

# University Report

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## UNIVERSITY REPORT

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COSMO PIETERSE:

Hello, and this week we have a report from Nigeria on the perspectives of the one-year old National Council for Science and Technology, but first, as promised last week, we go to Ghana, to hear more about work being done in nutrition at the University of Ghana at Legon.

There Christine Oppong spoke to Dr. Oracca Tetteh, a biochemist, and last week in UNIVERSITY REPORT he told of his department's work to develop easily-available wholesome food for young children. But Dr. Tetteh's work in nutrition ranges further. So Christine Oppong, our Legon reporter, asked him:

CHRISTINE OPPONG:

What other lines of research have you been pursuing recently in the nutrition department at Legon?

DR. ORACCA TETTEH:

Well our main activity there has been teaching, for which we are producing students who are well steeped in nutrition and, therefore, could help in the message of carrying good feeding habits, good nutrition to the mothers. This is an important activity where you have to train people to help in the work which is supposed to be done in the country.

Secondly we have our lines of research, such as energy expenditure and energy intake of average Ghanaians. It is important for us to know how much energy is taken in by any person, and how much that person spends, so that the body weight can be maintained at a good position, because we know that excess body weight has got problems with it, problems of disease which we call the degenerative diseases. We hope that by studies of energy metabolism of Ghanaians we should come up with good solutions to some of these problems. We have carried out some

DR. ORACCA TETTEH:

of this work with soldiers at present, and we are standardising the proceedings - we hope to have these perfected in the near future.

We have also been looking at the problem of food habits in general, that is, the relationship of the foods, and the preferences which people show. It is important for us to know the food preferences and food habits of people so that when we give our foods to them we do not give them foods they will not take at all. We are, therefore, sure that by doing such research, much of it bordering on the social sciences, the behaviour patterns of people, we could help in the motivation and changing of people's food habits.

CHRISTINE OPFONG:

Are you in fact carrying out any interdisciplinary programmes with social scientists and others in Legon at the moment?

DR. ORACCA TETTEH:

Well, at the moment we have mentioned this problem of the interdisciplinary areas of research, discussed it with some people who are very interested, and we are hoping that this line will be taken soon. There is a little project which was started up in Northern Ghana which, in fact, shows this approach. A nutritionist is trying to find out the problems in relation to nutrition in this area, and she has come up with the social problems which surround these nutritional facts, and during this project we also managed to get a geographer who was interested to look into some of these problems for us. We hope we can use more of the inter-disciplinary approach to solve these problems.

COSMO PIETERSE:

Dr. Oracca Tetteh, biochemist working on problems of nutrition at the University of Ghana at Legon, talking to Christine Oppong.

And so, from a nation's physical and nutritional health to a nation's economic and developmental health, but still with a nutritionist. Professor V.A. Oyemuga, Professor of Animal Nutrition in the University of Ibadan is also Chairman of the Nigerian Council for Science and Technology. One of the Council's main functions is to advise the Government on methods to meet the growing needs for science education and technological instruction. Nigeria is developing fast technologically. So Akin first asked Professor Oyemuga that since:-

AKIN EUBA: One of your main tasks, no doubt, is to build up technology in Nigeria, why is it so important that Nigeria should become a technological country?

PROFESSOR OYENUGA: Well it is important that Nigeria should become a technological country because Nigeria has all the natural resources for technological development. Whether you measure this in terms of potential man-power, or potential natural resources. Not only that, Nigeria is a big country, which, at present, has about sixty-three million people, and which in another ten or fifteen years will be about 102 - 103 million - this is a big country by any standard. And it is not a country which could afford to only export raw materials, and import all its manufactured products from other countries. To be able to manufacture and develop these natural resources, it has to develop technology, technology is the instrumentation these days for rapid material development and, therefore, Nigeria must just go on as rapidly as possible in developing its technological manpower.

COSMO PIETERSE: Professor V.A. Oyenuga, Professor of Animal Nutrition, University of Ibadan, on the needs for Nigeria's technological advance. And it is to serve these needs that the National Council for Science and Technology was formed just over a year ago - to serve Nigeria. What then Akin Euba asked Professor Oyenuga - what are the Council's policies?

PROFESSOR OYENUGA: I think the broad policies are, one, to see that there is a proper and efficient way of running the scientific industries that are now increasingly developing in this country and, therefore, the transfer of technology from technological findings to industries is a very important one. It is one thing for the industries to develop very rapidly, so long as they develop rapidly and efficiently. Basic industries like telecommunications for instance, transportation like airlines and so on, are not running efficiently enough. It is the concern of my council to see to it that steps are taken as urgently as possible to improve their efficiency through proper training and transfer of technology to industry. Besides that, the question of basic research, and increasing the stock of research, it is also of very high priority. And how sufficient financial resources could be diverted to this aspect is also one of the basic policies of

PROFESSOR OYENUGA: the Council. There are quite a number of others of course which I can't enumerate here now.

AKIN EUBA: What are the most critical areas of need in the scientific fields in Nigeria?

PROFESSOR OYENUGA: Well from what I have said, I think we can define the most critical areas by defining our orders of priority. I think the most important priority in Nigeria these days is to raise the standard of living of the people of this country. In terms of food production, in terms of education, in terms of natural resources and the import substituted industrial products. We feel that emphasis should be placed upon this, and the whole of our recommendations to the government are based on the fundamental philosophy of raising the standard of living of people as rapidly as possible. In view of the wide gap that exists between living standards in Nigeria, and in other parts of the developed world. Therefore, agriculture, in all its aspects, is a very important basic area, and so is industry, agro-industrial processes, and also other industries, which I have mentioned, which are basic to the rapid development of industries and industrialisation of the country.

AKIN EUBA: What are some of the difficulties which you anticipate in the National Council, in terms of putting your ideas into operation?

PROFESSOR OYENUGA: Of course, one major difficulty is finance. It is true that we are in a country which is rapidly developing, but nevertheless there are various calls upon the financial resources, which are slender, of the country. Therefore it is absolutely impossible to get money to cover half of what the Council feels would be necessary. Therefore, we are drawing up orders of priority.

Another thing is the fact that the Council, of course, is advisory to government, its recommendations have got to be approved by the Federal Executive Council and this is naturally a very slow process. Therefore, until the government takes action we cannot go putting things into operation. The council is unique in many ways in the sense that it is made up of policy makers in the scientific sectors of the Federal government, and also of representatives of the State governments in addition to certain eminent scientists covering different fields

PROFESSOR OYENUGA:

of scientific endeavour. Because of this, sometimes it is not very easy to come to decisions as rapidly as possible, and the machinery is, therefore, slow. But we are very confident in the advantage of this system, in the sense that, once decisions are arrived at, it makes things easy when the government approves of this advice, to get the national acceptance of these decisions.

AKIN EUBA:

Well you mention funds, and this is, in fact, one of the most touchy problems in a project of this nature. Apart from government sources do you see any possibility of raising funds from outside?

PROFESSOR OYENUGA:

Well, we are looking forward to that, we do hope, of course that our essential needs will be met by the government, and we don't want to go outside for almost everything we want to develop in this country. Nevertheless, there are a number of projects which we are thinking of at present, for example, popularisation of science, the establishment of science museums in the country for the young scientists, the establishment of science libraries in the country, the establishment of scientific headquarters which will also house the Nigerian Council for Science and Technology and provide all the facilities. All these are projects which we will have to seek the assistance and goodwill of other countries, friendly countries, in executing.

AKIN EUBA:

What is the extent of scientific research in Nigeria at present? Is research at present properly directed towards the needs of the country?

PROFESSOR OYENUGA:

I believe the various research organisations in the country are doing their best to see to it that what they are doing is geared to the economic needs of the country. But since in the past there has been no organisation and planning, obviously this couldn't have been directed and encouraged from national goals. It is now that this science policy machinery has been set up that this can probably be done.

COSMO PIETERSE:

So the need for industrialisation, and for a technological revolution is recognised, action is being taken. But what of the problems caused? In the industrial western world, pollution of the earth, sea and of the very air itself caused by industry, and thoughtless industrialisation is nearing crisis point. There is the problem too of the damage an industrial and technological

COSMO PIETERSE:

revolution can have on a nation's culture, and way of life.

Akin raised this note of caution with Professor Oyenuga.

AKIN EUBA:

To what extent do you think technology will affect traditional cultures of Nigeria? Is it possible, for example, to accept technology which so far has been developed mainly in the West without accepting along with it the cultural values of the Western peoples?

PROFESSOR OYENUGA:

Well, this is the question which is often raised, and is a very relevant, pertinent question indeed. We are latecomers in the field of science and technology and, as such, with good planning and good foresight, we have all the advantages of avoiding the pitfalls which the western countries, and other countries which have trod the scientific road have fallen into. We feel really that we must develop science and technology in this country, with the back-ground of the traditions of the people of this country. We cannot import wholesale technological methods and innovations from other countries and just put them into a different environment altogether, it would not work. Naturally it must evolve and develop with the traditional background of Nigeria. We do believe very much in this. A good example of this for instance is the environmental pollution which recently has come to the fore in a number of countries whose environment has been polluted as a result of industrialisation. It is hoped that in Nigeria we will look into this matter very early to avoid creating a similar situation in our industrial development in the country.

COSMO PIETERSE:

Professor Oyenuga, Professor of Animal Nutrition at Ibadan University, also Chairman of Nigeria's National Council for Science and Technology, talking to Akin Euba.

And that, until next week, is where we must leave it, so, for now, it's goodbye from UNIVERSITY REPORT, and from me, Cosmo Pieterse.

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