and behavioural transformation necessary in this season in our nation, Nigeria?

The increasing levels of insecurity, poverty, and uncertainties heightened by the inconclusive, suspended, and recounting votes and yet to be completed 2019 national and state elections, shows that it is not all well with our nation. We need transformation.

Secondly, Nigeria's population has been projected to reach 350 million by the year 2050. **Nigeria has been projected to add no fewer than 189 million people to her current population between 2018 and 2050, according to the report of UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) (<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/05/nigeria-add-189m-people-2018-2050-un/>).** To survive this population explosion, our economic growth must outpace our population growth. For our economy to grow, we need major attitudinal and behavioural shifts that will attract foreign direct investments that will grow our economy among other policy changes.

The third reason is that Africa has been tagged by many experts as the next frontier in global economic development in the next 25 – 40 years.¹ Nigeria is expected to

¹ The Fastest Billion by Charles Robertson

play a major leadership role in the economic and social emergence of Africa. Hence, Nigeria must purposefully develop the requisite human capitals to meet these trending challenges. For these and other reasons, we should critically re-examine and re-engineer our approach to human capital development if we are to ensure Nigeria's present and future prosperity. There are proven purposeful human capital development models from which Nigeria can learn.

Case Study 1: Taiwan

Taiwan is a barren rock in a typhoon-laden sea with no natural resources to develop. It even must import sand and gravel from China for construction. Yet it has the fourth-largest financial reserves in the world. How can this be possible? The secret is rather than digging in the ground and mining whatever comes up, Taiwan has deliberately invested in the development of her 23 million people, their talent, energy and intelligence — both men and women. Taiwan has no oil, no iron ore, no forests, no diamonds, no gold, just a few small deposits of coal and natural gas. Because of lack of natural resources, they formed the habits and culture of honing her people's skills, which turns out to be the most valuable and only truly renewable resource in the world today, because necessity is still the mother of invention.

Case Study 2: Singapore

Singapore is one of a handful of nations that have developed from third to first world status within one generation. Within 30 years of her separation from Britain in 1959 and Malaysia in 1965 to become an independent nation, the founding fathers of Singapore successfully navigated her through very tortuous paths to become a first world nation of influence and affluence. Inheriting a nation corroded by: poverty, unemployment, no foreign investments, poor education institutions,

poor health institutions, poor housing, corruption which coloured the political climate, no law and order, external threats from China, Indonesia, USSR. As those were not enough, they were booted out of Malaysia in 1965. No body gave them a chance to succeed as a City State. But, through deliberate and strategic development of leaders and followers, Singapore emerged from poverty to become a first world nation within one generation- a feat that very few nations have attained.

How did they accomplish this? The answers are captured in the words of the late Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father of Singapore, in the book: “***From Third World to First- The Singapore Story From 1965 to 2000***”.

Lee Kuan Yew wrote:

When we started in 1959, we knew little about how to govern, or how to solve our many economic and social problems. All we had was a burning desire to change an unfair and unjust society for the better (Chapter 43, page 687).

From this statement, we see that successful nation building begins with a sincere and passionate vision to build **a fair and just society**. This vision is in consonance with the Nigerian national anthem which states our desires **to build a nation bound in freedom, peace, and unity**. A nation where no man is oppressed. A nation where we shall help our youths the truth to, in love and honesty grow, living just and true, to build a nation where peace and justice shall reign.

Let me shade more light on the type of nation the Founding Fathers of Singapore set out to build and the values they wanted to cultivate in their society:

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1. *They wanted to build a harmonious, peaceful, prosperous, multi-racial, multi-religious, social democratic society, based on justice, equality, integrity and meritocracy.*
2. *They wanted to transform their nation from a Third World to First in one generation (1965 - 2000).*
3. *They desired a nation led by Leaders of Integrity: to create a Corruption-free Society.*
4. *They set a goal to develop disciplined, hard-working, highly educated, skilled & productive workforce.*
5. *They wanted to create a culture of savings by encouraging delayed gratification: a society that saves (30-40%).*
6. *They set out to create a nation that is Self-Reliant- minimal Foreign Aids, and totally independent nation.*
7. *To create a clean, green and safe society- Environment & Security*
8. *To create a Quadra-Partism Alliance: Government, Labour – Business - Education Sectors working together in mutual co-existence to create a first world economy- no strikes!*
9. *they dreamt about a nation where there will be employment for all; quality, affordable & sustainable housing for all; quality education, health care, infrastructure & living standard for all; and justice **for all**- no impunity.*

In the words of Lee Kuan Yew:

*We had one simple guiding principle for survival, that Singapore had to be a more rugged, better organized, and more efficient than others in the region.... We had to make it possible for investors to operate successfully and profitably in Singapore despite our lack of a domestic market and natural resources. (**Chapter 4, Page 58**).*

These nations understood that the development of any nation hinges on: 1) Developing reliable and cheap land, air and sea transportation system for the movement of goods and services; b) Developing disciplined and well trained workers that can operate the industrial machines and highly technical equipment; c) Establishing a stable and efficient government that facilitates and not impede development for both local and foreign investors. In the words of Lee Kuan Yew:

This meant we had to train our people and equip them to provide First World standards of service. I believed this was possible, that we could re-educate and re-orientate our people with help of schools, trade unions, community centers, and social organizations...[to] get our people to change their Third World habits. (Chapter 4, Page 58)

To do this, they invited foreign organizations to establish training institutes that met international standards according to the words of Lee Kuan Yew:

After 4 to 6 months of training, these workers, who were trained in a factory-like environment, became familiar with the work systems and cultures of the different nations and were desirable employees. These training institutes became useful points of reference for investors from these countries to check how our workers compared with theirs. They validated the standards of Singapore workers. (Chapter 4, Page 69)

Interestingly, the mentality of the Singapore's top leadership was focused on how to add value to their young people as again captured by Lee Kuan Yew follows:

Ngiam Tong Dow, a young EDB [Economic Development Board] Director...remembered what Keng Swee told him, that every time he drove by a school and saw hundreds of children streaming out, he felt downhearted, wondering how to find jobs for them when they left school.
(Chapter 4, Page 59)

It is quite clear from the above quotations that the leaders of Singapore were highly intentional in developing rugged, better organized, and efficient young men and women who could do things better and cheaper and are able to provide first-world level of service. Such dedicated commitment to human capital development created massive employment, which in turn, created committed and loyal followership.

Nigerian Universities and the Human Capacity Requirements for National Development

Recent study reviews in 2013 by the Senior Executive Course 35 of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) titled: ***Strengthening Institution Frameworks and the Transformation Agenda with a Sub-Theme: Human Capital Development and Transformation Agenda in Nigeria***, concluded that the nation lacks adequate human capacity to meet the demands of the Vision 20:2020.

The 20th Nigerian Economic Summit (NES #20) in 2015 organized on the theme: ***Transforming Education Through Partnerships for Global Competitiveness***, reached an already-known conclusion that: the Nigerian education sector is in dire straits and would require the intervention of both public and private sectors'

stakeholders if it is to fulfil its function of preparing Nigeria to compete in the global economy.

To ensure that Nigeria has the labour force that is highly skilled, innovative and globally competitive, the Nigerian Economic Summit NES #20 report in 2015 made several recommendations: 1) that government must ensure that the Nigerian education curricular be tied to the national vision; 2) that it be fit for purpose of character and 21st Century skill development towards national transformation; 3) that the Education Sector be led by competent and disciplined professionals who are appointed on merit; 4) that student assessment be knowledge-application based; 5) that there should be significant private sector intervention projects through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs); and 6) that native intelligence be explored and developed.

Creating an Atmosphere for Appropriate Human Capital Development

To achieve these, obviously a new learning environment different from the existing status quo in our places of learning must be explored.

In his March 2012 New York Times article titled: ***Pass the Books. Hold the Oil***, Thomas L. Friedman described findings by a team from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or O.E.C.D., from its study from their Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA. O.E.C.D. offers tests on mathematics, science and reading comprehension skills to 15-year-olds in 65 countries every two years. The study mapped and compared the performance of the students with the total earnings on natural resources as a percentage of G.D.P. for each participating country. In other words, how well do the high school students

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do on math and science skills compared with how much oil their countries pump and sell or how many diamonds they dig and sell?

The results indicated that there was a ***“a significant negative relationship between the money countries extract from national resources and the knowledge and skills of their high school population,”*** according to the administrators of the PISA exams for the O.E.C.D. ***“This is a global pattern that holds across 65 countries that took part in the latest PISA assessment.”*** That Oil and PISA scores don not correlate positively. (See the data map at: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/9/49881940.pdf>). According to the latest PISA results, students in Singapore, Finland, South Korea, Hong Kong and Japan stand out as having high PISA scores and few natural resources, while Qatar and Kazakhstan stand out as having the highest oil rents and the lowest PISA scores. In the 2007 report, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Algeria, Bahrain, Iran and Syria stood out the same way in International Mathematics and Science Study. Interestingly, students from Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey — also Middle East states with few natural resources — scored better. Also lagging in recent PISA scores were students in many of the resource-rich countries of Latin America, like Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. Africa was not tested. Countries like Canada, Australia and Norway, though having countries high levels of natural resources, still score well on PISA. The reason is because all three countries have established deliberate policies of saving and investing these resource and not just consuming them.

The conclusion from the study is: **if you really want to know how a country is going to do in the 21st century, don't count its oil reserves or gold mines, count its highly effective teachers, involved parents and committed students. “Today's learning outcomes at school, according to the study, are**

a powerful predictor for the wealth and social outcomes that countries will reap in the long run.”

The former Prime Minister of Israel, Madam Golda Meir, once lamented that, **“Moses arduously led the Jews for 40 years through the desert — just to bring them to the only country in the Middle East that had no oil.”** But Moses may have gotten it right, after all. Today, Israel has one of the most innovative economies, and its population enjoys a standard of living most of the oil-rich countries in the region are not able to offer.”

From his foreword to the book: **Start Up Nation** by Dan Senor and Saul Singer, Shimon Peres, the Late Former Prime Minister of Israel wrote concerning the leadership paradigm that built Israel:

- **The seeds of a new Israel grew from the imagination of an exiled people**.... [When we return to Israel in 1948] the soil was obstinate, and the environment was hostile. On our ancient journey from Egypt to Israel we Jews crossed a huge desert and, in modern times, to, returned home to more desert. We had to create ourselves anew.
- As a poor people coming home to a poor land, we had to discover the riches of scarcity. The only capital at our disposal was human capital...The Kibbutz became an incubator, and the farmer a scientist.
- Israel bred creativity proportionate not to the size of our country but to the dangers we faced.”
- High-tech in Israel began with agriculture. Even with little land and less water, Israel became an agricultural leader.

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- *Though many still consider agriculture the epitome of low-tech, they are mistaken: technology was 95% of the secret of Israel's prodigious agricultural productivity and 5% labour.*
- *Today, Israel has gone from innovating for agricultural improvement to becoming **a farmer of high-technology** such as new software, drugs, microchip, etc.*

Had Moses settled in Saudi Arabia, or any of the oil rich territories in the Middle East instead of the current barren desert called Israel today, the innovative spirit seen today in Israel would not have been the prevalent culture. They would have been as docile as their neighbours. The young generation of Israelites now say that they have finally discovered the **milk and the honey** that Moses promised them: they are their creative and innovative minds activated by living in an environment that is harsh and resources scarce. This proves that necessity is still the mother of inventions.

The Israeli story concurs with the PISA team report, revealing a national disease, vis a vis: **societies that get addicted to their natural resources seem to develop parents and young people who lose some of the instincts, habits and incentives for doing homework and honing skills.** In contrast, according to the study, “in countries with little in the way of natural resources — Finland, Singapore or Japan — education has strong outcomes and a high status, at least in part because the public at large has understood that the country must live by its knowledge and skills and that these depend on the quality of education. ... Every parent and child in these countries knows that skills will decide the life chances of the child and nothing else is going to rescue them, so they build a whole culture and education system around it.”

As K. R. Sridhar, the founder of the Silicon Valley fuel-cell company Bloom Energy, once said: ***“When you don’t have resources, you become resourceful.”*** That’s why the foreign countries with the most companies listed on the Nasdaq are Israel, China/Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, South Korea and Singapore — none of which can live off natural resources.

In summary, the study concludes that ***“knowledge and skills have become the global currency of 21st-century economies, but there is no central bank that prints this currency. Every [nation] has to decide on their own how much they will print. Sure, it’s great to have oil, gas, diamonds and all the mineral deposits in the world; they can buy jobs, but they’ll weaken your society in the long run unless they’re used to build schools and a culture of lifelong learning.*** The thing that will **ENSURE THAT NIGERIA’S PRESENT AND FUTURE PROSPERITY IS THE NEED TO USE OUR NATURAL RESOURCES AS CATALYSTS FOR PURPOSEFUL HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT that gives us a competitive edge globally.** For that to happen, we must change how we produce leaders changing our education systems.

To ensure Nigeria’s present and future prosperity, the first place to start in my humble opinion is to re-examine and re-engineer our approach to human capital development. The focus of the First-Generation Universities (1GU) were learning for the sake of knowing, never minding how such knowledge could be converted to societal gains. The Second-Generation Universities (2GUs) took learning further and emphasized learning for doing or product development and/or improvement. **Third Generation University or 3GUs** is emphasizing learning for life or social improvement. The Third Generation University (3GU) has distinct features that

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makes it unique as the new way of developing competent, skilled, applicant-driven, graduates that can transform our dear nation. The 3GU model emphasis education for societal transformation. Nigeria must seriously consider adopting this model of education if Nigeria is to comfortably absorb the 189 million people increase in population by 2050 and lead African economic renaissance **despite** increasing steep global economic competition and emerging complexity of cross-cutting social-economic challenges. This will help to develop responsible leadership and followership that that are rugged, resilience, who can efficiently and effectively convert our natural resources to their highest derivatives.

These are my humble thoughts on the topics you have given me to speak on. Let me once more thank leadership of Michael and Cecilia Ibru University for the invitation, and congratulate the Founders, and appreciate all the Special Guests of Honour, and the Distinguished Guests for your attention.

May God bless you.

May God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

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