



**SPEECH BY THE GUEST OF HONOUR, THE HONOURABLE DEPUTY
MINISTER OF HIGHER AND TERTIARY EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT, ON THE THEME "CONSOLIDATING
CURRICULUM GAINS THROUGH INNOVATIVE PRACTICES "**

By

Hon. Dr Godfrey Gandawa (MP)

At Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo Polytechnic

12 SEPTEMBER 2015; GWANDA

- The Director of Ceremonies; **Mr. B. Z. Ngorima**
- The Principal of Joshaua Mqabuko Nkomo Polytechnic; **Dr N. Moyo**
- The Minister of State for Matabeleland South Province, **Honourable Comrade Abednigo Ncube**
- Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament here present
- The Vice Chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe, **Prof L. Nyagura**
- The Director of Tertiary Education Programmes, **Mr. J.T. Dewah** and other Senior Government Officials here present
- The Chairperson of J.M Nkomo Polytechnic Advisory Council **Madam S. Nyathi** and Advisory Council members here present.
- Principals of Sister Colleges
- Captains of Industry and Commerce
- J.M Nkomo Polytechnic lecturing non-lecturing Staff
- Distinguished Guests
- Parents, Guardians and Spouses of Graduands
- Graduands
- Ladies and Gentlemen
- Comrades and Friends

Madam Principal, Zimbabwe is viewed and regarded highly in education in general but time has now come to set the agenda to take Zimbabwe to economic development through Knowledge of the 21st century. Polytechnics should focus on high-end bleeding edge, cutting-edge and disruptive technologies to build significant comparative advantages key in a 21st century global village. Furthermore, Madam Principal, Polytechnics must vigorously pursue, a national research agenda aimed at deepening evidence-based sustainable socio-economic transformation.

Madam Principal, my Ministry through Polytechnics must drive an aggressive national translational Research and Development strategy anchored on new knowledge generation underpinned by systematic human capital development and protection of intellectual property. All our institutions of higher learning without fail must therefore push deep and foster a national culture of scientific research and development (R&D), entrepreneurial innovation and knowledge management for a 21st century economy.

Madam Principal, to define and realize economic growth, Polytechnics and institutions of higher learning must avoid the fixation with quantity over quality of graduates. To stop creating jobless graduates our institutions must produce graduates required by our economy and the region, and avoid "useless learning." Our colleges, Madam Principal, from an economic standpoint, must emphasize on productivity of graduates over sheer production of academic knowledge and graduates. We must avoid academic bullionism. Training in all our institutions should aim to close the

scientific and industrial gap of knowledge. We envisage our Polytechnics being centres of excellence and productivity hubs. Institutions of higher learning must create experts and must be think-tanks in the areas they operate. They must be solution thinkers for the country and industry. Polytechnics should avoid organizational slack and create time for innovative thinking. Time and space for thinking is essential for creating new knowledge. Creativity will not thrive unless people have time to reflect, challenge established thinking and work-out solutions to problems being faced by the country.

Madam Principal, ladies and gentlemen, the need for economic renewal in Zimbabwe remains urgent. Years of disappointing job growth and stagnant incomes for the majority of workers have left the nation shaken and frustrated. At the same time, astonishing new technologies are provoking genuine excitement. Polytechnics must transform the status quo by creating jobs through deep involvement with technology research and development and application of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)

Polytechnics by construct can unlock an industrial revolution in areas like manufacturing, energy and the high-tech services. These industries Madam Principal, encompass the nation's "tech" sector at its broadest and most consequential. Their dynamism must be allowed to be a central component of any future revitalized Zimbabwe economy. As such, these industries encompass the country's best shot at supporting innovative, inclusive and sustainable growth.

Madam Principal, by consolidating curriculum gains through innovative practices, institutions of higher learning, private and public sector leaders must inculcate innovation in training and operations. Innovation remains the only lasting source of advantage for firms and places in the advanced industry sector in a complex environment like ours. Surely our Polytechnics cannot afford to watch and train uncreative graduates, it calls for new thinking and demand new strategies. Accordingly, Polytechnics, industry and commerce need to radically rethink their technology development strategies.

It is a collective effort, government, institutions of higher learning, industry and commerce need to ramp up the scale of innovation and reconsider the formats through which they conduct themselves for the benefit of the country in economic development. More research and development (R&D) conducted within new, more open or networked innovation models are necessary to design the future of our country.

We need to recharge the skills pipeline. Polytechnics must lead in this area. More qualified workers with different and more technical skillsets are critical to the future competitiveness of the country. However, the skills pre-requisites of modern advanced industries have been changing faster than the country's ability to train the needed workers. Polytechnics should look at their curriculum to suit new industries of the future. The economy will start to heat again and industries will expand hence there is need for all our institutions of higher learning to start improving the availability of skilled workers by developing **smart, industry-led, sector-specific**, and

regional skills initiatives. Polytechnics need to get much more involved in developing the skills pipeline and the public and private sector must become much more responsive in stating their needs.

Madam Principal, the economy continues to suffer from low levels of employment, while poverty and income inequality continue more widespread than in other middle income economies. A considerable amount of Zimbabwe's mineral resources are exported as raw ores or only partially processed. The government is losing a lot of revenue, hence Polytechnics must train personnel who are able to value add and beneficiate our minerals to produce products.

The government's industrialization policy which must be complimented by Polytechnics and institutions of higher learning calls for a paradigm shift in mineral development, strategic investment in assets to maximize long term growth beneficiation projects, enhance value of exports, increase sources after consumption of local content and create opportunities for sustainable jobs. Polytechnics must lead in this area by producing experts, technicians and the equipment for value addition and beneficiation.

Madam Principal, linguistic diversity is an issue of growing social importance because a majority of all living languages are threatened in their continued existence. Changes in the vitality of a language have important implications for individuals and societies. I want to put emphasis on the need to increase the number of indigenous languages we teach here at JN. The Constitution of Zimbabwe recognizes sixteen (16) indigenous languages and it is our wish as a Ministry to see all the sixteen

languages being taught in our institutions of teacher training; even spread in colleges with even each college teaching four or all. Doing this will help in maintaining social and cultural identity and the interest for maintenance and revival of minority languages. Let's embrace all the indigenous languages.

To my graduands, you have learnt, you have acquired skills, go out and make a difference in the education sector, industry and commerce. It is clear the future holds great opportunities. It also holds pitfalls. The trick will be to avoid the pitfalls, and seize the opportunities.

Unleash your full potential, I know you are great within you, if you think you are not; listen to what Ralph Waldo Emerson said ***"What lies behind us, and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us."*** And Stephen Covey said ***"I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions."*** Surely make the correct decisions guided by the knowledge acquired here at college.

And lastly, Mark Twain once said ***"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by things that you didn't do than the ones you did do, so throw off the bowlines, sail away from safe harbor, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore, Dream, Discover."***

Makorokoto, Amhlope Machena, Congratulations

I thank you.