2011-11-07

Vice Chancellor's Installation Speech

Ndlovu, Lindela R
Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe and
Chancellor of the National University of Science and Technology,
Cde Robert Gabriel Mugabe.

The Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Honourable Dr.
Stan Mudenge

The Deputy Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Dr.
Sikhanyiso Duke Ndlovu
Members of NUST Council here present

The Acting Pro-Vice Chancellor of NUST, Professor Sam. Sibanda

Cabinet and Resident Ministers and Governors here present

Vice- Chancellors and Pro-Vice Chancellors from sister institutions

The former Vice-Chancellor of NUST, Professor Phinias Mogorosi Makhurane

All highly esteemed VVIPs

Ladies and Gentlemen

Graduants, parents and Guardians

Salibonani, Mabuyani, Lumelang, Riavhusa, Tomousa Mose,

Mwapona biyeni, Mangwanani Mose, Greetings to you all

Your Excellency, The President of Zimbabwe and Chancellor of NUST I thank you and the nation for bestowing upon me the responsibility of providing stewardship to NUST. I use the word ‘stewardship’ deliberately. For NUST has over the years established its niche in the higher education system in Zimbabwe, the SADC region and indeed Africa and the world. Its moto of ‘Think in other
terms’ has lead it to pioneer in industrial attachment as an integral part of the degree programme and all its supportive structures in this country. This produced graduates whose performance in industry was not paralleled by any and whose demand in industry ensured that all were absorbed within the first two months of graduating. The ambience at NUST has earned the institution the respect of all. I therefore am aware that expectations on me as Vice Chancellor to at least maintain these standards or better still exceed them are high. For that I have my hero, role model and predecessor Professor Phineas Mogorosi Makhurane to thank and all those that worked with him over the years. They laid a solid foundation for us to built on – both figuratively and, as these structures coming up bear witness, literally.

The challenge is ‘how do you mend something that aint broken?’ I will pose what I see as challenges for me and my team NUST in the next five years. I will not endeavour to answer any of the challenges today but as a true former Mzingwane Secondary School boy all I
will say is “I zenzo kunge Mazwi’ (Deeds not Words) which was the school motto then as is still now.

The higher education horizon has changed over the fourteen years since the inception of NUST both locally and internationally. Locally, several universities have come up since 1991 and most have been modeled along the NUST lines. This poses competition to all our programmes and the need to put into fact our motto has never been greater. What unique selling advantages can we imbue our students with so that they maintain the NUST tradition of ‘holding one’s own in academia, industry and socially’?

There is increased expectation by state and public at large that universities solve real and contemporary problems in their societies. Gone are the days when the public and government were happy to fund universities so that they indulge in intellectual curiosity, much as this is valuable. This heightened expectation requires us at universities to accept explicitly a social responsibility that goes much
wider than outreach programmes but one that is interwoven into all our activities. In this regard, in a knowledge economy we are expected to be seen to be drivers of the knowledge-creation, the conversion of that knowledge into marketable goods and services and creators of human capital that can create wealth for self and nation. This calls for a re-look at our teaching and learning processes. Are they still at the cutting edge required to produce employers (creators of employment) rather than employees? Are they robust enough to produce graduants with a strong sense of national identity and patriotic fervour without them being subservient? Are they competitive enough to produce a graduate who sees the whole world as potential market, not for themselves and their certificates but for goods and services made in Zimbabwe? For it is provision of such kind of human resource that Zimbabwe needs to improve its foreign currency earnings.

The increasing globalization of the world through the coming together of a variety of technologies but most importantly of
information and communications technologies poses challenges and opportunities to us at NUST. How do we re-engineer the way we do business to take advantage of the ICTies? Can we in fact maximize self-learning by our students even though we still are a face-to-face teaching institution? Biotechnologies offer increased scope for income generation and with the nation poised to start reaping benefits of the land reform programme that you so valiantly championed your excellence, how can we at NUST beneficiate such produce through our science and technology? Material science is another area where we could have comparative advantage over institutions locally and regionally.

As we endeavour to be world class, we cannot avoid the question of our almost total dependence on government fiscus for our funding. We compete for this funding with many other claimants and indeed to realize our cherished dream of being world class the proportion of money we generate from sources other than the government grant needs to increase. Our collective challenge as team NUST is to
manage and exploit our professional intellect into useful products and services that we can market. Quinn et al (1996) describe Professional intellect as consisting of four levels: know-what, know-why, know-how and care-why. Those familiar with the NUST approach to teaching and learning will readily recognize the parallels to our emphasis on knowledge (know-what and know-why), skills (know-how) and correct attitude (care-why). You will not that we do not at any stage emphasise ‘know-who’, which has been described as scourge of today’s Zimbabwe employment scene. The care-why is our biggest challenge. How do we motivate each other such that we display self-motivated creativity? In a knowledge organization such as ours this is the prime driver for productivity. Good salaries help but are not of and in themselves an adequate and sufficient condition. As leadership at NUST we need to discover the ‘other’ motivators in our community and bring them to the surface.

To successfully overcome these challenges we need partners – industry, philanthropic organizations, government and civil society.
We need to pursue these linkages with vigour and clear indications of the mutual benefit that will accrue to all if we so engage.

Academia is my forte and I can go on and on but I am conscious of the fact that there four thousand other Zimbabweans gathered here whose focus is not pontificating about challenges facing NUST in the next five years. Their focus is on celebrating their success or that of a beloved one and I am in the way of that happening. So I will shut at this juncture.

But before I do let me put in a personal note. While it is an extremely happy day for it saddens me that the one person I would have loved more than any other to be here is no longer in this world to witness izibulo lakhe ligothswa ubungcitshi beze mfundo. I refer of course to my mother who the Chairman of Council made reference to in his speech. Allow me your Excellency to thank her in absentia or put it in its proper perspective ngi thethele in public: E Mntungwa, E Mbuduma ka Masoka , E Sigwegwe sika Bingweni,E
Nqaqu. May I also take this opportunity to thank my family and other relatives here present for always being there for me.

THANK YOU ALL, TWALUMBA LOKO, TABOKA KASAKASA, RIALEVHUWA, REA LEBOKA, TOBOKA, TATENDA, SYABONGA