



## **UI-SMEs Summit: One of the key challenges faced by SMEs in Nigeria is lack of research and development support - UI VC, Professor Olayinka**

Nov 14, 2019

### **NIGERIA: -**

The Vice Chancellor of University of Ibadan, Professor Abel Idowu Olayinka has said that one of the key challenges faced by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria is the lack of research and development support.

The Vice Chancellor disclosed this while delivering his address at the University of Ibadan Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) summit that was held at the International Conference Centre, University of Ibadan recently.

Speaking at the summit, Professor Olayinka said that the University of Ibadan is committed to making available to the SMEs, the institution research outputs that could directly solve societal problem, thereby fulfilling the vision of academic excellence that is geared towards meeting the needs of the society.

"As a fulfilment of one of the mission statements of the University which is 'to contribute to the transformation of the society through creativity and innovation, we are committed to fostering a relationship with Small and Medium Scale businesses with a view to solving technical problems relating to such businesses" Professor Olayinka said.

The Vice Chancellor stated that one of the key challenges faced by SMEs in Nigeria is the lack of research and development support.

"I am of the firm conviction that Nigeria should tap to its fullest the opportunities, benefits and gains inherent in SMEs. It is high time government started putting words to action in the SME sector, as it will serve as a veritable platform to address the problem of youth unemployment if not totally eradicating it"

"SMEs could, if properly managed and supported become the chief driver of economic growth in Nigeria. It is with this hindsight, that the University of Ibadan decided to embark on collating a database of viable small and medium scale enterprises across disciplines within the reach of the university" the VC said.

He however hoped that the summit will translate to a national discourse and offer other SMEs across the nation a platform to participate and as well involve other tertiary institutions, while the University of Ibadan remain the chief convener of the laudable summit.

Meanwhile, in her presentation on "Rationales for UI-SME Collaboration" the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research, Innovation and Strategic Partnerships, Professor Olanike Adeyemo said, "it is our expectation that this will jumpstart continuous interaction between the University of Ibadan and all SMEs stakeholders as a strategy focused on building the strength of our academic research system and linking this strength to industries for partnerships and innovation that responds to today's needs and positions in Nigeria".

In his own presentation, "Fidelity Bank, SMEs and Higher Education Engagement" the Managing Director, Fidelity Bank, Mr. Nnmandi Okonkwo ably represented by the Head of Division SMEs, Fidelity Bank, Mr. Osaigbor Omorogbe stated that, one of the biggest issues SMEs is facing in the market is not so much issue of funding but the absence of the knowledge of how much to manage the little resources you have gotten.

He further stated that the days of taking a loan in bank A and defaulting, and then going to present a complete different phase in Bank B to get a facility is over.

"If you go into a debt relationship with a bank today, and for some strange reasons you are unable to pay, we will get our money".

"You must be sure that the business is at that stage where it requires debt capital and that it has the capacity to pay back when the time is ripe" he said.

The Head, Procter and Gamble (P&G) Ibadan Plant, Mr. Segun Olujimi who represents Manufacturing Association of Nigeria during his presentation on "SME and University Relationship: Industrial Expectations" said, when it comes to SMEs, what is important is the application of the knowledge and skills to make profits. No matter how well read anyone is, if he is not able to translate that knowledge and skills into valuable creation then, it is a problem".

The sad truth is that the significant segment of today's labour force does not have the requisite skills demanded by employers.

He lamented that majority of Nigerian youths are unemployed and they risk living lifetime unemployment.

"If we don't do something now, we will realize that the unemployment rate that we are seen at 20% will still go up in the next few years" Olujimi said

He urged that the university and industries should be naturally interdependent, and also, the university through research and development should create innovations and processes which the industry utilise for production.

Also, in his presentation, "The Role of the Bank of Industry in SME and Academia Partnership" the State Manager, Bank of Industry Limited, Mr. Pacqueens E. Irabor lamented that Education is sounding like deception and it is becoming irrelevant.

He stated that we should be able to have an education that is built around vocation and as well make our educational system become very relevant to our local situation.

"Our universities should be a platform where students are taught how to discover themselves and equip them to make that unique contribution to their world while deriving maximum satisfactions. If we have not created such system, we are wasting everybody's time" Mr. Irabor said.

He urged that the academia and industries must form a symbiotic and they must produce graduate who are relevant to the industry.

However, presentations were also made by some other participants who contributed immensely to the summit towards solving the problems and meeting the needs of the society.

The summit had in attendance the Vice Chancellor, University of Ibadan, Professor Abel Idowu Olayinka, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research, Innovation and Strategic Partnerships, Professor Olanike Adeyemo; Managing Director, Fidelity Bank, Mr. Nnmandi Okonkwo ably represented by Head of Division SMEs, Fidelity Bank, Mr. Osaigbor Omorogbe; Head, Procter and Gamble (P&G) Ibadan Plant, Mr. Segun Olujimi; State Manager, Bank of Industry Limited, Mr. Pacqueens E. Irabor; Area Manager, ITF, Mrs. Mercy Oguntimehin; MD GIS Konsult Ltd Ibadan, Mr. David Tolu; Convener, UI SME Committee, Prof. T.A Ewemoje; Dr. O.O Olakanmi; Prof. Oyedunni Arologun; Prof. Elizabeth Adenike; academicians; students among others.