



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA
WELCOME: AFRICAN OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE
TICKETPRO DOME
NORTH RIDING, JOHANNESBURG
4-6 June 2019

- Programme Director: Dr Somadoda Fikeni
- Prof Mathukhu Mogale, Executive Dean of the College of Economic and Management Sciences, University of South Africa, and other colleagues in executive and extended management.
- Our Keynote Speaker today, my esteemed colleague Professor Tshilidzi Marwala, Vice Chancellor and Principal of the University of Johannesburg and I might add, relentless champion of the 4th Industrial revolution and its massive potential for Africa's development
- Colleagues from sister institutions nationally, in the SADC region, on the Continent and across the world

- Captains of industry
- Government representatives
- Dr TE Nenzhelele, CoD: Operations Management, Unisa
- Dr Barnes Sookdeo, Department of Operations Management, Unisa
- Ms CM Maseko, Chairperson African Operations Management Conference, (University of South Africa) Department of Operations Management, Unisa
- Keynote speakers and panellists for the rest of the conference
- Facilitator for this morning's sessions: Mr Nico Landman, Festo: Head of didactic SADC, and our panellists
 - Mr Martin Sanne – Executive Director: CSIR
 - Ms Annemarie van Koller – President: SAIMC
 - Mr Dirk van Dyk – Chief executive Officer: IFPTI
 - Mr Rudeon Snell – Director: Intelligent solution – EMEA at SAP
- Sponsors: NRF and SA Tourism
- Guests speakers and conference participants
- Distinguished representatives of the operations management sector

I am delighted to welcome you to this 2nd *African Operations Management Conference*, once again hosted by the University of

South Africa. And once again I must thank and congratulate Unisa's Department of Operations Management, which has put together an impressive and broadly representative programme that speaks not only to the wide and cross-cutting nature of Operations Management, but also to our aim to bring together researchers and practitioners from academia, government and industry, to meet and share cutting-edge developments in the field of operations management.

I have had a good look at the programme and I am absolutely delighted to note that our organisers have succeeded admirably in doing just that. I'd like to believe that the excellent response to the call for contributions offers up evidence of a growing spirit of collaboration and an appreciation of the fact that we will need to solve this country and this Continent's problems as a collective, leveraging existing capacities, and sharing our knowledge and our resources.

This is critical to a sustainable future. The plethora of continental and global elections is bringing to the fore the very uncomfortable truth and reality that the *old guard* who are currently in charge are not necessarily attuned to the critical needs of a burgeoning global population, which in our case in Africa and also in India, is very, very young, and will have very different expectations of the world that they must inhabit and in which they will be the majority in the not too

distant future. A concern is that the current *old guard* are not necessarily attuned to the realities and demands of modern society and the dreams and aspirations of a different type of young people, and one sometimes suspects that the nationalist/right-wing backlash which we are seeing the world over, is evidence of an attempt to hold on to powers and structures which are becoming increasingly redundant - in real time. One suggests that we are at the vanguard of one of the most comprehensive revolutions of all time and given its nature, scope and comprehensiveness, forecasting and predicating our global future holds few certainties. It is in this environment that we must find a way in which to transfer knowledge and power successfully. This is a daunting task you will agree.

So, the theme of this conference: *Competitive Operations Management for Driving Automation in Africa forward*, is both timely and topical, and builds on our commitment to the African Union Agenda 2063, which aims at pursuing growth and sustainable development on the Continent, in an inclusive and integrated fashion. Also, as a university whose vision is to be *the African University shaping futures* in the service of humanity, we are fundamentally committed to our own development and that of the Continent, and in pursuit of that, to collaborations, engagements and agreements with

those stakeholders who share this vision and a commitment to the sustainability and flourishing of future generations.

I might also point out that as the biggest university on the Continent in terms of both student numbers and our facilities and operations, we are ideally placed to make a multi-faceted contribution to the development of Operations Management. We are able to develop and teach curricula and skills across a range of competencies and share our own expertise in the application of the same, drawing on our own management and operations.

As an example of this capacity I can share with you that our massive national infrastructure includes one of the largest printing presses on the Continent. Obviously, that is because our Distance Education business model previously necessitated massive volumes of printed study materials. We are now busy restructuring this facility in line with the growing obsolescence of print and our gradual move to increased online provision. We have for some time now, also been developing and actioning a multi-layered and complex ICT infrastructure as we move into the online education environment and as we ensure that our internal operations keep up with the efficiency and accompanying affordance of technology.

What all of this says - from our ongoing registration processes, to teaching, learning, research and assessments (and it is not unusual to receive one-and-a-half million assignments at any given time in the submissions cycle), our printing operations, our infrastructure development and maintenance, our procurement processes, our Occupational Health and Safety processes, our quality management and improvement and the day-to-day operations of the university (the list is endless) - is that Unisa has a massive, complex, and multifaceted operations management environment – I must confess that it is at times nightmarish in its demands, failures and complexity, and at times exhilarating in its sheer magnitude, impressiveness and accomplishments.

Ladies and gentlemen, over the coming days you will be engaging on critical aspects such as: the 4th Industrial Revolution, its role, import and potential for operations management on our Continent (and you will be aware ladies and gentlemen that there are some quite conflicting views about the 4IR and its realisation on our Continent – which I hope might arise in our panel discussion today); such as relevant curriculum development that makes full use of continental data sets (and this goes back to my point about populations demographics); such as challenges faced by industry in embracing automation in a largely jobless environment (to name but one

immediate challenge); and recommendations and the policy reform necessary to give automation a solid platform from which it can launch with confidence and in the knowledge that it has the backing of government and industry. Add to this the papers that have been submitted and which cover every aspect of operations management, and you have the makings of a very enriching conference. There is truly something for everyone and I feel very confident that you will all leave this conference enriched and enthused and perhaps most importantly, as champions of automation and the development of our Continent.

It remains for me to wish you all a very successful and productive conference.

I thank you.