

African Studies Association of the UK

Commission for Africa/NEPAD/G8

Discussion document 1

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Participants:

Dr Sani Abba Aliyu (saniabbaaliyu@yahoo.com)
Dr Tanimu Abubakar (tana@edu.ng)
Dr George Kwanashie (Gakwanashie@yahoo.com)
Prof. Mike Kwanashie (mikekwanashie@yahoo.com)
Muhammad Umar-Buratai (uburatai@yahoo.com)

In conversation with Prof Graham Furniss (gfl@soas.ac.uk)

Graham Furniss: How do you think the Commission Consultation document will be received, particularly in relation to Higher Education in Africa?

George Kwanashie: I would not be surprised if it doesn't encounter a great deal of scepticism across the continent especially from the intellectuals, same old stuff: 'people come and tell us what to do, just talk but not back it with action'. There are professional NGOs who are into this sort of thing, I saw the list of Nigerian groups that are already participating and it is the regular NGO types, which is good but I think it misses a lot, it would have been better if we had more time, if it had come last year then I would have wanted ABU to be involved in a more active way and have organized groups to discuss, because if you don't agree then it is best to tell people, if you are sceptical you tell them so, but we must remain engaged with the community outside.

It mentions HE but says very little and when it talks of education again it is in a very general sense. But this touches a very important thing -- for over two decades the World Bank encouraged African countries to focus on mass education and literacy and this caused a de-emphasising of higher education with talk of graduate unemployment, and last year the World Bank was beginning to rethink its position and they are now coming to accept that HE requires more attention, and it is the case that for all these development issues unless you have a strong HE sector that produces the manpower, the ideas and so on to move society then nothing is going to happen, and certainly as far as Nigeria is concerned the core issue is the collapse of capacity, at whatever level whether you are talking of governance, whether you are talking of the health sector, or talking of education, the capacity just isn't there, you can put in all the money you like, if you don't have the people with the skills to manage society to develop all these things, it is a waste of time.

And I think this is what has kept happening, the international organizations in developed countries will think up programmes, put money into it, come over here, supervise it for three, four, five years, then when they go it collapses. Because there isn't the capacity to sustain, in whatever area, transparency in governance, building democracy, what have you. That is where HE comes in most critically, unless you have an HE sector that will produce the people with the skills, the manpower to sustain things on all of these fronts, I think it is a waste of time, which is why I hope things will come back to higher education - that is our base and what we know, we have spent our lives in higher education.

Tanimu Abubakar: Apart from the general cynicism there is also the general resignation about this kind of high profile intervention in relation to development. Situations like intervention in Iraq don't help, the experience is that all sorts of interventions with all sorts of promises about resources are forthcoming but little is actually done, and particularly in relation to NEPAD. Over the last 2–3 years there has been a lot of noise about NEPAD, their representatives came to Abuja with a long action plan of programmes, and time frames, but not much has been going on, and now this one, so it is important to address that kind of cynicism, partly because many of us are not aware of what it takes to get this kind of intervention realized and active – the nature of governments, the various interests that can push things backward and forward and so on. Having said that, the second most important question is, How is this intervention going to be effected? Will this be intervention through governments, loans, grants, the things that people are familiar with, or are they going to be through the NGO type of activity, getting resources and skill and various forms of assistance to civil society, empowering a variety of components of civil society to discharge certain kinds of responsibilities that may add up to some kind of development? I think this a very important question. Or is it going to be a combination of the two, or is there going to be a new way of doing it? If we raise that in general terms, there is another question that will arise -- What will be the nature of state and civil society organisations and structures? How will these fit into the programmes and actions of this intervention? I am raising this because quite a lot of issues touch on this -- peace, security, -- Who is going to play what role in effecting them? When we come to the specifics then these are some of the things we are going to be concerned with -- the nature of governance, the nature of nation states, because the nature of the crises that are evident everywhere in the African continent point to the fact that these preliminary issues have not been resolved, the issue of nationalities and nations, the question of state governance, the question of the responsibilities of government, citizenship rights, and so on and so forth. They have not been resolved since independence, and because they have not been resolved they have created new problems, both the state and the structures of civil society are unable to cope with these problems, and so, on the one hand, you have this real strong desire for peace, for progress, for development, for stability, while, on the other hand, in a practical sense there are processes that are negating them and you get all the same parties involved in these same processes, either in terms of making peace, or in terms of taking care of refugees, or providing emergency relief. So it seems to be a vicious circle, the same sets of people, governments, civil society organisations, international communities, they are concerned with development, progress, peace and stability, and all dancing around in a circle – saying look there is a calamity, and you address the calamity, and you come up with a programme. And immediately another calamity occurs and so on, and none is able to say, 'Look what is going on? Who is playing what role? And part of the problem is that a lot of questions dealing with state, nationhood, citizenship, governance and so on, have not been resolved since independence.

And if you are intervening in this kind of structure then a very fundamental problem arises: how are you going to guarantee fairness, equity, and equal participation for the beneficiaries? What can be done to prevent all these new resources, new assistance, skills coming in and generating new conflicts -- this is a very important issue to address.

Let me then come to the issue of HE, and again the point has already been made. There are two things that need to be addressed. One is the nature of HE itself and its relation to the needs of society and the context in which it must function. HE of course in most African countries derives its structure and purpose from the process of decolonisation and independence and has been considered the cornerstone for the creation of the modern state, providing manpower and so on, but it has also demanded a strong role for the state in terms of absorbing the products of HE, in terms of providing employment, in terms of opening up industries and so on, creating all the structures that the products of HE will go into. This has created a problem in many African societies and yet there hasn't been any systematic attempt to address that issue, there are efforts here and there, even in Nigeria it is being recognised that government can no longer directly employ all these people. We have seen the emergence of elements of corporate capitalism, globalisation, the market-driven economy, and all of this has generated some interest in

trying to redefine the context in which HE is provided, but this has not been done systematically. And again, if there is an intervention, how is this matter going to be addressed? If you now bring resources, and you say you are going to do it through governments, then the same problems are going to arise. Go through government bureaucracy, government policies and programmes and so on, and the governments (which are themselves running very large deficits and which have many other problems) can easily divert these resources or whittle them down. So it is very important to ask what kind of HE are we talking about in the 21st century? What is it supposed to do? How is it going to be actively involved in assisting development in the continent in general and in generating jobs, in reducing the burden on the state?

So that is one issue, the second question is how are the HE institutions to be run? Run and regulated? What will be their role, because if they are essentially recipients of all these goodies, if they are to be objects in the programme and have very little role in terms of creating their own programmes, in terms of developing their own capacities, in terms of how actively they get involved, and take responsibility for whatever input they get and transforming this input into an output that is reasonable, many other problems will definitely arise. And I think that even at that level the issue of capacity within the HE institutions themselves becomes a very big problem. Do they have the capacity first to understand all these interventions and changes that are needed? Can they do this without getting unnecessarily bogged down by the very old ideological debates -- because this the problem of most of the universities. There is still a lot of talk about the welfare state, the responsibility of government to provide free education, and to provide everything, without ever asking what changes have taken place in society in relation to resources and population, new needs and so on. No one raises these questions, they just assume it is a natural thing that government should provide everything.

It is important to have systems that have the capacity to create new discourses, that is the important thing, discussion about change and how intervention should come in, as happens in most places. If you don't have such discussion, then you can have the intervention, you can have all the resources come in, but all you have is a large number of organizations on the inside asking for their own share of what comes in, without ever thinking about how this can be used in generating new knowledge, or developing new systems and so on. So the challenges are really enormous. Finally, who is to benefit from HE is also a very important question. I raise this because there has been a lot of concern over the number of people who are qualified, for example in Nigeria, for HE but who cannot get space in the existing tertiary institutions. Because of this all sorts programmes have been contemplated, some of them have been half-heartedly put in place, the Open University, distance learning, elearning, and it is very important to know who is going to benefit, and how is that going to assure equity of access, all very important matters.

Muhammed Umar-Burutai: I think there is a missing link between the interventions and the objectives that they seek to underscore in the developing countries. And a large measure has to do with the question of perception, what are the peculiarities on the ground. The point has been underscored by both Dr Kwanashie and Dr Tanimu, and, to my mind, I think that what the interventions need to consider are the socio-cultural peculiarities on the ground. When for example it is proposed to strengthen education, particularly for girls, how is this to be done? Oftentimes you bring in interventions for people, the ideals of which may be good, but which also in the end fail because people hardly identify with them. And I think this is part of what this document here needs to pay attention to, look at the question of peculiarity and how to go about that first. No matter how good a project may be in principle, unless the people for whom it is meant identify with it, it is not going to work. We are aware of how projects like clinics, boreholes and other things are sited in various communities but which only last for a short period of time and then they break down and that is the end of it. Unless of course you get the people involved so that they identify with it as part of the progress of their own community, unless they identify with it and care for it, then the sustainability can hardly be guaranteed. I recall that way back in the late 80s the UN declared a decade for cultural development, and I think that part of the emphasis behind that declaration was the realization that unless we approach the issue of development from the perspective of culture and the peculiarities of the societies for whom development is meant, the goal of development is not going to

be realized. And I think this is what has been missing so far and it affects all the initiatives that are raised here.

Tanimu Abubakar: The debate need not be a society-wide debate, but there should be some concern with this particular issue at the level of the planning as well as at the level of the implementation and within the universities. If that is not done my fear is that you can have resources come in but they get wasted, they get underutilized and so on. One just hopes that the G8 whenever it adopts a programme of this nature may provide conditions – yes, we can intervene in HE to do A, B, C, D, E provided certain criteria are clearly spelt out.

Sani Abba Aliyu: One possibility, for these initiatives to work and to reduce a lot of woolliness around these things, is for the Commission (for Africa), or for the various stakeholders that the Commission expects to act on the report, to identify what productive initiatives already exist in HE, for instance. I know there is the Association for African Universities, they definitely do have certain programmes and activities, I don't know how effective they are, I don't know how well received they are and whether their impact is felt in the universities, not much of them is heard here, to be quite honest. But for consultation purposes it would be useful to reach out to them, and also I think the Association of Commonwealth Universities has projects, ongoing projects and ideas about higher education. I know for instance they have this project that arranges for retired academics to provide expertise to developing universities in specific areas. People who will have retired in various parts of the world, either the US or Europe who come under a specific arrangement and provide specific expertise which is lacking in many developing universities. So I think this is one possibility. Then the other dimension, by way of improving the level of information available to allow for precise action, is to begin to talk to some of the Foundations, because, whether we like it or not, the major international foundations, American foundations specifically, now have a vast amount of information about African universities across the continent. They have their own approach and their own mechanisms of support -- Rockefeller, Macarthur, Ford, Carnegie -- and they have spelt out their policy documents, and they have given the criteria for intervention in specific universities. Their theme is reform, they look at which universities have shown indications of reform, and they send their teams around and make their assessments. Then based on what they saw on the ground, on interviews and discussions, they ranked universities and decided to provide specific support.

So this is an important dimension, using existing resources, existing sources of information, about how to go about things in respect of HE. In relation to NEPAD, there should be a way in which national governments could be made more responsive in relation to NEPAD. Honestly, at the level of HE here, we have practically no involvement. I don't think that since NEPAD was inaugurated we have had any visitation from anybody from the Foreign Ministry or from NEPAD, no documents as far as I know. They may have their website, but it is a different thing to go their website as compared with national governments themselves mobilizing various sectors to take an effective role in NEPAD activities. So as far as we are concerned, NEPAD is associated with Thabo Mbeki and our President going for meetings and so on, but on the ground, in specific institutional settings, you don't hear anything about it. They don't appear to have established any link to the needs of HE in any specific countries. I don't know what other countries are doing. A friend of ours who used to work as a desk officer for NEPAD came here some time ago seeking admission to the university and he asked about NEPAD and we said we know nothing about it. He was amazed and said that consultation processes had already been tabulated and ticked as having been done! Yet the university sectors are not involved and are not aware of what is going on, lip service is given to NEPAD but at the level of implementation it is quite a problem.

I think we should remember that there is also ECOWAS, and I don't know all the details of their protocols, but I think there ought to be a protocol on education, a section on education, and some kind of interaction and exchange between the various countries in West Africa. ECOWAS now has existed for over 20 years but the Vice-Chancellors of West Africa have no fora, as far as I know, they don't meet,

the lecturers don't meet, the students don't meet, there is nothing that brings them together, no sharing of resources, no exchange, so I think again it would be helpful for this commission to talk to some of these bodies, find out what they are doing and suggest that they do more to mobilize various sectors.

Then, looking at various areas of the document itself, I also noticed that there is no mention of the mass media, and I think, as Tanimu mentioned, we have a number of conflicts around the place in many countries of Africa, and it is important that resolution and discussion takes place with the assistance of the mass media. There should be intervention in these areas, support, training, exposure, reorientation, resensitisation, all sorts of things need to be done both in the short term and the long term.

Clearly the question of HE will be an important area of intervention, but again either the Commission itself has to determine what areas it wishes to address, or else each institution will provide a long, long list -- we want this, we want that. There has to be a way of really thinking out what are the critical priorities and what the Commission can do in assisting the carrying out of those priorities.

George Kwanashie: I think what is required is to create a culture of discourse in African societies. It is not that you must stop and debate at every point, but you must encourage, create a culture of discourse which doesn't currently exist. Every so often, a problem arises and people clash and then it is over. Government policies are involved, take NIDS (which is the Nigerian version of NEPAD) I think they held one workshop or symposium here in ABU and they wanted people to participate, and how many people attended – very few. It was a huge document but as you went into the hall they said, 'here is the document', there was no time to read it, all that happened was somebody talked at you and that was it. In the meantime, people are worrying about gas for their cookers, about this, about that. They are not going to make any contribution in one or two hours. What you need is continuing discussion and information that circulates, and that is where this media thing comes in. But then we need a new type of media in Nigeria, honestly, the number of errors in a copy of a paper I bought this week was incredible, I thought what kind of graduates are we producing? English errors, not to mention the matter of the kind of questions they raise, the level of investigation that goes on. I don't know what the answer would be, but I think some of the answer will be to develop an independent media. Part of the problem has been that the media was largely government, especially here in the north. How many functioning private newspapers do you have - practically none. There is just the *Trust* and maybe one or two others, there is another that has just come up, *Leadership*, which is part of the Trust Collective, all owned by Sam Nda-Isaiah. That is about all, there is still *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* but they really don't provide the forum for the type of discourse that is needed, although if you read the issues from an earlier time, they really asked questions, 'If you were Governor what would you do?' And people proffered very simple ideas, but you got a feel of what people were thinking about. Now first I think it is that type of discussion that is required, you will never get a total consensus, but at least you have an idea what people are thinking, and my own view is of course that for development, for managing any society, it is not every time you wait for a consensus, it is not every time that everybody has the capacity to determine what should happen or where things should go. Sometimes someone has to accept responsibility and then help other people to understand where you want to take them but there is still a need to create the forum for people to express a view, participate, and that applies whether you are talking about governance, or universities specifically. What do universities need? If you ask, then you will probably get a thousand and one different things, but at least you get a feel for what the thinking is, but at the end of the day somebody must accept responsibility before cutting a path and pushing the university in a particular direction. That is where I think authority structures come into play. We can't put them aside. But I also think in response to one question you asked earlier, yes, some of us grew up when socialism was the vogue, communism was the vogue, everything was the state. I said to Mike, I thank God I have lived enough to see the socialist state fail and unwind itself. But we must encourage new debates and discussion in the universities.

I now believe that we must encourage civil society even though no one is necessarily sure what it is. Some people think of it as NGOs, everybody sets up his own little NGO but they don't necessarily have

the capacity to make very effective contributions. Here in Nigeria what is happening is that donors are using religious organizations who had been into these things anyway, the Catholic church for example, the Anglicans, and other protestants. A number of these Islamic missions have always run schools and other facilities, I think the donor agencies are coming back and trying to work through them rather than through the Ministries, because through the Ministries the money will be chopped, so they are working through these organisations and less through the regular NGOs. The local NGOs all get a bit of money – AIDS campaign, this campaign, that campaign, but not for providing services on a long term basis themselves.

I sometimes feel that part of the problem of societies in Africa is that it is getting so bad that individuals will not even accept responsibility for themselves, and for what they do. Everything has been handed over to government, to some distant organization. Our traditional institutions of managing society have literally collapsed, whatever we might say; we pretend they may exist somewhere but even they are, I believe, collapsing. Individuals won't accept responsibility for themselves, they won't accept responsibility for their families, and so they won't accept responsibility for society -- they expect government to do it, and I think we need to change that. Nobody wants to pay fees, for example, for higher education. Take the stakeholder conference at ABU last Saturday for example, the academic staff union comes up and says, 'No, Nigeria has enough money, nobody should pay fees, government should bring all the money.' But government isn't doing it! You have to do something different, for God's sake. And to keep repeating that line when the university is starving, and you can't get things done, and they sit down and say, 'no, we won't do it.'

So this idea of encouraging civil society, that individuals, groups, outside of government must begin to accept responsibility, and you empower them to do it, is important. There are plenty of people in the universities who have no business being here, they would probably be much better off if they were outside. Let them have some small business, let them do commissioned research, even if it is the problems of Samaru, let them go there and find out, publish it. At least they will do it better than the Local Government Chairman who does not know his left from his right. There are all sorts of things that people can do outside and not remain in the university.

And the problems of governance are everywhere, look around the world, you can't trust governments to do everything, and most of the time you can't even trust them to do anything right, man must learn to protect himself outside the structures of governance, and he must learn to do things for himself, and wherever you go in the world, in Africa -- take the DRC, there is no governance in the Republic of Congo. Take a place like Nigeria where everything seems OK, but when you go to my village there is no governance, there is no evidence of governance. With all the money that they say Nigeria has, all the noise they make in Abuja, if you go down to the rural areas there is no governance, it's not there. All these interventions, if they really want to have long term impact, which is what they say they want to do, then we have to look for new paradigms, as Tanimu said.

I read something here in the document about population growth and the population moving into the cities. This is a 1960s, 1950s phenomenon, not today. The people are still in the rural area for God's sake. And that is why you have all these crises in the rural areas. There is more rural-rural migration taking place, contests for land, water resources, that is why these conflicts are there. But the Governor sitting in Kaduna, or the donor agent flying into Abuja, the national capital, sees all these slums around the place and says the whole country is assembling there, it is not, people are still in the villages, my people are still in their village, there is no water, there is no light, they are quarrelling over farm land, they are quarrelling over ponds, that is where the action still is. And unless these interventions take cognizance of this... But I don't know how we will get it because we won't get it through government. When Blair turns up in Abuja, Obasanjo will show him what he wants to show him. They took the Queen to Nassarawa State, in Karu, and created an artificial market. Poor lady, she was going around

smiling, and I said, something is wrong with this, something is wrong with this, this is not my village. My God did I laugh!

Sani Abba Aliyu: Coming back to the Commission document, first there is the question of whether the political drive to take this forward is time-limited in the sense that we all know that an election is coming in the UK. What are the realistic chances of Blair losing and the initiative losing momentum? And secondly, is there not a danger of biting off more than anyone can chew? Would it not be better to choose two or three areas and focus upon effecting real change in those areas – health is of course a key issue, and then education, we remember that Blair arrived in government saying ‘education, education, education!’ And take education in a broader sense to include literacy generally in the adult and school age population and to include the media. And so people will be able to make up their own minds rather than be led by the nose by unscrupulous politicians. UNESCO used to provide some support for education broadly but we don’t hear much of that these days. So perhaps the Commission could talk to UNESCO about those things that have gone well in various parts of Africa and see if something could be done in this regard.

As for HIV/AIDS, I think one of the things that ought to be done is confront how certain cultural practices exacerbate the situation, but this requires the debate that comes with education. I was visiting the hospital the other day and a doctor friend of mine was berating a woman who had come to accompany her mother. After she had gone I asked him why. My friend said that he had diagnosed her with HIV six years previously after her husband had died. He had said she should not remarry and should take retrovirals which were expensive but the only measure available. When she came back with her mother and complained of rashes herself, he had discovered that she had married a man with three other wives and kept her condition secret. Cross-infection where a man has three or four wives is a timebomb.

One way in which these issues can be addressed is through the religious institutions. For example, recently, through the Ramadan evening *tafsir* of Qur’anic interpretation and homily, there was hardly any discussion of these issues. No sermons, nothing. And recently I heard of a friend getting married, who said the arrangements had gone a long way when another friend said to him that he should really ensure that both he and his proposed new wife should be tested, particularly because the woman’s previous husband had died. Well, he didn’t see him again for some time but when he did he discovered the marriage was off, and his friend said he was very grateful for the warning – she was HIV positive. In this part of the world it is clear that it is from the mosques, from the clerics, that the message has to be hammered home. Maybe they will have to say that ‘OK, you have more money, you want to marry another wife, but you should both go off and have tests, it is an absolute necessity.

George Kwanashie: This is very important. Some of the Christian churches won’t marry couples in the church until they go and have the AIDS test. And if one of them is positive then the marriage is not allowed.

Tanimu Abubakar: And in Samaru there are whole families that have been wiped out. Husband and three or four wives all gone, and there is thus a strain on the extended family who have to care for sometimes large numbers of orphan children. It’s all very well to put up posters and do performances, it really has very little effect. It is the Muslim clergy that really has to be engaged, because their attitude to it is very narrow, it is dismissive and glib. I remember there was a TV programme and I went there when I was in student affairs, and we were discussing the AIDS pandemic and the imam got angry saying that it was disgraceful that people were discouraging young girls from getting married, these were sinful things. And so when you have a clergy that simplifies the problem and thinks that it is a question of adultery and that is all, and refuses to consider all the other possibilities you have a real problem. On the occasion of the discussion, I said we should not narrow these things down to just adultery, it is possible to contract the infection by other ways, and the man just walked out saying this was a

programme just to encourage promiscuity. And I think that is the attitude of the Muslim clergy in a very fundamental way and unless that type of thing is tackled we will not get very far. They have a very strong hold over society. People believe them, and so what Sani has just said is very, very true. I know of three families in Samaru that are gone, a man who had three wives and went on to marry a fourth wife who was infected, and then they are all gone, and people just keep quiet, it is a continuing pattern. This is a major area that must be engaged with.

Mike Kwanashie: As an economist let me come back to the issue of development strategies. I do not feel that development can come through NEPAD and its ilk. All the measures are designed from a developed country's perspective. There is a world view of how development should be that is crafted by the experience of the G8 and they have an agreement on how globalisation is going, how major development issues should be resolved, how the world should look in ten years time. And most of these documents work down from there. In order to achieve these overall aims what are the steps to be taken, what should be the role of Asia, Africa, etc., and the logic of development in these countries must be consistent with the global initiative, irrespective of how the global initiative is articulated. I have had occasion to tell people close to the President that I don't feel the commitment of funds will meet the targets they have set, for two reasons. One, we cannot meet the conditions to draw those funds, and since the G8 are not philanthropists there will be conditions. And in the reports the point has been made that the aid growth ratio is far below what even they themselves have targeted. Most of these developed countries can't see why they should commit more resources than they are committing now to a continent that is, in their view, incapable of being a viable participant in the global economic system. They don't see how you can have a continent riddled with conflict, with wars, with bad news virtually every day, being able to mobilise within those constituencies the resources that we expect through NEPAD. And as democracies they cannot move resources fast. And so I feel the focus of development must be on resolving the problems of Africa itself, restructuring society, and part of what I am just hearing about is one part of that process, and you can't restructure these societies overnight, you can't change perceptions of imams overnight, they are a very strong force in the community, what the imam says goes! You can do all the campaigning you like in Abuja, but by the time you come to the local community it is his perception that is important, and he will resist. And so the response of the local society, the response at the grassroots follows a logic not consistent with the sort of response that the NEPAD initiative tends to assume. Even the way we organise the economy follows a logic that the NEPAD initiative cannot assume. And I understand it from their perspective. There is no way they can, at a global level, accept our response pattern to economic and social development, how can they? They expect us to behave in a particular way. Why are we having problems with our economic reform policies? Because we articulate our reforms at a global level, with a global mindset, knowing quite well that at the local level people cannot respond to those signals. Our people cannot respond to economic signals as people in Europe or elsewhere can respond to economic signals. Our people will not respond to a declining exchange rate as someone in Britain will respond to it. But we still articulate these policies because we want to be respectable, we want to be acceptable to international development partners, and so we still articulate these policies within that framework and that mindset. And then on a daily basis it fails.

And so the criticism goes to us, to us in government, because we maintain the cleavages in society, we run parallel worlds. I sometimes say we run three economies. Those of us at Abuja are running the first economy and that is the only thing we care about. Of course, when international organisations put a lot of pressure on us to concern ourselves with something like AIDS then we have to do that. But if the cleric says no then we will just pack up and return to Abuja, what do we care. Just like the polio issue, if the cleric wants his people to die, what can we do about it. It is good that the pressure is there however, so that we do attempt to bring together the global development issues and the local circumstances, the first economy and the third economy. And then these rascals in the university belong to the second economy, they think we should give them all our money, to build buildings and live well, they want to go on strike, they want to lock up the country! But unless they understand how the systems connect... They have been able to hold the whole system to ransom, forcing the government to actually listen to them, but that does

not make them part of the main economy, they don't control the productive part of Nigeria, which is still very, very small. They don't control the flow of wealth and of resources, they don't control how the oil money is distributed in the country, they are not part of the first economy. The first economy distributes the wealth, the second economy devours it and the third economy, weak as it is, produces goods and services (usually second-hand refurbishment) at the local level and just manages to keep going. And how do you build the structures that connects everybody, the first and the third economies? This NEPAD initiative is all about the first economy, and they use symptoms of the third economy to qualify the first economy and it just doesn't work that way. If they want to be helpful they have to go to the third economy, they have to ignore all of us in Abuja, ignore the slackers in the universities and go down. I see that these documents talk of community-based initiatives, not wanting to deal with state governments anymore, 'we don't want to deal with Abuja anymore'. But even that is wobbling because everyone is going to the communities doing what they want to do, there is no coordination, no coherence, and so we don't have the advantages of synergy to maximise the impact at that level. But unless you address the issue at that level, believe you me, all these initiatives are just useless. We are going into the review of the millenium goals. There will be a lot of noise, much will be said, and the report will show that it has been a failure, we are nowhere meeting those targets, and Nigeria will no way meet those targets. And so we will go to that conference and the question will be why did we not meet these targets? The aid ratios will be brought up but even there, any increase may not get through to the right constituencies.

You have to start with proper governance at the lowest level. That is where you start the transformation. And it includes the value system and social relations at that lowest level. Without that framework none of these projects will work. There must be an effective governance structure, like there was in the NA (native authority) system with all its faults. The NAs worked and so we need to consider how it was that they provided the little we had at that time. We have to re-engineer at that level, and we need the support of the state. We can't do it by asking government to go to hell. I have worked a lot with the UNDP and I like their strategy of saying that there are things they want to see functioning at the lowest level of the community and they will only work with those structures. They say, 'You put those structures in place or else we won't work with you'. And some of us in Abuja said, 'Wait a minute you can't tell us what to do.' But for us Nigerians who are working that system we recognise that that is the right thing to do, a community-based initiative is the right thing to do. Even if that initiative is with the support of the state we have no objection to that, but you must have the proper structure at the lowest level so that it is possible to combine the work of the private individuals, the work of the NGOs, the work of the state, etc. If we can get something like that going then these initiatives can actually help us in development. But if it is measures from the level of G8 coming downwards then I think it is a waste of time, they might as well keep their money over there and give us visas to come and work for them – allow labour to move freely!

George Kwanashie: In building effective states we need to eliminate overlaps in functions. It all started during the military times here. There was the parastatal responsible for something, and then there is a ministry supposed to be doing the same thing, then local governments again, state governments again, and you end up with nobody doing anything really. And so it is important to determine that there are certain things that can be done effectively at the local level and create the capacity to deliver at that level. You can't continue to duplicate functions and efforts, and you can't staff local governments with people who have not been to school and expect them to be effective. You have to create a local government system that will absorb the kinds of skills that can implement development. It is not that local governments don't receive money, they do, but they just don't know how to manage it and make it productive. There is this former student of mine who has just finished his youth service, in Jigawa state or somewhere, I forget, and he said that in his local government at the end of the month, they go and collect their money from wherever they collect it and they sit down under a tree and decide who gets what, and everybody goes away and comes back the next month, and that's it, it's that simple. Or they go and build culverts that lead to nowhere because somebody has to be given a contract, there are

culverts all over the place, no roads! Or they put street lights, but there is no street! Somebody had to give a contract, share the money and everything goes away!

One other problem is political, rather professional, control of policy formulation and implementation. They sit there in Abuja and the people who determine real policy, not the fancy thing they write in documents, but what actually happens on the ground? Time and again it is the politicians who make decisions on implementation where the professionals are sidelined. They share out the money and take their cut from the implementation process where the professionals ought to be seeing the policy through to reality.

The key issue, and I come back to the universities here, is to create the skills and the professionalism that is required. It is not that there are no Nigerians who know how things should be done, it is the subversion of all the systems by politicians that creates much of the problem. We have talked about HE but in my view the whole HE system does have to be completely shaken up. We even need to ask, 'what are we here for?' We need a lot of discussion within the system. You can bring in millions of dollars and put it into ABU now and it will just go down the drain unless you undertake very fundamental reforms, people don't even know what a university is for any more.

But then there are also very specific problems which need to be addressed. The quantity and quality of staff that you have, that is a key issue, and that is something where effective help could be provided. On the training of personnel my own position here has been 'don't give them a visa!' Mike here was one of the few who came back, but lots of them we send to go and train abroad, at the slightest trouble they skip. So the whole training process for universities became a process of training personnel for those economies outside, not for us. If they come back, they can no longer live in a house without 24-hour electricity, but those of us who are here we can live. So our preferred option here, in ABU, is give us the resources to bring people here, to train people locally, but this training issue is key, and then facilities. But then create linkages also between departments here, academics here, and people outside so that people can go out for three months, six months, but no longer. Academics, you give them one year and they won't come back! They'll find a way of skipping. This brain drain has been really serious. I would say that over the last two decades as much as sixty percent, or seventy, of the best brains in Nigeria have left the university system. Either they have gone abroad, or they have gone into the private sector, or they have just gone and sat in Abuja! But to keep people you have to provide the environment for them to be fully and productively engaged, and that has not been there. People find more interesting things to do. But talking of the university, the biggest problem is the quantity and quality of staff.

There will also need to be a major debate in Nigeria about who is going to fund education. How much should individuals contribute? Either as parents or as students. In Britain people have to take out a loan and mortgage part of their later earning capacity. Here in Nigeria, nobody even wants to start discussing such things, and yet it has become clearer and clearer that there is no alternative. The state, with all the goodwill in the world, is not going to be able to provide the funds. And there are some of us who believe that if more state funds are to come into HE then they should be directed at increasing access rather than making the few of us left here more comfortable, which is what we have been demanding. These issues will have to be discussed and no intervention should occur without these issues having been addressed. And universities will not be able to play the role that I believe they can play in pushing forward African development unless you deal with the fundamental issues that currently confront these universities. We have spent all our lives in the university and these universities are in a bad shape.