An Address

By the

Honourable Minister of Education
ProfessorRuqayyatuRufađ

On the Occasion of the

27th Convocation Ceremony

Thursday, November 24, 2011
Distinguished Guest of Honour
Your Excellencies
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
My Lords, Temporal and Spiritual
Chairman and Members of the Governing Council
Board of Fellows of the College
Vice Chancellors and Rectors
Members of the Academic Board and Staff of the College
Parents and Guardians of the Graduands
The Graduating Students
Beloved Students of the institution
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press

I am delighted to be here today, at this 27th Convocation Ceremony of Yaba College of Technology; an institution which is indeed a national heritage. It is germane to recall today again that the seed of tertiary education in Nigeria was first planted here some sixty four years ago.

This cradle of tertiary education in Nigeria has continued to produce academically sound, morally balanced and professionally qualified personnel relevant to the industrial emancipation of Nigeria. Most of these products have been found to be proficiently competent and relevant to both the public and private sector as relevant knowledge workers with specialized skills.

It gladdens my heart to note that the entrepreneurship education which was pioneered by the college as a compulsory course has continued to stimulate the acquisition of productive and managerial skills for self-actualisation. Through this programme, the products of the college are encouraged to become job creators and not job seekers. This is certainly in tandem with the achievement of one of the Millenium Development goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger through productivity and economic empowerment.

It is pertinent that we seize the benefit of this occasion to reflect on our commitment to the dreams and aspirations of the founding fathers who midwifed the vision of 1947 with the establishment of this institution as the cradle of higher learning in Nigeria, and ascertain how far we have gone. In the
pursuance of this administration’s effort to actualize vision 20-2020, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan unveiled the Presidential Transformation Agenda for 2011 – 2015. This was released at the one-day retreat for functional and executive management personnel in the Federal Ministry of Education, in July 2011.

The Transformation Agenda singled out education, along with Health, Agriculture, Petroleum and the Niger Delta as areas that require sectoral strategic plans towards the realization of vision 20-2020. He highlighted monitoring and evaluation as the key components for the effective implementation of the agenda while the 1st National Implementation Plan is to be achieved between 2010 – 2013.

The focus of the transformation agenda is a direct challenge to all the major stakeholders in the education sector. Considering the pivotal role of education on the nation’s road map to economic growth and development especially at the tertiary level, it behoves every key player in the sector to identify with the Transformation Agenda. The education sector must be ICT driven in line with contemporary global trend. Conscious efforts must be made to research and source for local content that would enhance the manufacturing and production process even in a hyper-competitive environment. The Nigerian Education system has an onerous role to play in actualizing government’s desire to nurture and develop the requisite human capital base for a globally-competitive economy.

Emphasis is to be placed on entrepreneurship education to encourage job creation and consciously aid poverty alleviation. This can be achieved by exploiting private sector potentials for employment generation. Similarly, private sector partnership should be encouraged through a healthy and sustainable interaction between the town and the gown. An enabling environment should be created in the Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of
Education for pragmatic private sector involvement. This would help to boost research work, analysis and evolution of new trends in economic and industrial evolution of the country.

To rekindle the past glory of the education sector and repose confidence in the public, value re-orientation must be upheld. Zero tolerance for corruption and corrupt practices is to be maintained by institutional heads. The institutions should put in place an incentive system that will motivate staff through reward for exemplary behavior and sanction for poor or untoward performance. Strict adherence to laws, rules and regulations must be emphasized while leaders are to lead by examples and good precepts. A strict compliance with the transformation agenda towards the actualization of vision 20-2020 by the Governing Councils and management team at all levels of tertiary education is not negotiable.

It is imperative to note that technical education is the pivot on which the requisite human capital development of our dear country can be hinged. It holds the key to a pragmatic economic growth and development of our emerging economy. Considering the relevance of competency based education to our march to economic and industrial emancipation, the philosophy of technical education as stipulated in the current national policy must be sustained, periodically examined and analyzed to be in tune with contemporary technological trends across the globe and labour market demands.

Consequently, the Polytechnics in Nigeria through the instrumentality of the supervisory agency, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should urgently stop the academic drift into non-technical courses. The prescribed polytechnics enrolment ratio of 70:30 for technical and non-technical courses must be strictly adhered to if polytechnic education is to make any meaningful and sustainable contribution to the nation’s growth and development. The dream of vision 20-2020 can only become a reality when the technical human
capital development of the nation is firmly based on a well defined labour market demands. To sustain the relevance of technical education, we must encourage and stimulate interest in technical schools so as to give them priority as intakes into the polytechnics and Polytechnic graduands as intakes into the specialized Universities i.e. Universities of Agriculture and Technology.

As the pioneering institution of higher education in Nigeria, the Yaba College of Technology should structure and pattern its growth and development after other world acclaimed institutions particularly in the areas of innovation and research. This is achievable by ensuring quality service delivery, contribution of relevant research work towards the nation’s industries in the private sector for innovative collaboration, training and retraining of staff, especially the academic. The college should develop and design a pragmatic and productive approach in the discharge of its corporate responsibility to the society. Sustainability of the existing accredited courses and introduction of relevant ones in response to labour market demands, should be encouraged.

The Yaba College of Technology should serve as a practical model for other polytechnics in the country and even other higher institutions of learning. It should continue to train and produce skilled graduates who are academically competent and can compete favourably in a hyper competitive environment both locally and at the global level. These should be knowledge workers with specialized skills and training who would not only be job creators but would also contribute positively to the transformation of the global economy.

Government will on its part continue to respond to genuine demands, for the development of the polytechnic sector in relation to national needs for the growth and development of the economy. Similarly, the welfare of staff will continue to attract Government’s attention as well as infrastructural development.
I congratulate in a special way the fellowship recipients for today. You truly deserve this honour for your immense contributions to the growth and development of humanity in terms of sustainable employment generation and wealth creation. I charge you to strive to do more for the college at this critical stage of its development. I commend the Academic Board of the College for its foresight in identifying and honouring these eminent personalities and urge you to maintain a healthy and regular interactive relationship with your past, present and future fellows.

I felicitate with the Rector, the Management team and the entire staff of Yaba College of Technology as you celebrate this unique convocation ceremony. I am especially pleased to congratulate the Rector, as you preside over the first graduation ceremony of the college during your tenure. I acknowledge the other giant strides the college has recorded over time, especially the peace on campus and give credit to the co-operation between staff and students.

I wish to use this opportunity to thank the members of the immediate past Governing Council of YCT led by Chief Joju Fadairo, for the direction and guidance given to the management of the college in transforming the academic, social and infrastructural landscape of the college. I congratulate you for a job well done.

For the joy that knows no bound, I congratulate the graduands. We celebrate you today because of your achievement through hard work, dedication and perseverance. I encourage you to utilize the knowledge acquired from Yaba College of Technology positively in the service of humanity; and continue to be good ambassadors of the College. It is my expectation that as you go out into the world of work, you will key into the governments transformation agenda and embrace the spirit of the millenium development goals. I also want to congratulate your parents and guardians in a special way for the counselling and the various efforts that cummulated in your achievement today.
Finally, I implore the management of the College to open more chapters of innovation and strive to surpass your humble achievements. Never rest on your oars, as you continue to render selfless service to humanity by propelling this great college to enviable heights.

I congratulate you all on the various achievements of the college and thank you for listening.
Executive Council in December last year amounting to ₦12.4billion naira. This contract does not stop at supply of equipment only, but also involve the rehabilitation and furnishing of laboratories, workshops and provision of infrastructure to the beneficiary institutions.

The contract will also involve the training of the lecture, technicians and technologist on the installation and use of the equipment. The executions, of these projects had since commenced and has reached various stages of completion.

Also, the deplorable state of Technical Colleges in the Country has been worrisome to the FME. We have set out to completely revamp and revitalize the sector in line with the transformation agenda. The government would soon intervene in the Technical Colleges as done in the Polytechnics and Monotechnics with a view to bringing synergy of training in the tertiary and sub-tertiary technical education sector.

It is heart cheering to note that the entrepreneurship education which was pioneered by the College as compulsory course has continued to stimulate the acquisition of productive and managerial skills for self-actualization. Through this programme, the products of the College are encouraged to become job creators and not job seekers. Emphasis must, therefore, be placed on entrepreneurship education to aid poverty alleviation. This is certainly in tandem with the achievement of one of the Millennium Development Goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger through productivity and economic empowerment.