

ADDRESS BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY, FEDERAL  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ON BEHALF OF COL. A.A. ALI, FEDERAL  
COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION, NIGERIA

Mr. Chairman, Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have been requested by the Honourable Federal Commissioner for Education, Col. Amadu Ali, to represent him at this opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Africa Regional Seminar on Technical Education and Industry, being held at Ibadan. Col. Ali has requested me to express his regrets for his inability to be with you this morning.

I am pleased, on behalf of the Hon. Federal Commissioner for Education to welcome to Nigeria the participants in this Commonwealth Africa Regional Seminar on Technical Education and Industry. Nigeria is glad to play host to this seminar because it will give participants the opportunity to assess for themselves the vast strides we are making in industrial development, in accelerating the training of skilled workers, craftsmen and technicians who are required in much greater numbers than hitherto, and in the development of policies on technical education which are more relevant to the requirements of industry in Nigeria. Like most developing countries, Nigeria is grappling with problems of the reorientation of its educational system to provide the skilled manpower required for its rapidly developing industrial sector.

This seminar will deal with topics apposite to the policy on technical education contained in our new National Policy on Education. It will deal with the partnership between technical education and industry, the complementary roles of industry and educational institutions in educating and training technicians, and the participation of industry in the formation of curricula and syllabuses for technical education courses.

Technical education in Nigeria started early this century when the first technical school was opened in Kano in 1913. Apprenticeship training opportunities were also available in the Public Works Department, the Telegraphic Department, and the Survey Department. It became a subject of considerable concern to the Government as by 1945 when plans were made for the establishment of technical institutes, trade centres, and handicraft centres. The Yaba Technical Institute opened in 1947 and offered three full-time programmes for junior technical, senior technical and teacher training. The junior technical course was a four-year programme of secondary education with a technical bias, giving resident instruction in wood working, drafting, sub-professional engineering, commerce, and printing to students who had completed eight years of primary education. The senior technical course was a three-year with two years of residential instruction separate by one year of on-the-job training in industry. This course admitted students who had completed a standard secondary grammar school course and those who had completed the junior technical course. The senior technical course programme covered subjects like electrical, mechanical and civil engineering, a course for architectural assistants, and a course in economics. The teacher training programme was a two-year course for the preparation of teachers for handicraft centres and secondary school craft courses.

The Yaba Trade Centre enrolled its first students in 1947. Its objective was to produce skilled craftsmen. Students worked largely on an apprenticeship basis. Trade centres, technical institutes and technical

schools of the Yaba Trade Centre type now exist in all the States. The courses in the trade centres and technical training schools are of the sandwich type. There is also a substantial number of handicraft centres offering manual training courses for the development of mechanical skills as part of the general programme of education at the post-secondary level.

Technical education has come a long way since its beginnings in the senior technical courses in the Yaba Technical Institute in 1947. Yaba Technical Institute itself developed into Yaba College of Technology in 1963. Colleges of technology and polytechnics have been established to offer diploma-type courses originally modelled on the Ordinary National and Higher National Diploma programmes in Britain. In 1975, there were only eight colleges of technology in the country. None of them had an enrolment of much over 1,000. Now several States have their own college of technology, and the Federal Government has approved the establishment of six Federal colleges of technology with an anticipated student population of 5,000 each. Kaduna Polytechnic has an enrolment of about 6,000.

To produce a better quality of technicians and technologists, the Federal Military Government has abolished the Ordinary National and Higher National Diploma two-tier system of technical education in Nigeria, and replaced it with a single-tier Nigerian National Diploma programme of the same standard as the previous Higher Diploma course. It will consist of three years of study, covering lectures and practicals and periods of industrial training, plus one year of supervised industrial work experience - making four years in all.

New courses are being drawn up in consultation with industry and the various professional bodies. We are aware of the difficulty in expecting industry to co-operate in the provision of supervised industrial training because a large number of firms in industry are small and lack the necessary facilities to organize this type of training. In 1977, the National Board for Technical Education was set up to advise the Government on, and to co-ordinate all aspects of, technical and vocational education falling outside the universities, and to make recommendations on the national policy necessary for the full development of technical and vocational education for the training of technicians, craftsmen and other middle-level and skilled manpower. The Board will also determine the general programmes to be pursued by polytechnics and colleges of technology so as to maximize the use of available facilities and avoid unnecessary duplication, while at the same time ensuring that they are adequate to the manpower needs of the country.

We, in Nigeria, recognize that there is still much to do to improve technical education in Africa. This seminar should provide a unique opportunity for participants to contribute their thinking to the development of new strategies and policies for the reorientation of technical education. This in turn should increase in quality and quantity the output of technicians and technologists in industry.

Thank you.