



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR

OPENING ADDRESS: LAUNCH OF THE UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

ZK MATTHEWS HALL

16 FEBRUARY 2012

- Honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and pleasure to welcome you to this, the official launch of Unisa's College of Education. I recognise quite a number of faces from far and wide and I am really pleased that you have been able to join us on this very special occasion.

If you were to ask me how I would characterise the month of March at the University of South Africa, my immediate response would be - *busy!* In the last two weeks alone we have had key institutional events and assemblies that include our extended management lekgotla, our budget assembly, our Research and Innovation week and awards dinner, Senate, and this exciting launch! But even as I have been caught up in the busy-ness, I have been so impressed at the energy and excitement that is pulsing through Unisa. It seems that the momentum that was generated last year has carried over to this year – and intensified. And that is good news. Our institution is a hive of activity and that is just as it should be.

But what is perhaps more exciting, is that much of what is happening is new and innovative and designed to not only place Unisa at the forefront of higher education practice, but also ensure that as an institution we are firmly in tune with the environment in which we operate, and responsive to its needs. That response for example, included the launch of our new Research and Innovation portfolio at the end of last year (I know that quite a number of you were present at that event as well), as well as a follow-up Research and Innovation week which ended with the gala dinner last night. Today, continuing that response and impetus, we are equally delighted to launch formally, our new College of Education, which actually opened its doors in April 2011.

“Well”, you might ask me, “So what? Isn’t that exactly what universities are supposed to do?” My answer to that is “Yes, in a sense it is.” We *should* always strive for growth, development, invigoration and renewal. But what excites me about these really seminal initiatives on Unisa’s part, is that from their conception to their inception, cognisance has been taken of the realities of education in South Africa and Africa today, and the challenges that we need to overcome if we are ever to achieve the desired outcomes. So in a very real sense, from the very beginning we have sought to strike a balance between the aspirational and the feasible; between the dream and the reality. And do you know, I think we are getting it just right!

One reads on a daily basis, articles decrying the state of education in South Africa. Criticisms rage from the ridiculous to the sublime. Yet few commentators offer viable solutions; nor do they acknowledge the tremendous amount of hard work that is being done in education in South Africa to address the many challenges that we face. And for the main part, higher education institutions continue to see themselves as distinct from the other tiers of education, intent on pursuing visions and missions which at times seem not to acknowledge or accommodate the realities of our South African or African society.

At Unisa we believe that higher education institutions should form part of a coherent and integrated system and that the whole must comprise the sum of its parts. Using

that line of reasoning, if one part of that system is dysfunctional then the whole system is impacted. As such, rather than point fingers at any given tier of our education system and apportion blame, we need to work together in an integrated manner, to find viable solutions for the challenges that we face. We believe that this will result in a win-win situation: for our schools, our tertiary institutions, our education system and most importantly, our students and our country.

To that end Unisa is actively pursuing partnerships, collaborations, agreements and the like, with a broad range of stakeholders including government, sister institutions, business, the public and private sectors, and local and international entities and institutions, with the aim of sourcing funding, and sharing and exchanging resources, capacity and expertise. Again we see this as a win-win situation and it has been quite instructive to see just what can be achieved when heads are put together, resources are pooled and goals are shared and common. Because ultimately ladies and gentlemen, we do have a common goal – and that is the growth and development of South Africa.

As we come closer to the end date of initiatives such as Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations signatory nations have begun taking stock and measuring the progress that has been made on the targets that we set for ourselves for 2015. While there has been some progress, there is general agreement that targets will generally not be met and that we will need to redouble our efforts if we aim even to come close. It is also interesting to note that in analysing progress for developing nations around Education for All and the MDGs initial data seem quite impressive – until one removes China from the statistical equation. Then one discovers that in reality progress has been quite humble in many cases.

In that process of analysis we have also calculated the capacities we will need to achieve the 2015 goals. The statistics are sobering.

In 2009, 112 out of 208 countries (54%) needed to further increase the size of their primary teaching workforce due to growing numbers of students, whereas 96

countries (46%) can potentially reduce their workforces. In total, the 112 expanding countries will need at least 2 million more teachers in classrooms by 2015 than in 2009, to provide quality primary education for all. More than one-half (55%) of the additional teachers are needed in sub-Saharan Africa (1,115,000). Other regions in need of additional teachers include the Arab States (243,000 or 12% of the global demand), South and West Asia (292,000 or 14%) and North America and Western Europe (155,000 or 8%). Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean account for less than 11% of the global additional number of primary teachers needed to reach Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015. In South Africa, we had 232, 200 teachers in 2009, and it is estimated that we will need 242,300 by 2015. The problem is that we are losing teachers faster than we are gaining them,¹ and so we too have a debilitating shortage when it comes to teachers.

Clearly we need to produce more teachers – not just for South Africa, but for the region and the continent. Not only that, but we are also aware that a large number of our existing teaching staff need to improve their qualifications and their expertise. Unisa is ideally positioned in terms of our infrastructure and reach and our unique ODL mode of delivery to make a major contribution to the production and upskilling of large numbers of teachers, and it was with this in mind that we decided to establish the College of Education, which we believe will revolutionise the teaching profession in South Africa.

Originally operating as a school within the College of Human Sciences, the new fully-fledged college now aims to “re-imagine the research, teaching and study of education as a discipline” as it seeks to produce top quality teachers for the country. Unisa, which has one of the largest teacher education footprints in the country, has always been at the forefront of training and development in the education sector, with 50% of the country’s current crop of teachers coming from the institution.

¹ INFORMATION SHEET No. 6 The Global Demand for Primary Teachers – 2011 Update
<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/IS6-2011-Teachers-EN6.pdf>

I have just read an interview that was held with our new Dean of the College of Education, Prof Kuzvinetsa Dzvimbo. When asked what his medium-term dream for the College of Education (CEDU) was, Prof Dzvimbo responded: “Our dream is a simple dream and that is to re-imagine the teaching, learning and research of education as a discipline. Our dream is also that colleagues will be able to do their research in key areas of mathematics, science, technology, language, ECD, etc. and that we will be able to set-up ‘laboratories’ where research can be done on how African children learn. By doing this, our colleagues will be able to contribute new knowledge to key areas such as Educational Psychology, Mathematics, Science, Technology, Language, etc. At the moment, most of the literature used is based in Europe and North America. We want to know how children born in Africa, within our living conditions, learn, so that we can contribute new knowledge in this area”.

Ladies and gentlemen I think that says it all. I know that there are already many exciting initiatives underway in CEDU and more in the offing. I am sure you will hear a lot more about those shortly. I believe that this college has understood very clearly the need to be a part of a system that adopts a holistic approach to higher education delivery and I look forward with anticipation to the impact that its graduates will have on our society as the college grows from strength-to-strength.

So welcome once again to this major milestone on our institution’s history and development. We are honoured that you have come to share in our celebrations.

I thank you.