

# **THE PURPOSE OF WORKSHOP: THE REASON FOR CHANGE**

**Text of the Lecture Delivered by the Vice-Chancellor, University of Ilorin, Prof. Is-haq O. Oloyede, on the Occasion of the Orientation Workshop Organised for the Newly-recruited Staff of the University by the Centre for Research, Development and In-House Training (CREDIT) on Monday, November 9, 2009 at the University Auditorium.**

## **The Purpose of Workshop: The Reason For Change**

### **Introduction**

Attitude is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than what people do or say. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. - W.C. Fields

I heartily welcome you to this important orientation programme organised by our Centre for Research, Development and In-House Training (CREDIT). I want to congratulate and give credit to the Director of CREDIT, Prof. Isaac Abimbola, and his lieutenants, for conceiving and delivering this workshop as part of their mandate. This is because workshops of this nature are very important and orientation programmes are very necessary for all people, new employees and students, in new environments so that they may know their right from left in their new operational contexts.

It is my hope that at the end of the workshop, our newly-recruited staff, for whom this programme is primarily meant, would have benefitted a lot. I expect that at the end of passing through this training, you would have been greatly assisted in directing your thoughts, controlling your emotions and ultimately ordaining your destiny. I congratulate you on the success of joining the workforce of the University of Ilorin, the University with a difference, and I wish you all a fulfilling career as academics, administrators and as other categories of staff.

### **It's All About Attitude**

The first important condition for anyone to be successful is a function of attitude. Everyone has attitudes but it is not everyone that has the right attitudes. That is why one would agree with W.F. Fields, quoted above, that attitude is the ultimate. In a new environment or workplace, attitude really matters. Everyone needs to form, develop, modify or even change attitudes at one time or the other in order to attain success.

If I may ask, what is your attitude to God Who created you? What is your attitude to the University of Ilorin where you are now employed? What is your attitude to your superiors, colleagues, subordinates or fellow human beings? What is your attitude to yourself? Some people consider themselves as failures. They have a low self-esteem and the world will eventually deem them the way they consider themselves. Our life will be as good as we think it is.

The components of attitudes are beliefs, dispositions and actions and our attitudes can be positive, negative or ambivalent (love/hate). What do you think or *believe* of the University of Ilorin? What is your *disposition* to the University? What can you do or not do for the sake of the University? Right attitudes produce right actions and wrong attitudes produce wrong actions.

In an address I called “Our Attitude, Our Altitude” that I delivered at the end of the 12th Association of African Universities General Conference in Abuja on May 8 2009, I shared what I learnt about attitude with the audience and to some of them, it was revealing. Some of you would have come across it before but I think it is worth sharing and repeating. I said:

...let me buttress my point on attitude with this little scientific truth I learnt somewhere in order to make life 100% successful. If each letter in the alphabet has a numeric value and it's equal to that value in its sequence, then A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z is equal to 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26. Thus,  $H+A+R+D+W+O+R+K = 8+1+18+4+23+15+18+11=98\%$ ,  $K+N+O+W+L+E+D+G+E = 11+14+15+23+12+5+4+7+5 = 96\%$ ,  $L+O+V+E=12+15+22+5= 54\%$ ,  $L+U+C+K = 12+21+3+11 = 47\%$  (None of them makes 100%). Then, what makes 100%? Is it money, power, fame or what? Every problem has a solution, if only we change our attitude to it. It is our A T T I T U D E towards Life,

Others and Work that makes OUR life 100% successful: A+T+T+I+T+U+D+E =  
1+20+20+9+20+21+4+5 = 100%.

So, all life is about attitude.

### **Why Are We Here?**

We are all here today not because we have less work to do but because this workshop is very pertinent to your successful tenure in the University of Ilorin. I used the word “tenure” because everything that has a beginning automatically has an end. Since the day you received your letter of appointment, the people in Establishment have started doing a count down, though surreptitiously, of the number of days you have left. Years pass quickly and before you know it, you are retiring, other things being equal but hopefully so. This is because as it is not automatic for every newly admitted student to graduate, it is not automatic for every new staff member to retire from the University. If a person, student or staff member, runs foul of the law, the University has regulations through which such an individual will be exited quickly before s/he is ready. I pray this will not be your portion.

As ignorance of the law is said not to be an excuse, this workshop is intended to make your career a success such that you will attain your full professional potential and be your best. A Graduate Assistant today will be the Professor of tomorrow. The Administrative Assistant of today will be the Registrar of tomorrow. It is your primary responsibility to do your work conscientiously and the system will reward you. It is towards this end of making you be your best that this workshop is aimed at:

- preparing you for change in tune with a new environment and a rapidly changing world;
- familiarizing you with the history and structure of the University of Ilorin to enable you to align your expectations with the expectations of your new employer;
- acquainting you with basic communication skills to improve interpersonal relations in a new environment;
- familiarizing you with the available facilities in the University Library and the Portal;
- providing you with the needed information to interact efficiently and effectively with the Bursary Department;

- accustoming you with the provisions of the General Order;
- providing you with knowledge and skills needed in conflict management and resolution, leadership and time management;
- equipping you with the knowledge and skills needed in registration, advising students and general record keeping;
- sensitizing you on the rules of behaviour related to your jobs and within relevant laws; and
- apprising you with the rudiments of your jobs and how to grow and develop professionally.

Towards meeting these purposes, resource persons and experts have been sourced internally and externally and it is my fervent hope that you will take advantage of their wealth of experience and benefit from them maximally. This workshop is for your good. It is all about you.

### **The Need For Change**

Change, from the time immemorial, had been the most constant feature of life. The early Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, believed that everything in nature is in a state of constant change. Scientists tell us that physical and chemical changes occur in matter or anything that occupies space and possesses the attributes of gravity and inertia. Matter may be solid, liquid or gas. Matter matters when it changes.

In a related vein, both ‘dynamics’ and ‘inertia’ are two scientific terms. Dynamics is the branch of science that deals with motions of bodies and the ways these motions are influenced by applied forces. Newton’s Law of Inertia, however, posits that every body perseveres in a state of rest except it is compelled by impressed forces to change its state. Everyday, the forces of dynamics change matters from their states of inertia. Everything changes and nothing sustains a state of inertia for so long.

But as normal and natural as change is, it is hard. Thomas Friedman tells us that “Change is hardest on those caught by surprise. Change is hardest on those who have difficulty changing too. But change is natural; change is not new; change is important”. In life, we must all be prepared to change. One must be ready to change or be

changed! The world is changing and it is changing fast. In a fast changing world full of dynamics, it is suicidal to be in a state of inertia. A staff member of the University of Ilorin is essentially expected to be dynamic, not inert.

I do not know how many participants here have got our current Annual Report that I presented at the last Convocation Ceremony. In my introduction to it, which I called “It is possible”, I talked about change and how skeptical people feel about it that many people even resist it. We all use the telephone and we have taken it for granted. But when the idea of the telephone was mooted, people scorned it. In fact, Alexander Graham Bell, its inventor, was arrested and detained because he was considered what one would call a ‘419er’ in the Nigerian parlance for trying to get funding to execute his research. A newspaper, as I wrote, even editorialised as follows:

He (Alexander Graham Bell) claimed he was promoting a device whereby one person could talk to another several miles away, by means of a small apparatus and some wire. Without doubt, this man is a fraud and an unscrupulous trickster and must be taught that the American public is too smart to be the victim of this and similar schemes. Even if this insane idea worked it would have no practical value other than for circus sideshows.

It is not unlikely that some people would even consider this orientation to be unnecessary. But we know it is necessary and, now or later everyone will realise it is. There is a need for change in the way we think, in the way we talk and the way we act. Let us always remember that the only permanent thing in life is change and change we must. A black man in America rode on the slogan of “change” to change the polity and become the first of his kind to preside over America. That is the power of change. There is a need for change and that is why the University of Ilorin is changing.

## **Changing Attitudes and Changing the World**

Many people complain about the world, the general state of affairs, without realising that they can change the world by changing themselves. The purpose of this workshop is to stimulate us to think, talk and act in a different way. Many people lack the power of independent thinking; they allow other people to think for them and they absorb other people's thinking, no matter how defective or ill-informed such thinking is. This is unfortunate.

Newspapers and their writers think for many people. If we surrender our capacity to think for others, then in our life, we are living in a shadow. We are not real. To change the world, we must change ourselves. And to change ourselves, we have to be determined. Success requires determination. No success is attained on the basis of doing business as usual. We have to think the unthinkable. We have to make possible the impossible.

There is this story by Napoleon Hill and W. Clement Stone. A preacher was at home thinking of what to say on a raining day. The wife was not at home and his young son left with him was restless and edgy. The man needed to think but the boy would not let him be. To keep the boy busy and gain some time, he picked an old magazine and found a full page brightly-coloured picture showing the map of the world. Then, he tore the page from the magazine, ripped it into bits and pieces and scattered everything all over the floor. He told the boy, "Johnny, if you can put this all together, I'll give you a quarter", a quarter of a dollar or 25 cents, that is. He thought it was a good strategy of keeping the boy busy for at least a few hours.

Barely after 10 minutes, Johnny knocked on his father's door. He wanted to claim his prize for the map had been neatly arranged. The man could not believe his eyes. How could his son solve such a puzzle in so short a time? He asked him how he did it, for the father knew it would take him himself a much longer time.

"Oh," said Johnny, "it was easy. On the other side there was a picture of a man. I just put a piece of paper on the bottom, put the picture of the man together, put a piece of paper on top, and then turned it over. I figured that if I got the man right, the world would be right." The man smiled appreciatively and handed the boy his well-

deserved quarter. He told his son that he had provided him the sermon he would deliver: *if a man is right, his world will be right*. This is very important. *If you are right, your world will be right*. A good mental attitude is not to blame others. A good mental attitude is to take responsibility for one's actions. Let's consider marriage as a case in point.

Marriages collapse easily nowadays as we all know. The United Kingdom has the highest rate of divorce with a rate of 45% and the situation is not much different in other advanced countries. There is no need for statistics because someone each of us knows is a divorcee. In such a situation, someone is to blame. Marriages do not break because people are not intelligent, talented or educated. There are many educated people that have broken homes. Marriages break because people do not adjust or change with the new circumstances. Things go awry because people lack self-discipline.

Socrates, the Greek philosopher, had a broken marriage. He was married to a beautiful woman, Xanthippe, but no sooner had they got married than they began seeing each other's faults. Xanthippe was a nagging wife. Socrates was not faultless either as a husband. Socrates was reported to have said, "My aim in life is to get on well with people. I chose Xanthippe because I knew if I could get on with her, I could get on with anyone". There is a difference between words and actions. Socrates did not live up to his words. He could not tolerate his wife. His marriage with Xanthippe hit the rocks. Who was to blame? Socrates? Xanthippe? Both! It would take two to tango.

### **Dawn Abraham's Guidelines**

In an article called "What everybody should know about the power of positive thinking", Dawn Abraham discusses what he calls his "ten power of positive thinking guidelines" and they are worth sharing.

1. Reserve Judgement. Spend a whole day not judging anyone or anything.
2. Create a happy zone in your mind. There are many ways to do this. Visualization is a great way to start.
3. Believe in yourself as someone without limits. Spend the day doing things you felt you were afraid to try.

4. Use positive words. Watch and listen to what you say to yourself all day. Make sure you are using positive words to speak to yourself...
5. Smile today every fifteen minutes. Smiling changes your perception about life. Know that what you think about all day is your reality.
6. Practise acceptance of knowing there is a purpose for everything that happens in life. Find the lesson in each situation and know it is meant to be.
7. Take time to get in touch with your spiritual self, start meditating everyday. Spend some time in silence. You can use guided mediations as well...
8. Be of service to everyone you come in contact with. Start out your day asking how can I help?
9. Tune in your intuition on daily basis and ask what you should be doing today? Be on purpose when you plan your day and then listen.
10. Count your blessings everyday then thank the Universe for them. Gratitude is huge in maintaining positive thoughts.

The last point is especially instructive to those who always complain. If we were thoughtful, we would be grateful.

### **Playing our Part**

The University Management on our part are fully committed to the promotion of staff welfare. This is because we know that motivation results in efficiency and to whom much is given, much is expected. While it is generally believed that people don't give you your right until you fight for it, at the University of Ilorin, we try to ensure that no right is denied any deserving staff member and as such, there is often no reason to fight. Our desire to build a world-class University we know would be a tall dream if the staff are low-spirited and are not well motivated to put in their best. In this, we try our best. We cannot say our best is enough in all circumstances.

There are many layers at which the University advances staff welfare, explicitly and implicitly. One explicit indicator is that we do not joke with staff salaries and on the 21st of each month, whether the University receives

money from the Government or not, we have taken it upon ourselves that staff salaries are be paid under all circumstances. The other one is the capacity building through the provision and distribution of 110 laptops to various categories of University staff.

Besides, through the Computer Acquisition Scheme, the University has expended some N39, 676,700 within the past one year on the supply of over 300 laptops to staff (88 beneficiaries in Administration/ Registry, 62 in Arts; 51 in Business and Social Sciences; 41 in Engineering and Technology; 32 in Education; 19 in Law, and 14 in Communication and Information Sciences). This loan is being deducted instalmentally from the concerned staff's salaries. The University still has some N29, 092,444.07 to pay the suppliers but all the staff have got their laptops.

It is in this light that the University has made the ownership of laptops mandatory for some categories of its new staff. Part of the necessary change we are talking about requires that employees of the 21st century do not join the University workforce with 20th century skills. Being computer literate is a fundamental requirement for many jobs now, including those within the University. Having a laptop for many categories of University staff has become a necessity in the present age, not a luxury.

### **A Choice To Make**

Moreover, it was a collective decision when the University was developing its strategic plan a few years ago that we would adopt dialogue as the basis of addressing issues and resolving matters. This has worked so well for the University that it is now a pride to the nation. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) of the University of Ilorin calls its secretariat building “a dividend of constructive unionism”. It is believed that by working together, we will continue to make the University our collective pride, which it is already.

We also believe much in training and as we are here, over 200 staff of the University are undergoing training in world universities. Within the last two years, more staff have been sponsored to learned conferences than the number sponsored since the establishment of the University. The result is that there is a harmonious industrial

relationship among campus unions and the University as we all see one another as partners-in-progress. This is the kind of relationship we need to sustain.

The key ingredient to success in any case is willingness. You should be willing to become aware of what choices you are making and you should be willing to make a change. Willingness to be faithful and self-disciplined is fundamental. Are you willing to build the University or destroy it? Everyone has a choice to make. Everyone has a part to play. What do you choose?

## **Conclusion**

What I have shared with you so far is just a curtain raiser. In the sessions that will follow, experts and scholars on specific areas of interest will share their wealth of knowledge with you. You owe yourself a responsibility to be well-guided. You owe yourself a responsibility to decide right from now that you will attain the peak of your career. This is possible if you maintain the right attitude and you change appropriately in that direction. Many of us would realise we need to change our eating, sleeping, spending and working habits to achieve our goals. We all have reasons for change and to change.

Finally, when Western education first came to Nigeria, to be educated was to know one's three R's; reading, 'rithmetic and 'riting. To be successful as a staff member of the University of Ilorin and indeed as a citizen of the world today, you must remember the three R's: respect for self; reasoning with others and responsibility for all your actions.

Above all, you should know how to PUSH: Pray Untill Something Happens.

Thank you very much for your attention. I wish you the best.