UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN

THE TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY-SEVENTH (297TH) INAUGURAL LECTURE

"FROM WOBBLING TO THRIVING DEVELOPMENT: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES"

By

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THURSDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY, 2026

This 297th Inaugural Lecture was delivered under the

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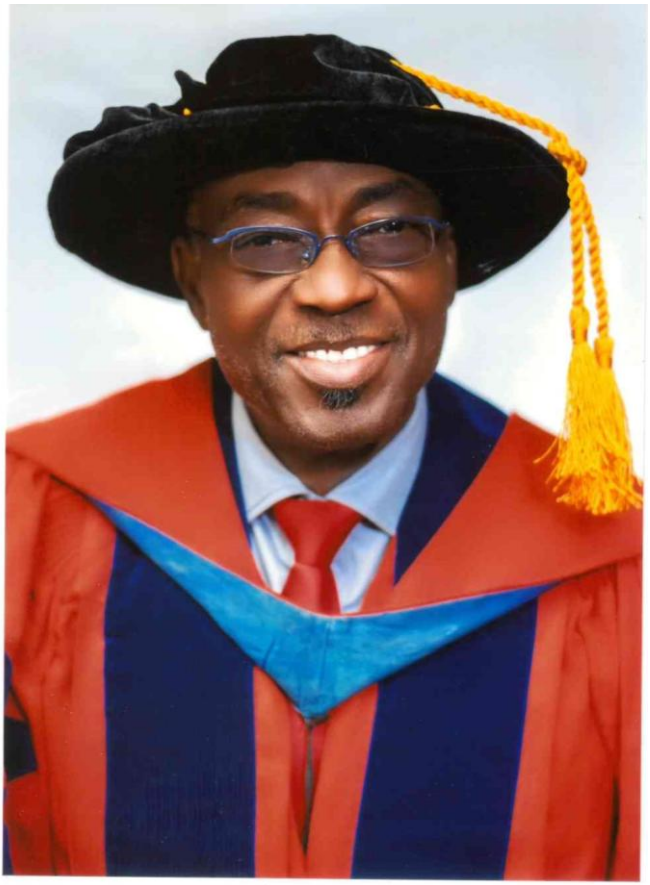
19th February, 2026

ISBN: 978-978-68-3838-9

Published by:

The Library and Publications Committee,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Printed by
UNILORIN Press, Ilorin, Nigeria



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Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Preamble

To God be the glory for making this 19th day of February 2026 a reality. I offer my wholehearted and overflowing gratitude to the Almighty God, the I AM that I AM, who has granted me the grace to be counted among the living to deliver this lecture. As I reflect today, I cannot fail to remember surviving a motor accident in 2001, shortly before the announcement of my Professorship in 2002 (though backdated to 1998 after four years of waiting), and yet another accident in 2011 on travelling back to Maiduguri after completing a sabbatical leave at Bayero University, Kano. My life has indeed been shaped by divine mercy. I am also deeply grateful to the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Wahab O. Egbewole, for approving the presentation of this Inaugural Lecture. This marks the second lecture from the Department of Adult and Primary Education,

following that of Professor H. O. Owolabi, and the first to be delivered specifically in the field of Adult and Non-formal Education.

My journey with the University of Ilorin secondarily began in 1981 during a visit with my late friend, Dele Ogunsetire of D'Alberto Construction Company that built the Chemistry Block and several other structures. While crossing the bridge at today's dam site, I was struck by the serenity and tourism potential of the environment, and I expressed a desire to start my career here. As my life is in God's hand and He directs as He wills, He first led me to the University of Maiduguri and later, after 31 years 4 months and 20 days, He through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, brought me back, and I am privileged to conclude my academic career at this institution. This was made possible under the Vice-Chancellorship of Professor AbdulGaniyu Ambali, who approved my transfer from the University of Maiduguri in the 2014/2015 session. Prior to the transfer, during the 2013/2014 academic session, I took up an appointment as a Visiting Professor in the Department of Arts Education, under the headship of Dr. (Professor) O. O. Oyelade. During the period, I developed a curriculum for a Bachelor of Education degree in Adult Education, which was subsequently adopted at the creation of the Department of Adult and Primary Education in the following session.

A related chapter in my professional life involved a previously proposed and submitted inaugural lecture titled "*Balancing the Nigerian Education System for Sustainable Development*" to the University of Maiduguri's Senate Publication Committee in 2013/2014 session. However, due to the insecurity that plagued the North-East region, including Borno State, a date was never assigned. My family and I ultimately made the difficult decision to leave the University of Maiduguri summarily, as we could no longer endure the security threats and the growing insurgency, which had untold effects on our health, social relations, and productivity.

These life experiences shaped a renewed research focus and directly inspired the title of this lecture: **"From Wobbling to Thriving Development: The Transformative Power of**

Adult Learning and Education for Sustainable Futures." With Nigeria and the global community still reeling in socio-economic shocks, geopolitical instability, and accelerating technological evolutions, this lecture is both timely and necessary. Drawing on more than four decades of academic journey, I will explore how Adult Learning and Education (ALE), anchored in lifelong learning, equips individuals and communities to confront challenges and emerge stronger. This lecture is both a reflection and a call to action-a reflection on my longstanding commitment to the field of adult education, and a call to recognise and harness its transformative power in addressing persistent global development challenges, particularly Nigeria's deep-rooted and multidimensional developmental issues.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, permit me to briefly explain the reasons for my insistence on delivering this inaugural lecture following the unfortunate interruption of the earlier attempt. My reasons are threefold. First, it is a debt I feel compelled to pay to academia in general and, more particularly, to the adult education and lifelong learning community that has sustained my academic career. Second, it is a direct response to the strong and positive encouragement I received from my immediate and extended family, most especially from my dearest wife, Professor Mary Grace Fajonyomi (Department of Counsellor Education and now Department of Educational Guidance and Counselling) who delivered the 238th Inaugural Lecture of this University on the 27th July, 2023; my younger brother, Professor S. O. Fajonyomi of Lagos State University, who delivered his own inaugural lecture on the 27th September, 2012; and from a younger sister, Professor Margaret O. Sofidiya of the University of Lagos. The two presentations constituted both an inspiration and a challenge, yet, as the Scripture reminds us, "there is a time for everything" (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Third, delivering an inaugural lecture at this later stage, long after my promotion to the rank of Professor in 1998, remains entirely consistent with a tradition of the practice. As Emeritus Professor J. A. Akinpelu, a very distinguished mentor (Of blessed memory), observed in 1983, inaugural lecture needs not coincide with a fresh professorial appointment or mark the

beginning of one's scholarship. It may be presented at any time to garner support for one's discipline or department, or to offer a systematic exposition of selected issues on which the lecturer's expertise can shed valuable light (Akinpelu, 1987). This lecture falls squarely within the third justification. Moreover, the considerable experience accumulated in almost twenty-eight years, since my promotion in 1998, adds depth, maturity, and value to the lecture.

Introduction

Development in Nigeria has long been characterised by inconsistencies, fragility, and a tendency to falter at critical moments. A combination of inadequate infrastructure, weak institutions, social inequalities, rising insecurity, and policy turnover has collectively produced a condition that I describe as 'wobbling development'. Despite vast human and natural resources, the nation struggles to meet basic indicators of progress and wellbeing for its citizens.

In this context, adult education and learning (ALE) emerges not as a peripheral concern but as a central pillar in the quest for a sustainable future. It offers a unique platform to empower the marginalised, build peace and social responsibility, and enhance livelihoods and health outcomes. It is my firm conviction that by placing ALE at the heart of our national agenda, we can move beyond crisis management and finally unlock sustainable, thriving futures for Nigeria.

Morphology, Anatomy and Physiology of Adult Learning and Education

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, the reminiscence of being a student in the Department of Botany, University of Ibadan, particularly my decision to select Botany as a teaching subject while pursuing the Bachelor of Education in Educational Management/Botany, provides an apt subheading for this section. It underscores the notion that ALE is a living educational system, a "field for all seasons", because it is continually alive, flexible, and responsive to the ever-changing needs of individuals, organisations, communities, and societies. Regrettably, the

concept and field of ALE remain widely misunderstood, not only by the general public in Nigeria and beyond, but also by educated professionals, administrators, and policymakers, who should be better informed. This persistent misconception continues to inspire me to seize every platform, including this inaugural lecture, to raise awareness and reorient perspectives of my audience (**Fajonyomi,** 1992; **Fajonyomi,** 2017b; **Fajonyomi,** 2024).

An opening reference is the UNESCO's Recommendation: "Adult learning and education is a core component of lifelong learning. It comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal, informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organisations and societies. Adult learning and education involves sustained activities and processes of acquiring, recognising, exchanging, and adapting capabilities (UNESCO, 2016).

The Vice-Chancellor Sir, it follows that ALE is morphologically designed to empower all categories of adults like-presidents of nations and organisations, senators, honourable members, judges, lawyers, accountants, the rich and the poor, out-of-school youth, rural women, and workers in the informal, formal and non-formal sectors-by equipping them with essential knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that complement and supplement formal schooling or school education. Indeed, every workshop, seminar, conference (whether online or offline), and even high-level gatherings such as U6+ conferences, constitute a form of ALE programme, regardless of the participants' demographic profile. It is a clear indication that no one is an emporium of knowledge and learning is life-long, and as such, everyone is an adult learner at one or all the time.

A closer examination of the definition reveals that ALE embraces all forms of education and learning intended for adults, and forms the bedrock of lifelong learning. That is, in morphology, it appears in three modalities: formal (degree and

certificate programmes for adults), non-formal (short courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, vocational or community programmes) and informal learning (self-directed, family and workplace learning) (**Fajonyomi,** 2011; **Fajonyomi,** 2017b). These modalities are recognised in international frameworks and encompass literacy, but extend far beyond it into lifelong learning systems (UNESCO, 2022).

Anatomically, the current Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards for the Nigerian University System (CCMAS) in use across Nigerian universities for about two years now, though developed in 2018, show that ALE's components are diverse. Programme types include: literacy and vocational education; community development; social development and extension services; cooperative management; women education; industrial and labour studies, distance education; leadership and administration (National Universities Commission (NUC), 2018). Additional programmes offered in colleges and universities in other climes are continuing professional development and workplace training; digital and ICT skills; entrepreneurship and micro-enterprise training; and health, environmental and civic education. These elements interconnect. For example, vocational training fused with entrepreneurship produces employable, enterprise-ready adults; civic education, combined with literacy, strengthens participation in democratic life.

The Vice-Chancellor Sir, it is unquestionable that the world of work is changing. Digitalisation, globalisation, and population ageing, as noted (OECD, 2021), are having a profound impact on the type and quality of jobs that are available and the skills required to perform them. I am convinced that the extent to which individuals, firms and economies can reap the benefits of these changes will depend critically on the readiness of adult learning and education system to help people develop and maintain relevant skills over their working careers.

Physiologically, ALE functions to sustain individual livelihoods, community resilience and national development. Its processes include needs assessment, learner-centred curriculum design, recognition of prior learning, flexible delivery (face-to-face, blended and distance learning), quality assurance and

pathways into formal certification. Mostly, effective ALE responds to labour-market signals (skills gaps), public health crises (health literacy), and social needs (peace building, social capacity). On completion of ALE programme(s) trainees may become: adult educators and literacy coordinators; vocational trainers and apprenticeship supervisors; corporate trainer; learning and development specialists; community development officers; curriculum designers and e-learning specialists; HR and training managers; NGO programme officers; M&E and policy analysts; and entrepreneurs who transform training into businesses. In the Nigerian context, avenues include the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), National Institute for Democratic Studies, State Literacy Agencies, polytechnics, private training centres, international NGOs and organisations or institutes, performing roles that demand both andragogic (arts and science of teaching adults) skills and sectoral expertise.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, for emphasis, the outcomes of ALE programmes are profoundly beneficial at both individual and societal levels. For individual participants, ALE delivers new or enhanced knowledge and skills, improved attitudes and behaviours, and more positive values. At the societal level, it contributes to improved standards of living, more effective political participation, good governance, and a deeper understanding of issues critical to sustainable livelihoods-such as health, access to safe water, nutrition, decent housing, employment generation, security, and social justice (Fajonyomi, 2015). Globally, ALE is not merely remedial; it is a strategic imperative. It underpins Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) and intersects directly with SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 13 (Climate Action) (**Fajonyomi** et al., 2024).

Regrettably, many providers of ALE and practising adult educators do not recognise themselves as such. Training managers in industry, human resource managers, agricultural extension workers, health visitors, computer training centre managers, and social welfare officers are often either unaware

that they are adult educators or reluctant to be identified as such. Similarly, the institutions, such as National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, National Directorate of Employment, Centre for Management Development and Training Centres owned by Private and Non-Governmental Organisations, within which these professionals operate, are rarely acknowledged or properly captured within the country's administrative network and policy for ALE. This lack of professional identity with the administrative oversight creates serious ripple effects on ALE programming, policy formulation, and implementation. If these practitioners fully embraced their roles and committed themselves to the advancement of ALE, they would add immeasurable value to the development of adult learning and education in Nigeria, and in other countries facing similar challenges. Furthermore, the proper placement and recognition of ALE delivery institutions within the national management framework will stimulate more effective, coordinated, and sustainable development in the sector.

On Development: Wobbling to Thriving and Sustainable Development

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, starting with the basics, to every student of "Economics of Adult Education", a course I have been teaching for almost four decades, development is broader and deeper than growth. While growth is a quantitative and structural process depicting increase in size of an object or subject like earning, development is a qualitative, unceasing process that continues throughout life and encompasses physical, mental, emotional, and social changes or degree of wellness of a nation, individual or an entity. Sir, you will agree with me that it is possible for a country to earn more and still largely be poor and unwell (See Table 1).

Perhaps, we may understand the meaning of development more profoundly by first examining the features of underdevelopment, which contemporary global reports (e.g., UNDP Human Development Report, 2023/2024) consistently describe as the absence of sufficient income and productive resources for sustainable livelihoods; widespread hunger and

malnutrition; ill-health; limited access to education and other essential services; increased vulnerability to disease; homelessness and inadequate housing; and exposure to unsafe environments. Underdevelopment is further deepened by social discrimination, exclusion, and the denial of participation in decision-making and in civil, social, and cultural life (**Fajonyomi,** 2011). Mr. Vice-Chancellor, suffice to say that the opposite of the features of underdevelopment holds for development. Crisply, development signifies the position of a nation on development ladder (See Table 1).

Table 1: *Nigeria Development Score Card with Africa and World Rankings in Recent Year*

S/N	Indicator	Value	Africa Ranking	World Ranking	Year
1	Population (millions)	237.5	1st	6th	2025
2	Births/1000 Population	35.4	7th	7th	2025
3	Deaths/1000 Population	10.7	10th	11th	2025
4	Infant Mortality Rate	53.7	20th	50th	2025
5	Life Expectancy	54.6 years	Lowest	Lowest	2025
6	GNI/Capita	$1250	11th	157th	2024
7	Multidimensional Poverty Index	63%	Very high	Very high	2022
8	Gender Gap Index	0.649	30th	124/148	2025
9	Women in National Assembly	4.1%	Lowest	180/185	2025
10	Adult Literacy	62%	41st	172nd	2022
11	Out-of School Children	20 million	1st	1st	2022
12	Gross Primary School Enrolment	61%	NA	NA	2021
13	Gross Secondary School Enrolment Ratio	46.89 %	NA	NA	2023
14	Global Peace Index	2.870	48/50	148/168	2025
15	Human Development Index	0.560	NA	156/189	2023

Sources: *United Nations Population Division, World Bank, UNDP Human Development Reports*

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, on wobbling development, it is understood through three interrelated lenses. First, it reflects a skill mismatch, a widening gap between the complex demands of the contemporary global economy (digitalisation, green transitions, and knowledge-intensive production) and the competencies available within the workforce and communities (**Fajonyomi,** 2017b; Efthymiou, 2024). Second, it denotes inequity, where development gains routinely circumvent the most vulnerable, creating social fragmentation and fuelling instability (UNDP, 2024). Third, wobbling development arises from policy fatigue-a recurrent pattern in which ambitious national programmes lose momentum, implementation becomes erratic, or initiatives are discontinued altogether because the foundational human capacity-knowledge, critical thinking, adaptive skills, and institutional discipline-remains insufficient to sustain them (**Fajonyomi**, 2023).

Indeed, Nigeria's development trajectory is littered with abandoned or poorly sustained initiatives: from the early National Development Plans to the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), and the Vision 2020 agenda. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, a troubling pattern emerges-many development initiatives in Nigeria tend to fade away with their initiators, underscoring the urgent need for continuity, institutional memory, capacity building, and a culture of sustained national commitment to long-term development goals.

Furthermore, wobbling development is reflected in intermittent gains overshadowed by persistent systemic barriers: multi-dimensional poverty index of about 63% in 2022; adult literacy stagnating around 62%, with stark regional variations over 70% in southern states but below 50% in many northern states; persistent gender disparities in educational access; and a volatile, oil-dependent economy continually exposed to global shocks. These vulnerabilities are compounded by insecurity, across the country that disrupt schooling and community life (**Fajonyomi**, 2024a), climate-induced displacements across the Sahel, the lingering socioeconomic effects of COVID-19, and fiscal constraints that weaken national capacity for sustained

public investment. Unsurprisingly, Nigeria ranked 164 out of 191 countries in the 2025 Human Development Index, reflecting these accumulated pressures (See Table 1).

Thriving and Sustainable Development Explained

The Vice-Chancellor Sir, if wobbling development reflects fragility, inconsistency, and the inability of a society to convert opportunities into sustainable progress, then *thriving development* stands as its robust and compelling opposite. Thriving development describes a condition in which people, institutions, and systems not only record progress, but do so in a manner that is resilient, inclusive, future-oriented, and self-sustaining**.** It captures societies that do not merely survive economic and social pressures, but rather grow through them, transforming challenges into opportunities for collective advancement.

Thriving development is neither accidental nor episodic. At its core, it reflects the presence of four interlocking attributes**,** which, when mutually reinforcing, generate development outcomes that endure across generations. These attributes (human capability, institutional strength, economic diversification, and social cohesion) collectively determine whether development efforts become permanent fixture or short-lived initiatives that disappear with political cycles (See Figure 1).

The first attribute, drawing from Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (Sen 2011), indicates that thriving development begins with people. It emerges when individuals possess the knowledge, skills, health, and agency required to lead productive and fulfilling lives. It is not measured merely by income or GDP, but by the freedom people enjoy in choosing the lives they value. The approach views development as the expansion of people's capabilities, emphasising that economic growth is a means to this end, not the end itself. A thriving trajectory, therefore, entails universities, adult learning centres, and digital infrastructures equipping citizens with 21st century competencies-critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy, creativity, and civic literacy. This is the antithesis of the Nigerian

pattern, where programmes fade as administrations change or as the initiators exit office.

The second attribute, institutional strength, ensures that development is not personality-driven but system-driven. Thriving societies are anchored on predictable governance, consistent policy delivery, efficient public services, and strong accountability mechanisms. Development in such contexts rests not only on visionary leadership but on institutional continuity, professional civil service traditions, long-term planning frameworks, and disciplined policy implementation. Policies do not die with their originators; they evolve with national priorities. In our own context, thriving development would mean that initiatives such as the Universal Basic Education Act, the National Digital Economy Policy, agricultural transformation strategies, and literacy programmes become national commitments rather than government-by-government experiments.

Thirdly, thriving development is undergirded by economic diversification and resilience. Societies that thrive do not depend on a single commodity or narrow economic base. Instead, they cultivate multiple engines of growth-productive agriculture, manufacturing, ICT services, renewable energy, creative industries, and innovative ecosystems linked to universities and research centres. For Nigeria, this would require a deliberate shift from oil dependence to human-capability-driven sectors such as agritech, green energy entrepreneurship, cultural and creative enterprises, and the digital economy. A diversified economy cushions the nation against global shocks, whether from pandemics, commodity price collapses, or geopolitical disruption.

The fourth attribute is social cohesion, the stabilising force that binds development together. Thriving societies are inclusive; they reduce inequality, bridge regional and gender disparities, and ensure that all citizens can participate meaningfully in national life. Social cohesion enhances trust, prevents violent conflict, and strengthens resilience against misinformation and extremism. In Nigeria, thriving development would mean that a child in Zamfara enjoys the same access to quality education as a child in Lagos; that young women in rural communities fully

participate in economic activities; and that communities experience security that enables learning, farming, and enterprise to flourish unhindered.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, taken together, these four attributes forms a conceptual architecture of thriving development which may be illustrated using the Pyramid Model of Thriving Development (Figure 1).

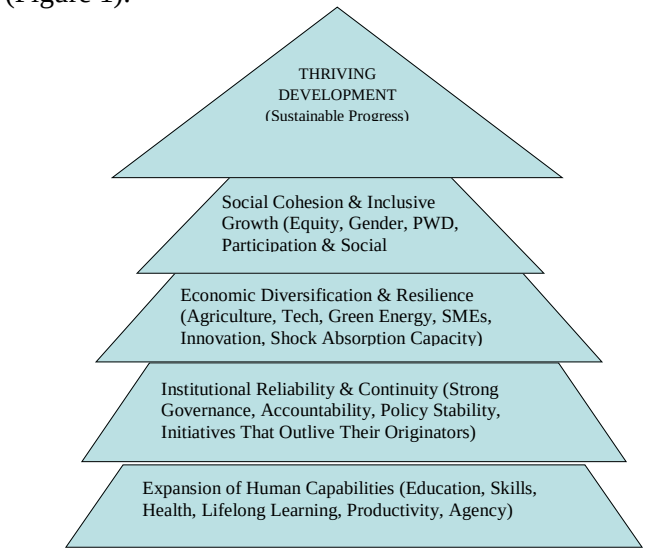


Fig. 1: Pyramid Model of Thriving Development (**Fajonyomi**, 2025)

Figure 1 shows that at the base of the pyramid lies *Human Capabilities*. Without educated, skilled, healthy citizens empowered for lifelong learning, development cannot stand. Above this rests *Institutional Reliability and Continuity*, providing the governance backbone for coordinating and sustaining national progress. The third tier is *Economic Diversification and Resilience*, representing the productive capacity of a modern nation capable of innovating and withstanding shocks. At the top of the pyramid sits *Social Cohesion and Inclusive Growth*, the capstone that stabilises and equalises development benefits across society. At the summit is *Thriving*

Development, symbolising the culmination of all underlying pillars working in harmony.

The Vice-Chancellor Sir, thriving development is not merely the absence of poverty or the presence of infrastructure. It is a dynamic, self-reinforcing state where: people possess the capabilities to shape their own futures; institutions safeguard continuity beyond political transitions; economies innovate, diversify, and resist shocks; and societies remain cohesive, peaceful, and inclusive. Ultimately, thriving development represents development that works, lasts, *and* creates a better tomorrow than today.

Adult Learning and Education as the Engine of Transformation

It is argued that societies do not fail primarily because of the absence of resources or policies, but because of limited human capacity to understand complexity, manage trade-offs, and sustain collective progress. Sir, my submission, in this Lecture and by the framework, is that ALE addresses this deficit directly. This framework is anchored in the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model proposed by Elkington in 1994. The TBL identifies three interdependent factors that determine the sustainability of any society (Kusmendar *et al*., 2025):

- People (Society): health, equity, inclusion, civic engagement, and social cohesion;
- Economy: productivity, innovation, decent work, competitiveness, and resilience;
- Planet (Environment): environmental protection, climate action, and responsible resource stewardship.

These three factors form a delicate triad. When one factor is prioritised at the expense of the others, development becomes unstable, uneven, and fragile, but, when they are harmonised, development becomes inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, as the central proposition of this lecture affirms that Adult Learning and Education is the intervening and multiplicative force transforming wobbling conditions into thriving development, I stand here, by God's grace, as living testimony to its power. Had I changed my course to Agricultural Economics in 1979, only God knows what path

my life might have taken? Sir, by the grace of God and the benevolence of ALE, I have visited three continents, and eight countries, including Japan, the UAE, the UK and Rwanda. Beyond the personal, its broader impact is illustrated mathematically and diagrammatically in the sequence that follows.

Mathematical Equations for Wobbling to Thriving Development

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, two distinct equations are used to illustrate the critical role of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) as the catalyst for the transformation.

The Wobbling Development Equation

Wobbling development represents a state of precariousness characterised by policy reversals, systemic inequality, and environmental vulnerability. This instability is expressed as:

$W=U(P\leftrightarrow E\leftrightarrow N)$

Where:
W: Wobbling Development.
U: Unbalanced trade-offs and systemic friction.
P, E, N: People, Economy, and Nature (The Triple Bottom Line).
↔: Symbolises bidirectional tension and conflict.

In this model, the three pillars exist in constant disagreement. Instead of reinforcing one another, they compete for resources and dominance. This friction resonates with the lyrics of Ebenezer Obey: *"Emi o gba, iwo o gba lo nda akitiyan"* (If everyone refuses responsibility or agreement, progress becomes impossible).

The Thriving Development Equation

The equation demonstrates that when ALE is introduced as the primary mediating variable, a strategic transformation occurs from a state of conflict to one of harmonious relationships.

The transformation is mathematically expressed as:

$T=I(P+E+N)ALE$

Where:
T: Thriving Development.
I: Intentional Integration and harmony.
+: Symbolises synergy and additive reinforcement.
ALE: The mediating factor (Adult Learning and Education).

In this state, development is no longer a series of isolated shocks but a harmonious movement. ALE acts as the "multiplicative mediator," providing the skills and knowledge to align human needs (P) with economic growth (E) and environmental sustainability (N). That is, by resolving the *"Emi o gba, iwo o gba"* (conflict of interest) with the integration of ALE, we can now sing, *"Ẹ jẹ́ ká jọ lẹ́sọ̀ lẹ́sọ̀; jèlẹ́èkẹ́, ẹ ká jọ lẹ́sọ̀ lẹ́sọ̀ o"* (Let us move together, gently and step-by-step)-a rhythmic, inclusive movement where every citizen is a stakeholder in progress.

Diagrammatic Representation

Fig. 2: ALE in Transitioning from Wobbling to Thriving Development (AI Gen.)

The Vice-Chancellor Sir, figure 2 is provided to accommodate those who may be apprehensive about mathematical illustrations and to sharpen the central thesis of this lecture. The figure illustrates the transformative role of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in moving societies from wobbling development to thriving and sustainable development.

Wobbling development represents a state of imbalance in which social, economic, and environmental systems interact weakly or in conflict, leading to instability, inequality, and heightened vulnerability to shocks. At the centre of the figure, ALE is positioned as a critical intervention point, highlighting its role as the engine that stabilises development processes and redirects them toward sustainability.

Surrounding this hub are the three interdependent factors of sustainable development-People, Economy, and Planet-arranged in a circular formation to emphasise continuous interaction, balance, and mutual dependence. Solid arrows extending from ALE to each pillar illustrate its direct contributions. ALE empowers People by promoting inclusion, critical thinking, social responsibility, and personal agency. It strengthens the Economy through the development of skills, innovation, productivity, and adaptive capacity. It safeguards the Planet by fostering environmental literacy, sustainable practices, and community resilience.

As ALE becomes fully integrated, the previously fragmented relationships among the three pillars are transformed into a harmonious and self-reinforcing cycle, marked by coherence across social, economic, and environmental domains. From this integrated system emerges an upward trajectory toward "Thriving Development (Resilient and Sustainable), signifying a development pathway that is inclusive, innovative, environmentally responsible, and capable of withstanding internal and external shocks.

My Contribution to the body of knowledge in Adult Learning and Education

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, my scholarly contributions, spanning decades, collectively affirm a singular thesis: transition of our nation or any nation from the threat of wobbling development to the constancy of thriving national outcomes could be inextricably linked to the empowerment of adult population through quality learning and education. The discourse is built upon eight interrelated thrusts rooted in research, knowledge and practice. The eight pillars are:

1. Adult Learning and Education as a Developmental Imperative
2. Literacy as a Stabiliser: Moving from Information Poverty to Development Competence
3. Systems Thinking in Organisational Settings
4. Access, Equity, and Inclusion as Drivers of Thriving Development
5. Quality Education: Bedrock of Sustainable and Thriving Development
6. ALE: A Strategy for Conflict Prevention and the Promoter of Safe Learning Environments
7. Leadership for Transformation: From Administrative Wobbling to Value-Driven Governance
8. Research, Monitoring and Evaluation in Adult Learning and Education (ALE) for Charting a Stable and Thriving Development Pathway

Adult Learning and Education as a Developmental Imperative

The Vice-Chancellor Sir, the discussion so far is suggestive and that is, ALE must be recognised not as a peripheral social service, but as the stabilising engine of sustainable and thriving development. This position was first established in my doctoral research, "Socio-economic Determinants of Adult Literacy Performance in Basic Education Classes in Borno State, Nigeria in 1988. It was empirically demonstrated that adult literacy constituted an essential prerequisite for socio-economic transformation and sustainable development in both rural and urban areas with 22.9% and 23.8% contributions, respectively (**Fajonyomi**, 1991). Besides, it made a strong factor of human and social capital formation (**Fajonyomi**, 1993a; **Fajonyomi**, 1997). This primary insight was subsequently expanded and conceptually clarified in Scope and Definition of Adult Education: The Nigerian Experience (**Fajonyomi**, 1992), where adult education was situated within the broader framework of national development rather than as a leisure-time intervention.

The argument was further strengthened in "Adult Education for Sustaining Livelihoods and Building a Culture of

Democracy" (**Fajonyomi**, 2013), which articulated ALE as a critical instrument for empowering citizens, sustaining livelihoods, deepening democratic values, and enhancing societal resilience. Further, it is evident that the programmes of ALE are mounted to meet evolving needs of individuals, communities, and the wider society as well as address emerging and context-specific challenges (**Fajonyomi**, 2015). Collectively, the contributions position Adult Learning and Education as the indispensable bedrock upon which societies cultivate resilience and transition from persistent instability to a state of systemic and thriving development.

For instance, the prison education and training foster rehabilitation, reintegration, reformation, and moral reasoning of the incarcerated population (**Fajonyomi**, 2018b), while programmes like adult basic education, environmental education, conflict management education, and education for social justice are deliberately designed to confront social exclusion, environmental degradation, violent conflict, structural injustice and emerging needs of the society (**Fajonyomi** & Fajonyomi, 1993; **Fajonyomi** & Oni, 1995). In other words, the scope of Adult Learning and Education will remain necessarily expansive and adaptive. So, as new social realities emerge and developmental needs evolve, the umbrella of ALE will continue to broaden, affirming its enduring relevance as a strategic instrument for national stability, human development, and sustainable societal transformation.

Literacy as a Stabiliser: Moving from Information Poverty to Development Competence

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, for emphasis, most decisive programme in the transition of information poverty to development competence remains literacy. My work, most notably, the monograph on "The power of literacy: strengthening the bond with development initiatives" (**Fajonyomi**, 2009a), as well as earlier research on functional literacy interventions, illustrates how literacy acts as a profound stabiliser. Literacy, as basic literacy, functional literacy, cultural literacy, environmental literacy, political literacy, or digital literacy,

equips individuals with the competencies required for meaningful economic and social participation, directly translating into improved health, enhanced productivity, advancement in technology, and stronger social cohesion (**Fajonyomi** & Fajonyomi, 1993; Adeyemi, Padonu & **Fajonyomi**, 1997; **Fajonyomi** & Fajonyomi, 1999; **Fajonyomi,** 2005; & **Fajonyomi**, 2006). In this sense, literacy functions as the primary lever that transforms wobbling social systems-plagued by ignorance and misinformation-into competent, capable structures of development (See Figures 3, 4, 5, & 6).

Figure 3: Unsafe grazing behaviour

Figure 4: Driver's Negligence

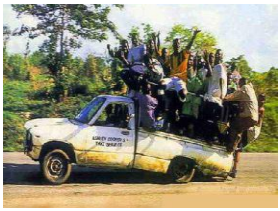


Figure 5: Dangerously overloaded van

Figure 6: Unsafe loading ignorance

These four Figures demonstrate the functional consequences of illiteracy. Here, illiteracy is shown not merely as the absence of schooling, but as a disabling factor that undermines the effective utilisation of development initiatives and socio-economic services.

Systems Thinking in Organisational Settings

The Vice-Chancellor Sir, one of the recurring explanations for the persistent wobbling condition of many African economic and social institutions lies in the failure to

appreciate development as a system. Institutions frequently approach problems in uncoordinated and compartmentalised ways, addressing symptoms rather than structures and isolated parts rather than interconnected wholes. Yet, as the systems theory reminds us, no component of an organisation or society operates in isolation; every action taken on a part inevitably reverberates through the entire system.

This absence of systemic consciousness has often resulted in policy incoherence, duplication of efforts, resource wastage, and escalating costs, all of which undermine institutional effectiveness and sustainability. It is within this context that systems' thinking emerges not merely as an analytical tool, but as a necessary philosophical orientation for steering institutions away from instability and towards purposeful, coordinated, and sustainable development.

Consequently, systems analysis has been deliberately applied to interrogate and strengthen organisational processes. For instance, systems' thinking was deployed in framing internal and external quality management mechanisms within the university system, with the aim of enhancing institutional effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability (**Fajonyomi**, Fajonyomi, & Ambali, 2020). By conceptualising quality assurance as an interconnected web of inputs, processes, outputs, and feedback loops, rather than as a series of isolated compliance exercises, the university system was better positioned to achieve coherence, continuous improvement, and stakeholder confidence.

Extending this systemic lens to the broader development conversation, **Fajonyomi,** Agarry, Fajonyomi, Alkali & Ebohon (2023) demonstrated that the accelerated attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) depends largely on taking education and sustainable development as an integrated system. Our study argued that lifelong learning, spanning childhood education, youth education, and adult education, must be deliberately harmonised with formal, informal, and non-formal learning pathways. When treated as interdependent components of a single development ecosystem, education

becomes a powerful catalyst for sustainable transformation rather than an isolated intervention.

Such a systems-based reconceptualisation offers a more rational and cost-effective pathway to achieving the SDGs within the 2030 target year. It reduces institutional friction arising from disjointed policies, avoids the unnecessary multiplication of programmes, minimises wastage of scarce resources, and enhances synergy across sectors. Ultimately, system thinking provides a critical bridge between policy intention and development outcomes, guiding institutions away from wobbling trajectories and firmly onto the path of sustainable thriving.

Access, Equity, and Inclusion as Drivers of Thriving Development

A nation cannot attain thriving development while segments of its population remain marginalised on the basis of age, gender, ability, place of birth, or geographical location. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, development that excludes is, by its very nature, unstable and wobbling. Sustainable national progress, therefore, rests on the extent to which access, equity, and inclusion are deliberately embedded in social policy, particularly within the education system. Empirical evidence accumulated over several decades have consistently shown that the school education system in Nigeria has been wobbling in its capacity to universalise access, promote equity, and ensure inclusivity across all levels of education (**Fajonyomi** & Fajonyomi, 1995; **Fajonyomi** & Isa, 1998; **Fajonyomi** et al., 2001; **Fajonyomi**, 2013; **Fajonyomi**, 2015; Ambali, Fajonyomi, **Fajonyomi,** & Abdullahi, 2019). Indicators such as the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER), Internal Efficiency (IE) and Female Participation Rate (FPR), as reported in the studies, reveal both quantitative shortfalls and structural disparities in participation.

For instance, while national figures suggest that approximately 80 per cent of primary school–age children were enrolled in school, this aggregate masks pronounced geo-political difference. At a time, statistics indicated that the South-West recorded an NER (A reflecting of Non-Schooling Gap) of 96.0 per cent, the South-South 95.9 per cent, and the North-

Central 81.3 percent, whereas the North-East and North-West lagged significantly behind with NERs of 61.8 per cent and 62.0 percent, respectively (**Fajonyomi**, 2008b; **Fajonyomi**, 2013; **Fajonyomi**, 2017a). Such disparities underscore the uneven distribution of educational opportunities and the persistence of regional exclusion, which in part, reflects differences in the quality and inclusiveness of governance across regions.

Beyond regional imbalances, gender inequity remains a defining challenge. Evidence consistently shows that female children are disproportionately disadvantaged in access to basic education. This unequal and generally low participation of girls at the foundation level inevitably translates into reduced female representation at higher levels of education and, by extension, limited participation in the labour market and political space. No wonder, FPR in the country's National Assembly is ridiculously 4.1 percent (**Fajonyomi** & Fajonyomi, 1995; **Fajonyomi**, 2009b; Ambali, **Fajonyomi**, Fajonyomi & Abdullahi, 2019). Mr. Vice-Chancellor, this perfectly mirrors a Yoruba proverb which says *"Amúkùn-èrù rẹ̀ wò, ó ní ẹ ò wò ìsàlẹ̀ wò"* ("When a load-carrier stumbles, he says no one examined the ground").

Compounding this challenge of gender imbalance is the low absorption capacity of schools, which partly explains Nigeria's persistently high population of out-of-school children (conservatively, 20,000,000), reported to be the highest globally (UNICEF, 2022), invariably making Nigeria the "out-of-school capital" of the world. Similarly, persistent participation gaps between urban and rural schools continue to favour urban centres, thereby deepening social and economic inequalities that fuel wobbling development. In all, Adult Learning and Education (ALE) programmes, in especially, open and distance learning (**Fajonyomi,** 1993c**, Fajonyomi**, 2008a, **Fajonyomi,** 2008c), offers remedial opportunities by expanding access, promoting equity, and fostering inclusivity for the underserved populations.

For emphasis, education policy, as a whole, must consciously pursue compensatory programmes aimed at addressing the educational deficits of disadvantaged groups,

including language minorities, ethnic minorities, abused children, internally displaced persons, and persons with physical challenges. Crucially, such interventions must be implemented without compromising quality, in line with the principle of equivalence. In essence, no group should be left behind. Therefore, access, equity, and inclusion are not optional considerations but non-negotiable prerequisites for balanced and sustainable development. Taken together, the contributions affirm that only by guaranteeing inclusive access to education, particularly for disadvantaged and marginalised populations, can a wobbling development trajectory be transformed into stable, resilient, and enduring national growth.

Quality Education: Bedrock of Sustainable and Thriving Development

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, permit me to observe that the quality of education received by learners or programme participants constitutes the basis of meaningful learning and sustainable development. Educational quality is fundamentally shaped by the quality of teachers and facilitators, the relevance of curriculum and instructional practices, the availability and suitability of instructional materials, the conduciveness of the learning environment and funding (**Fajonyomi**, 1992; **Fajonyomi**, 2007; **Fajonyomi**, 2008a). In contexts where comprehensive data on these dimensions are scarce, proxy indicators such as pupil–teacher ratio, class size, adequacy of classroom space, and the volume of library resources relative to enrolment are often employed as measurable benchmarks against which educational quality is assessed.

Empirical surveys of schools, particularly in urban centres (**Fajonyomi**, 2008a; **Fajonyomi**, 2013), consistently reveal pupil–teacher ratios and class sizes that far exceed established standards of 35:1 and 35–40 learners per class, respectively. Regrettably, these conditions, which persist in many public basic schools, are also observable in some programmes within higher education institutions-overcrowded lecture rooms, halls, and laboratories undermine effective teaching, lecturer–student interaction, and learning quality.

The Vice-Chancellor Sir, beyond physical learning conditions, the effectiveness of teaching is further shaped by the language of instruction. Permit me to draw attention to evidence from a quasi-experimental study conducted in 1993, which showed that Nigerian adults taught through a mix of English (L2) and Hausa (L1) performed better than those taught in English only or Hausa only (Fajonyomi & Ala-Adeyemi, 1993). This finding affirms the educational value of blending English with learners' first languages-whether Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba-to enhance understanding and participation. Indeed, certain concepts expressed in English are more clearly and quickly explained through the learner's immediate language environment. In this light, the recent policy to discourage the use of first languages, even alongside English, at all levels of instruction deserves careful reconsideration. However, before any national adoption, a comprehensive, evidence-based nationwide investigation remains imperative.

Further than numerical indicators, the declining quality of education across various levels of the formal school system has manifested in more troubling social outcomes. Studies have reported prolonged waiting periods for employment, often extending from 10-15 years after graduation (**Fajonyomi**, 2017a; **Fajonyomi,** 2018; **Fajonyomi,** 2023). This phenomenon has been widely attributed to a dysfunctional education system characterised by unresponsive and increasingly irrelevant curricula that fail to align learning with labour market realities and societal needs. That is, in practical terms, a functional and responsive education system ought to produce graduates equipped with appropriate attitudes, relevant knowledge, and employable skills, capable of securing or creating employment (Mbavai, **Fajonyomi** & Kamara, 2014).

Furthermore, the growing population of unemployed youth has been associated with increasing criminality and social instability nationwide (**Fajonyomi**, 2024a). In this context, ALE, given its flexibility, efficiency, responsiveness, and strategic use of technology, offers a vital complement to formal schooling (Fajonyomi, 1993). However, its potential is severely constrained by abysmal underfunding with public allocations to

ALE typically below one percent of funding for the formal education system which was earlier reported could be improved through collaboration (**Fajonyomi**, 1998 a & b: **Fajonyomi** & Ambali, 2016).

ALE: A Strategy for Conflict Prevention and the Promoter of Safe Learning Environments

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, it is incontrovertible that conflicts constitute one of the most persistent barriers to thriving and sustainable development, particularly in fragile societies like ours. We have seen violent conflicts disrupting learning systems, destroying livelihoods, weakening social trust, and undermining institutional stability (**Fajonyomi**, 2024a). Within this context, ALE is recognised as a critical intervention for conflict prevention and the promotion of safe learning environments, especially within formal and non-formal education spaces (**Fajonyomi**, 2024b)

In particular, **Fajonyomi**, Fajonyomi and Ambali (2018) demonstrated a clear and structured link between ALE and conflict prevention. Our study shows that adult education programmes equip individuals and communities with the capacity to identify early warning signs of conflict, manage grievances constructively, and resist mobilisation into violence. In other words, ALE functions not as a reactive mechanism, but as a preventive and stabilising strategy, addressing root causes of conflict such as ignorance, misinformation, exclusion, and weak social competence. This line of thought is further consolidated in **Fajonyomi** *et al*. (2024a), which advocated the growing need for well-thought-out education and systematic capacity building in conflict resolution and management.

The work positions ALE as central to building conflict-sensitive competencies, promoting dialogue, and strengthening social cohesion. In a practical application, Alkali, Ambali and **Fajonyomi** (2024) highlighted the role of scheme organisers in embedding safety and conflict sensitivity into programme design and implementation. We advised introduction of non-formal self-defence and safety training which equip learners/students with practical skills to recognise threats, avoid danger and protect themselves physically and mentally.

Leadership for Transformation: From Administrative Wobbling to Value-Driven Governance

The Vice-Chancellor Sir, leadership in institutions, organisations, and nations alike, indubitably constitutes the defining force that either stabilises systems or propels them into persistent administrative uncertainty. For example, on empirically interrogating universities' leadership quality, as well as, leadership selection and recruitment procedures in Nigeria (**Fajonyomi**, 2008b), I found out that the processes are frequently enmeshed in intrigues, manoeuvrings, and contested successions, with emphasis on impressive curricula vitae overshadowing the qualitative attributes that sustain effective governance like ethical judgement, emotional intelligence, personal integrity, and the capacity to mobilise collective purpose. Also, it was revealed that when leadership is narrowly construed as administrative competence, governance becomes transactional, while authority loses its moral legitimacy, and institutional coherence begins to erode. However, subsequent work on dynamic leadership in Nigerian universities affirmed that institutions regain stability and direction when leadership is anchored in shared values, adaptability, inclusiveness, and participatory decision-making, where authority is exercised as stewardship rather than dominance or "lording over" (**Fajonyomi** & Fajonyomi, 2019).

Furthermore, the outcome of a phenomenological qualitative analysis of the leadership crisis, which rocked the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE) in 1989, could have been prevented if leadership or electoral body were to be transparent and generous with information and make communication outlets open for dialogue. Interview conducted revealed that its recovery became possible only through a deliberate reorientation towards ethical leadership, collective ownership, and generational responsibility, reaffirming the indispensable role of value-driven governance in sustaining professional institutions (**Fajonyomi**, 2021). In this light, the transition from administrative wobbling to thriving development demands leaders whose legitimacy is rooted in values, whose

vision transcends personal ambition, and whose commitment secures institutional futures beyond their tenure.

Research, Monitoring and Evaluation in Adult Learning and Education

No nation, and indeed no individual, can survive or sustain thriving development without a robust evidence-based research culture and strong, in-built monitoring and (self) evaluation (RM&E) mechanisms. Research, in its various forms, is fundamentally expected to generate knowledge that enhances understanding of what works, why it works, for whom it works, and under what conditions, thereby fostering stable and thriving development (**Fajonyomi**, 1997; **Fajonyomi,** 2003, **Fajonyomi** & Fajonyomi, 2003). More importantly, research, monitoring, and evaluation are indispensable for providing reliable data to refine curricula, improve pedagogy, and adapt delivery modes to meet the diverse needs of adult learners. They also serve critical accountability and learning functions by demonstrating value for money to governments donors and sponsor; identifying best practices as well as contextual constraints; enabling programme implementers to adapt swiftly to emerging challenges; and maintaining quality during programme expansion and scale-up.

However, Mr. Vice-Chancellor sir, my experience and empirical observations reveal that the persistent paucity of credible data has rendered these interrelated processes increasingly difficult, time-consuming, and costly (**Fajonyomi**, 1997). Even more troubling is that attempts to rely on the limited available data often generate outcomes that are unhelpful, misaligned with the problems at hand, and, in many cases, counterproductive. Rather than addressing core developmental challenges, such outcomes tend to produce policy inconsistencies and programme inefficiencies that contribute to wobbling development trajectories (**Fajonyomi** & Isa, 1998). This scenario may partly explain why our country appears to be making several moves with little significant progress to show. The same logic applies at the individual level, where decisions based on faulty, incomplete, or poorly analysed information often lead to ineffective actions and unsatisfactory outcomes. Consequently, strengthening research capacity alongside

systematic monitoring and evaluation frameworks within ALE is not optional but imperative for achieving stable, evidence-driven, and truly thriving development.

Contributions to University Development: A Legacy of Service

The Vice-Chancellor sir, my career in academia is inseparable from my service to two great institutions: the University of Maiduguri (UNIMAID) and the University of Ilorin (UNILORIN). My contributions span decades, moving from classroom engagement to the highest echelons of institutional governance, always driven by the mandate to enhance academic quality and expand educational access while upholding the core principle of accountability paired with responsibility.

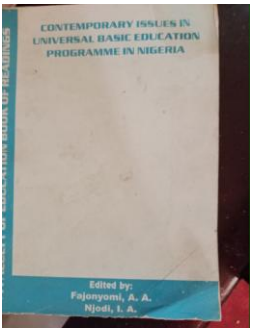
A. Foundation of Service: University of Maiduguri (1983–2014)

My service at the University of Maiduguri (UNIMAID) for 31 years was marked by dedicated teaching, earning me awards from student bodies at departmental and faculty levels, alongside official university recognition like the '*Commendation for Industry, University of Maiduguri Council in 1991*'. Beyond the classroom, I contributed significantly to academic policy and the university governance for over three decades.

i. Head of Department (1992–1995): This role provided indispensable experience in managing academic programmes, departmental resources, and setting standards for departmental effectiveness. I attracted a UNDP Train-the-Trainers Programme done in Taraba State for the benefit of academic staff and was responsible for floating M.Ed. and Ph.D. Programmes.

ii. Dean, Faculty of Education (2004–2008): As Dean, I was responsible to ensuring the quality of teacher training programmes, managing the Faculty's operations, and upholding academic integrity. In each session, an Annual Faculty Week was celebrated involving International Annual Conference culminating in the publication of the Faculty Book of Readings,

Commissioning of at least a project and Annual Get-Together with annual awards to deserving stakeholders within the University and outside.



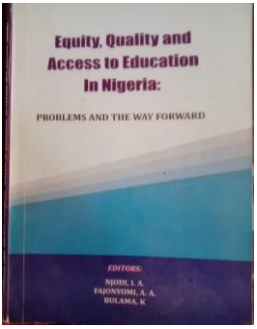


Figure 7: 2006 Book of Readings **Figure 8**: 2008 Book of Readings

Figure 9: A block of 8 Professorial Offices with a canteen built by the Faculty during my tenure

Figure 10: A library christened J.D. Amin Library in recognition of his VCship support to Faculty as he believed in my/our leadership

i. Member, University Senate (1992-1995 & 2002-2014): My fifteen years on the Senate offered a sustained opportunity to influence academic standards and policies across multiple administrations, shaping the intellectual direction of the University. Sponsored a 'bill' that led to the efficient computation of graduating student result leading to a significant reduction in the number of students graduating with Third Class and Pass degrees.

ii. Member, University Governing Council (2009–2013): Serving on the Council was the pinnacle of my service at UNIMAID. Working alongside Dr. 'Wale Babalakin, *SAN* (Pro-Chancellor) and Professor Mala Daura (Vice-Chancellor), I participated directly in the highest strategic decision-making processes. The visionary leadership and business acumen of the Pro-Chancellor fostered tremendous physical and social sustainable development, including seminal projects like the Kanem Suites in Kano and Abuja, which tend to secure the University's long-term financial stability. Under his leadership, external and internal members learned to serve not for primordial purpose of making money, scrambling for contracts or gaining undue influence but sacrificially for the growth of the University.

iii. Founder and Editor, Continuing and Extension Education Quarterly (CEEQ) (1999–2004): Recognising the need for specialised academic platforms, I spearheaded this initiative. This was vital in institutionalising scholarship in lifelong learning and extending the university's academic reach beyond its environ.

B. University of Ilorin (2014–Date)

i. Director, UNILORIN Centre for Open and Distance Learning (2014–2017): My role was critical in laying the foundation for the programme. I prepared the

foundational policy, appointed pioneer staff, and established the framework.

ii. Member, UNILORIN Senate (2014–Date): My continuous service on the Senate ensures that as the University expands its access and programmes academic quality is not compromised; even at the departmental level.

iii. Chairman, Faculty of Education Research Committee (2018–2020): This role drives research capacity building and ensured that scholarly activities were aligned with institutional goals.

iv. Member, Mock Accreditation Team (2018–2020): Played a key role in internal accreditation preparedness exercises, enabling the Faculty to exceed BMAS benchmarks and obtain full accreditation status for its academic programmes.

v. Director, Institute of Education (August 2020–March 2021): Though my tenure was short, I restructured the Institute for greater effectiveness and efficiency in pursuing its goals, underscoring my commitment to result-oriented university governance.

vi. Managing Editor, UNILORIN Journal of Lifelong Education (2017–2019): This contribution underscored the importance of disseminating cutting-edge research and fostering academic praxis within the field.

vii. Reviewer to local and international journals including Scopus listed International Journal of Lifelong Education.

C. Contributions to Professional, Community, and Religious Organisations

I have been a bonafide member of the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE) since 1987. Beyond making academic contributions at its conferences, I have played an active role in the Council's governance and stability: 1994 to

1996, I served as an elected member of the NNCAE Executive Committee, contributing to the resolution of a leadership transition crisis that threatened the Council's existence and helping to restore its stability and progress; the past decade, I am a member of the Council's Think Tank Group, and I am also on the NNCAE Board of Trustees.

As an extension of my commitment to community development, I serve on the Board of Trustees of the Kebbi Community Development Support Initiative (KCDSI).In the religious sphere, I was an executive member of the Chapel of Grace, University of Maiduguri for years and presently on the Executive Committee of the Chapel of the Light, University of Ilorin.

D. Contribution to Career Development and Human Capital Formation

1. Examined or supervised 46 Master and 16 Doctoral Students. Of the 16 Ph.D. holders eight are Professors.
2. Member and or Chairman of Accreditation, Resource Verification and Visitation Panel to three Colleges of Education and eight Universities (2005 to 2022).
3. Assessed 35 candidates and still counting for promotion to Professorial position in 14 Nigerian Universities offering Adult Education.

Conclusion

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, this lecture has shown that Nigeria's persistent developmental instability termed "wobbling development" is neither inevitable nor insurmountable. It stems from human-capability deficits, weak institutional continuity, policy inconsistency, inequitable access to education, and limited community empowerment. However, it affirms that ALE provides a transformative opportunity to convert a fragile into resilient and sustainable economy and polity. ALE equips individuals, institutions, and societies with adaptive knowledge, critical thinking, social responsibility, and all-season competencies. In other words, it is underscored that "no nation

can rise above the quality of learning available to its adults". That is, Nigeria can shift from wobbling to thriving development only by making ALE a well-resourced national priority, professionally recognised, and systematically integrated into planning and policy development. Again, the desired future is possible; it has to be built on a capable, empowered adult population.

Recommendations

1. *Nigeria's education governance framework should be reconfigured based on lifelong learning principles*: Thus, the Federal Ministry of Education should be renamed the Federal Ministry of Lifelong Education to reflect systemic collaborations and institutional linkages. Also, policy formulation and implementation should be decentralised through specialised, parallel commissions**.** At the tertiary level, the regulatory functions of NUC, NCCE, and NBTE should be streamlined into a Formal Higher Education Commission, complemented by an Adult Higher Education Commission. At the lower levels, corresponding structures should exist, such that alongside a Secondary Education Commission, there is an Adult and Continuing Education Commission**.** Furthermore, given the limited universality of UBEC, the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education should be retained, but strategically restructured. Each ALE structure shall coordinate programmes across MDAs, NGOs, and private sector providers in operation at each level.

2. *National Council of Education should be strengthened and expanded*: As the apex advisory body for the education sector, the Council should be broadened to reflect inclusive stakeholder representation, drawing from government, educational institutions, professional bodies, the scientific community, the private sector, and civil society. This would enhance its capacity to reconcile diverse interests and articulate coherent medium- and

long-term strategies for national education development. Within this framework, policy directions-particularly those relating to ALE-should be institutionally embedded within national development plans, including poverty reduction, security, and economic diversification strategies. Such integration would promote policy coherence, institutional continuity, and ensure that education reforms endure beyond political cycles and individual officeholders.

3. *Government commitment to ALE should prioritise quality improvement through the professionalisation of practice:* Accordingly, government should encourage and support the establishment of a legally recognised professional body responsible for regulating ALE practice nationwide. Such a body would formally recognise adult educators, trainers, extension workers, human resource development practitioners, and community development facilitators through certification systems, clearly defined career pathways, and enforceable professional standards. Facilitating Professionalisation would enhance instructional quality, promote accountability and ethical practice, elevate the status of ALE, and strengthen its contribution to workforce development, social cohesion, and sustainable national development.

4. *Adequate funding of ALE system should be prioritised for its effect on quality, efficiency, equity and responsiveness*: Even though providers of ALE programmes are mostly private they should not be denied public funding. Apart from public funding, they may be encouraged to enjoy diversified sources of funds, including subsidies for current expenses, special education programmes and research; access to loan to improve resources; and establish preferential tax treatment as in other climes. Also, the learners can enjoy some financial relief supports, free transport fares, reduction of income taxes for working students, access to national scholarship, institutional aid, among others. It is undoubtful that such deliberate effort

would not only make the programme available and accessible, it will also improve the opportunities for employment and mobility of individuals in the labour market.

5. *The relationship between formal schooling and ALE systems should be practical, functional, and mutually reinforcing*: Programme contents at equivalent levels should be aligned and benchmarked to ensure comparability and equivalence. Credits earned within one system should be transferable and recognised for progression within the other without undue barriers. For example, credits acquired by workers through accredited vocational or in-service training programmes should be formally recognised and accepted for admission or advancement in polytechnics or related formal education institutions, and vice versa. Such articulation would enhance mobility, promote lifelong learning pathways, and eliminate the rigid separation between formal and non-formal learning systems.

6. *A well-resourced Community Learning Centres should be established*: The CLCs are to serve as inclusive learning centres across all Local Government Areas to support lifelong learning and community development. These centres should be adequately equipped to deliver vocational and employability skills, peace building and conflict-sensitive education, health and civic literacy, digital and media literacy, and entrepreneurship training. Special attention should be given to youth, women, out-of-school adults, and other vulnerable groups. By leveraging partnerships with local institutions, civil society organisations, and the private sector, Community Learning Centres can promote social cohesion, economic empowerment, and digital inclusion while serving as accessible platforms for skills development and community resilience at the grassroots level.

7. *Public–Private Partnerships should be strategically strengthened*: In essence, this will enhance the relevance, quality, and sustainability of ALE programmes. Government should actively engage industries, technology firms, and development partners in the design and delivery of workplace-based learning, innovation-driven training, and green skills development. Such partnerships can facilitate access to modern equipment, digital platforms, internships, apprenticeships, and industry-recognised certifications. By aligning ALE curricula with labour market needs and emerging sectors, PPPs will improve employability, support entrepreneurship, promote environmentally sustainable jobs, and ensure that adult education contributes meaningfully to national economic transformation and inclusive development.

8. *Strong monitoring, evaluation, and research mechanisms should be embedded within all ALE programmes*: Systematic data collection and analysis should inform programme design, implementation, and continuous improvement, enabling evidence-based decision-making and policy adaptation. Regular impact evaluations will help identify what works, for whom, and under what conditions, while reducing inefficiencies and resource wastage. Institutionalising research and evaluation frameworks will also safeguard ALE initiatives from policy discontinuity and political interference, ensuring that successful programmes are sustained, scaled, and aligned with national development priorities beyond changing political administrations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is apposite for me to end this Inaugural Lecture with some acknowledgements. First and foremost, I wish to express my profound gratitude to Almighty God, whose ways are unfathomable, and who has been my present Help in times of trouble, for making this day a reality.

My gratitude also goes to past Vice-Chancellors of the University of Ilorin, especially Professor AbdulGaniyu Ambali *OON*, who allowed my transfer of service to the University and appointed me as the Director of Open and Distance Learning and Professor S.A. Abdulkareem, who appointed me as the Director of the Institute of Education. Let me also sincerely appreciate the present Vice-Chancellor, Professor Wahab O. Egbewole, *SAN*, for his friendly disposition and for the approval given to present this lecture. Other members of his visionary administration, including the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Professors A.A. Fawole, Taibat Odunola-Bakare and M.A. Etudaiye; the Registrar, Mr. M.A. Alfanla; the University Librarian, Professor K.T Omopupa and the Bursar, Mr. Abiodun Lawal are also recognised. Members of the University Governing Council are equally appreciated, especially the Chairman, Surveyor Abiodun J. Aluko, FCIML. Additionally, I acknowledge the University's Library and Publications Committee, under the leadership of Professor A.O. Issa, for reviewing and suggesting ways to improve on the quality of this lecture.

I am deeply thankful to my late parents, Pa Phillip Olagunju and Mama Theresa Bosede Fajonyomi, whose enduring legacies-of being resolute "finishers," exemplifying integrity, humility, discipline, and unwavering love for our Lord Jesus Christ-continue to bear fruit in my life and in the lives of all their children. My heartfelt appreciation extends to my siblings and their families: Professor and Mrs. S.O. Fajonyomi; Engineer and Mrs. P.O. Fajonyomi; Deaconess (Mrs.) Oluremi and Honourable Tunde Agboola; Engineer and Professor (Mrs.) Oluwatoyin and Engineer Bayo Sofidiya; Engineer and Mrs.

Eni-Olorunbukun Fajonyomi; and Engineer and Mrs. ‘Tope Fajonyomi.

I also extend warm thanks to my in-laws, the Deckers: Mrs. Josephine A. Ahmadu and family, Mrs. Rebecca Mohammed and family, Mr. Christopher Decker, and Mrs. Idowu Ogunbiyi and family, Mr. Samson Decker and family, Mr. Charles Decker and family, Mr. Anthony Decker and family. Further, although they have been called to Glory, I recognise with immense gratitude the late Messrs Hector, Victor, Rowland, and (Comrade) David Decker, alongside Misses Juliana and Janet Decker. Their collective and individual support at different stages of my life has been invaluable.

As the Yoruba proverb wisely states, *“Ẹ̀yàn kì í gbàgbé orísun rẹ̀”* (one should never forget one's roots), I salute the management and staff of the University of Maiduguri. In particular, I remain grateful to: University’s Staff Fellowship Committee for the award to pursue my post-graduate programmes from 1984 to 1988; The late Professor N. Gadzama, Vice-Chancellor, under whose tenure I served as Head of the Department of Continuing Education and Extension Services (1992–1995); Professor J. D. Amin, a visionary, transformative, and incorruptible Vice-Chancellor, whose unwavering support during my deanship of the Faculty of Education (2004–2008) enabled the Faculty to emerge as a recognised "Centre of Excellence"; Professor Mala Daura, a warm and approachable Vice-Chancellor, with whom I served on the University Council (2009–2013); Professor I.A. Njodi, who graciously accepted my decision to transfer my service from the University in 2014; and, Professor A. Shugaba, for his simplicity and as an ambassador of social justice.

I also acknowledge Dr. Wale Babalakin, *SAN, OFR*, Chairman of the Council, a brilliant lawyer, visionary university administrator, astute businessman, and dedicated philanthropist, whose tenure saw to the establishment of sustainable income-generating projects that continue to strengthen the University's

finances. My appreciation further goes to Professors Bulama Kagu, Emmanuel Camble, Nebath Tanglang, and Associate Professor David Bwala, who served as Heads of Department during my time as Dean of the Faculty of Education.

I say a sincere thank you to my colleagues in the Department of Continuing Education and Extension Services, University of Maiduguri, particularly Professors Y. Balami; A.A. Ishaq; A. Dugje; Tijjani Kalli; Amina Sanda; Oluremi Oni; Aishatu Sakir; Aminchi Daniel; and in the Department of Adult Education and Community Services, Bayero University Kano, mostly Professor Fatima, Umar; M.B. Shitu; A.A. Haladu; Ya'u; Usman; G. Tofa; I.W. Aujara and Ghali Saidu. The Vice-Chancellor of Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto, Professor Bashir Garba, *MFR* and colleagues in the Department of Adult Education and Extension Services of the University (sabbatical year 2023/2024), principally, Professors M. Jagaba; Asiyat Bagudo; M. Abba; M. Alkali and A. Mahmud, are especially appreciated .

Turning to the University of Ibadan, where I earned my B.Ed. in Educational Management/Botany (1978–1982), M.Ed. in Educational Management (Educational Planning and Policy) (1984–1985), and Ph.D. in Education (Economics/Planning of Adult Education) (1985–1988), I remain especially indebted to the late Dr. S. D. Akangbou and the late Professor J.T. Okedara, my supervisors for the Master dissertation and Ph.D. thesis, respectively. Professor Okedara's gesture of hosting me for dinner upon graduation and prayerfully commissioning me into the academic world as a "dedicated and faithful student" remains an unforgettable experience.

I am profoundly grateful to Emeritus Professor Michael Omolewa, who as Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, approved my transfer from the Department of Educational Management to the Department of Adult Education for my Ph.D. programme, and consistently offered spiritual, moral, and financial support to my family and me.

Special recognition goes to Professor ‘Dele Braimoh for teaching me the invaluable "principle of doubling the required number of publications" for promotion-a strategy that proved instrumental in my academic advancement-and to Professor ‘Depo Akintayo for his moral and financial support during my Ph.D. studies. I extend deep thanks to Professors ‘Yemi (an iconic Professor of Botany, a father figure indeed) and Deborah (a proxy elder sister) Egunyomi for their invaluable support to my family and me over the years.

My sincere greetings go to the past Deans of the Faculty of Education on assumption of duty in 2014, in particular Professors A.S. Olorundare, A.A. Adegoke, N.B. Oyedeji, Medinat F. Salman, F.A.O. Olasehinde-Williams, M.O. Yusuf, L.A. Yahaya, and the present, Professor O.L. Olaitan. I am so thankful to all retired and serving academic staff in the Faculty, particularly all Professors, all non-academic staff, specially the Faculty Officer and Faculty Accountant and all students across levels and programmes. Also, worthy of my recognition are my colleagues in the Department of Adult and Primary Education: foremost is Professor Taiwo T. Ambali, humility personified, for her encouragement and support in various ways; others are Professor O.O. Okoji (Head of Department), Drs. Olabisi Adedigba, Eniola K. Ola-Alani, Racheal O. Agarry, O.A. Olawuni, R. Abdulwahab, S.T. Kayode, A.O. Solagberu, A. Abdullahi, Messrs Y. Kuranga and T. Ahmed, Mesdames R.M.O. Mohammed and Salamat Isa. The non-academic staff, including Mmes. Aminat Sayi-Mohammed, Sa’Adat O. Ayuba, Dorcas F. Iwalaiye, and ‘Funke E. Abiola, are also appreciated for their supportive role. Furthermore, Professor H.O. Owolabi deserves my special acknowledgement for his diligence and administrative astuteness in growing my fitness into Unilorin academic culture. My thanks also go to Dr. M.O. Ogunjimi for his readiness to assist me to sort out nuances related to my computer use. Mrs. Olanike O. is acknowledged for painstakingly typesetting the work.

I would also like to thank my professional colleagues in the NNCAE, most especially Professors Fatima Umar and Labayo Kolawole Kazeem, National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC); States' Agencies for Mass Education; and, Universities, particularly those offering adult education for the familial relationship. Moreover, I recognise all members of the 1974 Set of St. Charles Grammar School, Osogbo and those of the 1977 Set at D.T. T.C., Oye-Ekiti for their social support. Residents of the Unilorin GRA Staff Quarters, Fate Road, Ilorin, are acknowledged for their good neighbourliness.

Besides, I very much thank my friends too numerous to mention, but I would like to single out the following for special recognition: Pastor Raphael Adoide, for providing the seed money for my university education and his steadfastness in friendship; Deacon Segun Dairo, my host and benefactor all through all my programmes in Ibadan; Professor Afolabi Popoola, a generous friend with a large heart, provided meal subsidies all through my undergraduate programme, and Professors AbdulGaniyu Ayodele Salawu (Baba) and Stephen O. Olubadewo, for accepting me as a brother-friend, despite the wide age difference; Dr. Gbadebo Oyelelan (my egbon) is fondly recognised for his guide through the lived experiences he often shares. Even though called to glory, I cannot but appreciate a bosom friend and a long-served University of Maiduguri Librarian, Mr. James Abayomi Agaja, a reliable, irreplaceable and lovely friend, missing him is an understatement. Also, I acknowledge Drs. Babangida Ladan; Auwalu Halilu and Usman A. Idris. Drs. Murtala Yusuf and Lawal Olorungbebe (Kwara State Commissioner for Education and Human Capital Development) are acknowledged for being there when they are needed. To Professors A. Omotesho, O. Obielodan, O. Oyelade, Yahaya Imam, A. Sofoluwe and A. Sanusi, I appreciate your love towards my family.

I solemnly wish to acknowledge members of the Chapel of Grace, University of Maiduguri; members of the CAC Chapel of Testimony, Sokoto; members of the Chapel of the Light, University of Ilorin, especially the Chaplains, including Rev. Eli Al-Hassan (Chaplain-in-Charge), Rev. Professor C.O. Ogunkunle, Rev. Dr. J.O. Osaji and Rev. Dr. F. M. Babajide, as well, I appreciate Professor ABO and Mummy Funmilayo Omotosho; all for their prayers and love. Dr. (Pastor) and Dr. (Mrs.) David Odaibo, a quiet couple in Lord's vineyard, are especially appreciated. Members of the Saint Joseph Catholic Church, Ilawe-Ekiti are also recognised. Most especially, I appreciate my Lord Bishop of Ekiti Diocese, Most Rev. Felix Ajakaiye, for his truthfulness in his work for God and our Lord Jesus Christ and his love towards my family. My relatives from Ilawe-Ekiti, particularly the Agboolas, Ajakaiyes, Akinwumis, and Fajonyomis are very sincerely appreciated. My in-laws, by marriage to my children, including Alawodes, Abdu-Gandus and Akinyemis, are also recognised.

What's more I wish to express my utmost gratitude to octogenarians and nonagenarians whose lives have been a blessing to my life, especially Emeritus Professor and Mama T. O. Olowokure; Professor and Mrs. B.O. Ogunbameru, Professor F.O. Adeniji; Professor F.C. Carew; Uncle Peter Fajonyomi; Baba Aganga, Professor Y.M. Fakunle, Rev. Professor A.M. Okorie; Professor S.K. Odaibo, Baba Engineer Owoeye, Baba Dr. Awopetu, and Baba P. Fatogun.

My children, especially Dr. IfeOluwadapo, Mr. Oluwafemi, Mrs. Oluwafunmilayo and Mr. Bunmi Fajonyomi and their families are profusely thanked for working to granting my wife and I peace at our old-age. Especially, to the grandchildren, TemitopeOluwa, AnuOluwa, Ayodele, Ayomikun, Oluwadarasimi and Iremide-Rohi, Divine and Deborah, I say, I love you all.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, sir, it is incontestable that I am blessed with a supportive and God-fearing wife of over 43 years, Professor Mary Grace Fajonyomi. I must acknowledge, with

deep gratitude, that her life mirrors the noble character celebrated in Proverbs 31:10–31. She is far more precious than rubies-industrious, wise, compassionate, and steadfast. Through tireless labour, prudent stewardship, and unwavering faith, she has brought honour to our home and strength to my calling. Her counsel is gracious, her hands generous to the needy, and her fear of the Lord evident in all she does. Truly, her works praise her, and I stand here today, by the grace of God, sustained by her enduring love and sacrifice. Tomorrow marks her birthday; I therefore invite you all to join me in singing: *Happy birthday to you…*

Since we do not say "Good Bye" at the University of Ilorin, let me say "See You Again" by the special Grace of God in 2027 at my Valedictory Lecture.

Again, I thank you all for listening, and may God grant you journey mercies to your different destinations.

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