

**ADDRESS AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 38TH ANNUAL
CONGRESS OF THE NIGERIAN ACADEMY OF EDUCATION (NAE), HELD
IN ABUJA, 6TH- 8TH NOVEMBER, 2024**

By

The President, Professor Kabiru Isyaku, OON, FNAE, mni.

Protocol

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy, excited and humbled to stand here in the midst of this galaxy of very distinguished people, who have assembled here today to participate in the Opening Ceremony of the 38th Annual Congress of Nigerian Academy of Education (NAE). NAE will be 40 years next year.

The Nigerian Academy of Education was inaugurated in 1985. It is the second of the Nigerian Academies - only younger than the Academy of Science. It is one of the Academies recognised by the Federal Government. Profs. Babatunde Fafunwa, Adamu Baikie, C. O. Taiwo, O. C. Nwana, Grace Allele-Williams, Ben Ukeje, Otonti Nduka, Peter Lassa, PAI Obanya, Dr S. J. Cookey, Alhaji Hamidu Alkali and Dr. Ahmed Eshak were among the 50 foundation members. The then Head of State, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, represented by Gen. Abacha and the Hon. Minister of Education, Prof Jibril Aminu, were present at the inauguration. The then Head of State was the first recipient of the Honorary Fellowship of NAE. That was the beginning of government-NAE relationship and respect. The body was to function on advisory capacity. NAE, today, is represented on the boards of some parastatals - NERDC, NCCE and TRCN - all under the Federal Ministry of Education. Among other things, NAE is also deeply involved in the activities of Federal Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation.

NAE is the apex organisation for seasoned, experienced, top notch educationists from the academia and administration. It is apolitical, completely national and does not discriminate on the basis of religion, location, gender and, may I add, age, provided the minimum requirements are met. Our current membership (over 300) includes Educational Institutions, former Ministers, Professors, Directors, Vice Chancellors, Provosts, Rectors, Heads of parastatals, etc.

The aim of NAE is to advise on and help improve the quality of education at all levels. This is achieved, among others, through the following activities:

- Holding annual interactive activities to discuss topical issues and to recharge members – like this occasion. In the last few years, such issues like access in education, sustainability in education, gender, educating children in difficult circumstances, skills and technologies in education, admissions into tertiary institutions and teacher education were variously discussed.**
- Production of books including text books for tertiary level and yearbooks, among others.**
- Carrying out researches and training on areas of needs, topical and futuristic issues in Education (commissioned and non-commissioned);**
- Engaging in projects such as Adopt-a-School which is a practical intervention to improve the school learning and environment by members and others;**
- Collaborating with other Bodies like JAMB, NCCE and NUC for the improvement of Education;**
- We have recently expanded our activities into the ECOWAS region to cooperate, learn, and help ourselves in the region.**

NAE believes that this country can achieve fast development, if the right attention and actions are given to education. Hence, this position has been variously expressed in the Academy’s periodic communiques and position papers submitted to relevant bodies. Recently, this organization’s positions on the professionalization of Teaching and the implementation of Teacher Education Policy were accepted by the government. It is my joy to hear that the implementation of some of the recommendations has begun.

NAE is delighted to witness the emergence of the National Language Policy because almost all the developed nations use their indigenous language in teaching and learning. Furthermore, the establishment of National Senior Secondary Education Commission (NSSEC) is another bold step to fill the only gap in the supervision at all levels of Education. The Act allowing the Colleges of Education to offer degree courses in Education is very apt. This should put a stop to the conversion of COE’s to Universities just for the Names – remember Teachers’ College Columbia, USA. Recently, the Academy made her position on the extension of validity of UTME score for ranking, unlike SSCE (i.e. WAEC, NECO, NABTEB and NBAIS).

NAE is prepared to partner with public (all levels of Government) and private bodies, to work towards the improvement of education, especially in providing tailor-made teacher capacity building.

NAE Congress

During Congress, there is a combination of the induction of new Members, Academy Fellows, Honorary Fellows and presentation of papers. Today, the Academy is inducting twenty-six (26) new members and elevating three (3) deserving members to the Fellowship level. The Fellows are:

- 1. Prof. Comfort M. Ekpo**
- 2. Prof. Elsie C. Umeano**
- 3. Prof. Ismail Junaidu (Posthumous)**

The Academy is also honouring two (2) personalities for their outstanding contributions to the development of Education in their various communities and Nigeria in general. These are:

- 1. Arc. Sonny S.T. Echono**
- 2. Chief (Dr) Mrs Justina U. Chukwu**

You will hear more about the Fellows and the Honorary Fellows during their respective citations. I seize this opportunity to congratulate all of them for being worthy of recognition.

BURNING ISSUES

I will use this unique occasion to bring up AGAIN some issues that the Academy believes require urgent attention by all stakeholders:

- 1. There is the need to declare emergency in the Education sector because it affects all other sectors. The National Policy on Education was last reviewed over 10 years ago. Issues like Status of Education in the Constitution, Structure, Funding, relevance of the current Curriculum, Evaluation and Certification should be addressed comprehensively enough to cover all levels and everything to do with Education with all stakeholders (Local, State, Federal Government, Employers, Religious and other Development Partners), since Education is the responsibility of ALL.**
- 2. Considering the teachers at Basic and Post basic levels, it is very discouraging for qualified or prospective teachers to see many schools highly**

populated by non-teachers, while thousands of qualified ones are jobless. Quality Assurance, Supervisory and funding Agencies should have the courage to enforce the approved standards in making sure that **ONLY** qualified personnel are in the country's educational institutions.

3. **The Salaries and other entitlements of the personnel in the Educational Institutions should be released as and at when due. These salaries should be adequate enough to allow the teachers have peace of mind to concentrate on their various jobs. It is high time the NTEP is fully implemented.**
4. **The recent commencement of supporting students through the National Education Loan Fund is a welcome development. However, this does not preclude the already approved policy of giving bursary to students studying to be Teachers to attract more and high intelligent students.**
5. **Presently, there is proliferation of educational institutions. States and the Federal government have continued to establish Tertiary Institutions, without matching the required funding personnel and facilities. Regrettably, all have their eyes on funding by TETFund. There should be moratorium on the establishment of such institutions, until the current ones are fully equipped and with adequate personnel as required by the Regulatory Agencies.**
6. **There is the need for the Federal Ministry of Education to review the procedure of recognising and accrediting offshore qualifications. The relevant Regulatory Agencies in the country should be fully involved, since they set standards at their various levels.**
7. **The Federal Government, at this stage of the country's development, should not directly run secondary Schools. Instead, FGN should only be in charge of Policy and Quality Assurance. Thus, all Federal Government Colleges should be devolved to the states with comprehensive conditions.**
8. **The Covid-19 pandemic has taught the world valuable lessons in all fields. In a nutshell, it is time to integrate technologies in Education. This will give room for the expansion of knowledge for both teachers and learners. The experts in the field know more.**

9. If **TEACHING** is a **PROFESSION** (such as the Health, the Legal, and Finance), top officers in all the sectors (MDAs) should be qualified and certified to teach, for them to understand the workings involved.
10. There is an urgent need for the Federal Government to appoint Boards and Councils of various Parastatals under the Federal Ministry of Education for the bodies to function properly and according to the law.

2024 NAE CONGRESS LECTURE

In this Congress, the topic is – **Nigerian Education System: Past, Present & Future**. The Keynote Address will be delivered by Prof. Maicibi Alhas Nok. There have been many calls for the comprehensive revision of the system to match the realities of the level of both current and future development. I strongly believe that more on this will be heard from the various speakers today and tomorrow.

APPRECIATIONS

No one organises an event of this nature without assistance. NAE is grateful to benevolent Landlord, the NCCE, that has been relentlessly supporting the Academy with personnel and other logistics. Both TRCN and NERDC deserve mention for their continuous support. As the highest professional body in Education, the Academy welcomes collaboration with all stakeholders in ensuring the quality of Education in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The theme is quite apt and relevant for all of us at this time. To catch up with the developed countries, the Nigerian education system has to be rejuvenated to be in tune with the present realities and future possibilities. Please make your points heard, included in the communique, and recorded for consideration by relevant stakeholders.

WELCOME TO THE 38TH CONGRESS AND THANK YOU FOR COMING!

And please mark your calendar to attend our 40th Anniversary in 2025

Prof Kabiru Isyaku OON, FNAE, mni.
President