

PROFESSOR NURUDEEN OLORUN-NIMBE ADEDIPE AT 70: A VIEW FROM CALEB UNIVERSITY

I am grateful for the great privilege of presenting this brief goodwill message on behalf of Caleb University, Imota, Lagos State on the occasion of the 70th birthday anniversary of the pioneer Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council of our University. My task is simple since the subject is so well known and it is akin to marketing Coca Cola or McDonalds to Americans! Yet it is challenging because the man of the moment is a many-sided personality and, as the legend goes, the blind Hindustani can only reasonably describe the part of the elephant that he has touched. Worse still, Professor Adedipe is my boss, one that I have worked with for barely three months! But I speak from my heart.

That said, though my first real meeting with Prof. Adedipe took place on September 28, 2010, when he chaired the panel that interviewed me for my current job, he was already well known to me and anyone else interested in university education and institution building in Nigeria. His towering reputation as pioneer Vice-Chancellor of the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (UNAAB), consultant to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), WHO, UNESCO, UNEP, UNICEF and Ford Foundation, and his capacity building initiatives as Visiting Professor at the NUC and chair of NUC's Standing Committee on Private Universities (SCOPU) preceded him. However, he was not the man that I expected to see though I soon learnt that his amiable demeanour is complemented by his stern stance against sloppiness and mediocrity. Let me highlight those features of his personality that I have observed within this short time frame.

First, he has a disarming and charming personality though this is complemented by a firm resolve on matters of principle. He does not suffer fools gladly. Second, Professor Adedipe would not settle for second best. Nothing but the best would satisfy him. He has an eye for detail, the kind of perfectionism that is the average Nigerian's nightmare. Third, he is an all-rounder – a cerebral academic, legendary administrator, institution builder and consultant. He once told me how he made a decent living from his passion for landscaping, originally, a mere hobby. In other words, he is the exemplar of the principle of application of knowledge beyond mere academic specialisation. Fourth, Professor Adedipe is urbane – whether in his dress style (Nigerian or Western), diction or sophisticated manners. I suspect that this suavity, which is natural to him in any case, is a product of a combination of his colonial Lagos “ajebutter” beginnings, global scholarship, career trajectories and self-development. Finally, I have observed the sharpness of

his intellect even at close to 70. To illustrate, he once handled a half-hour briefing session without recourse to his notes (if any). In addition, as we are witnessing today, he has managed to put together in one volume his thoughts, travails and triumphs in an autobiography that is bound to make rivetting reading from cover to cover –and that in spite of his crowded schedule.

Professor Adedipe has had a rich and fulfilling career in the university system in Nigeria and abroad. Nigerian higher education and the world of scholarship at large owe him a debt of gratitude for all he has done. We at Caleb University acknowledge today and always his great role in the take-off and running of the institution. Always available for counsel and guidance, Professor Adedipe has made immense contributions to the human capacity and infrastructure development of this rising star, the premier tertiary institution in the old Ikorodu Division. A striking imprint of his on Caleb University, Imota is the layout of the academic and administrative sections of the permanent site as a cluster of two massive buildings (flanked by the cafeteria, staff quarters and halls of residence). The alternative was a dispersed and disjointed campus setting. What might be called the clustered core concept has proven to be cost-effective and conducive to effective administration, while also fostering a close-knit community of academic and non-teaching staff, and students. There is nothing like experience – the kind that Professor Adedipe has in abundance.

On behalf of the Proprietor, Prince Oladega Adebogun, the Chairman and Members of the Board of Trustees, Members of the Governing Council, Management, Staff and Students of Caleb University, Imota, Lagos State, here's wishing Professor 'Nimbe Adedipe a happy 70th birthday and many happy returns of this day.

Thank you and God bless.

Professor Ayodeji Olukoju

Vice-Chancellor, Caleb University

Imota, Lagos State

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