

Address by Rev Dr Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile¹ at the launch of the iKamvelihle Development Trust and Thanksgiving Ceremony in honour of Dr Lindiwe Msengana-Ndlela at eMnxhe Location, Cala on 29th January 2016

Theme: The task at hand for South Africa's and Africa's elite² in the 21st Century

In a poem written in 1882, one of South Africa's pioneer academics and thinkers³ wrote this from Lovedale:

*Lay down the musket
Take up the pen
Seize paper and ink:
That's your shield*

These great thoughts by Reverend Isaac Williams Wauchope *ka Dyoba Ngodaka, ka Citashe, ka Silwangangubo* were to remain a clear clarion call throughout the centuries. Perhaps it has recently been popularised by our great icon, Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela, u-Madiba and many others after him. But the meaning of how to make education the shield of our nation does not seem to be fully understood by our children and by other elites as well. This is a serious challenge for the transformation and development of our country.

Although all seem to agree that quality education is the key for a nation to manage its destiny and position on earth, the actual emphasis seems

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² See definition in page 2

³ Isaac Williams Wauchope. Selected writings, 1874-1916, p.Xiii, Van Riebeeck Society – 2008

to be on statistics, quantity rather than quality. One of the things we need to put straight today is what quality education is, its role in democracy and development as well as the challenges facing African Elites in delivering the national aspirations.

By African elites here we mean chief decision makers in government, the academia, private sector, religious institutions, media, traditional affairs and labour. We include here other professional, community and cultural organisations. Yes, we also include decision makers in all sectors of society, including organs of civil society.

I hope this will be a worthy “*mphako*” from this venerable ceremony of launching the iKamvelihle Development Trust and Thanksgiving by MaMbhele, Dr Lindiwe Msengana-Ndlela for professionals involved in this development initiative. Let us be catalysts for access to knowledge, skills and opportunities and thereby facilitate the unleashing of the dormant creativity and talent that our people have.

Joblessness and our Youth

Until his death, Madiba stressed the importance of the youth in the country’s future. As the saying goes:

Umhlambi ongenamgqeku awuna kamva!

Because young people are full of energy, they ought not to be idle and not be engaged in productive or gainful activity. Young and able-bodied people must be at work. But that’s not the case currently. Statistics show that about 25% South Africans are without jobs. We are further

told that more than 50% of that figure constitutes young people. In countries like USA and Germany the unemployment figures are reportedly between 5 and 7%. In poorer economies the unemployment figures are sometimes as high as in the RSA (in countries like Greece, Portugal, Italy, Spain, etc.). The interesting phenomenon is that young and skilled Portuguese are going back to Angola and Mozambique looking for jobs! Unemployment and unskilled South Africans cannot hope to immigrate to Britain to relieve their plight! (See Prime Minister Cameron's Immigration laws).

There are at least two clear causes for joblessness at this point in our history.

- a) The global economic and financial meltdown. This has caused private sector companies to find it easy to fire or retrench young workers and retain old ones (Labour laws, pension benefits and skills retention).
- b) Population growth is faster in emerging economies like ours. Unfortunately, this is not matched by a fast spread of work-related skills and technology. Even some university and college graduates do not possess the skills required by the job-market.

This is a dangerous situation which can easily dislodge social, political economies. Anger and frustration are not known to give space to rational and creative thinking. No country wants to see such mayhem as we have seen elsewhere.

Our government and our tertiary institutions are challenged by the situation to think out of the colonial box. We cannot be satisfied with more graduates who continue to swell the ranks of the unskilled and unemployed. The content of our education must be microscopically scrutinised. The world of Education and the world of Work must close the gap between them. This can be done by upgrading vocational and technical education. Closer links between schools and companies should be forged. This is evidenced by the famous Dual Education System of the Germans where the theory of the classroom is augmented by vocational schooling and apprenticeships.

Our Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) could be replaced by a South African version of the Dual Education System. However, this would require a change of attitude by both the government and business.

The Minister of Basic Education is quoted as saying that our Education system is broken. It must be reviewed and mended. Business is reported to be afraid of skilled employees being poached. Groups of employers, training institutions and Labour Unions can sit down and develop ways to mitigate the threat posed by skills poachers. The much talked about 'investing in young people' must be translated from the current trickle to a shower.

Democracy and Development

Quality Education is an important tool for participating in democratic processes and moving a country forward. It empowers citizens to

appreciate what others bring to enrich a national programme. It helps to defeat selfishness and corruption. It enshrines professional conduct and integrity. Quality education has no appetite for mediocracy, nepotism and opportunism. Properly educated and skilled citizens respect their integrity and the integrity of their work. They despise and stay out of corrupt plans and actions. A good elite becomes good ambassadors for their country at home and abroad. They act ethically without compromising the values of the nation.

Challenges

Yes, we accept that the legacy of centuries of colonialism is a tall hurdle to jump over. But the heaviest burden that challenges the African elite is **moral and ethical action**. Madiba popularised the term '*RDP of the soul*'. He recognised the moral decay among the victims of apartheid and called for a healing and regeneration. He called for an economic dispensation and a democratic era with the face of *Ubuntu*.

This is work that must still be tackled in earnest.

The African elite are confronted on a daily basis with the challenge to act in the best interest of their country while responding to the diverse claims of the people and also covering their own needs. Finding themselves in the middle of lobby groups, decision makers nowadays find themselves without ethical guidelines or moral values in order to navigate successfully through such straights. In this situation, opportunists take the short cut of using their positions and power of

office to buy their survival. Others simply bribe their way and pay no attention to moral guidelines and ethical action.

This is the challenge: Recovering ethical and moral values.

What is to be done?

Our tertiary institutions must continue their tasks bequeathed to them by Western philosophies of education. They must pursue knowledge and disseminate it. Yes they must carry out research. But above all, they must reach to our communities. In partnership with professionals like Dr Msengana-Ndlela and her peers, they must bring productive knowledge and skills to our communities. Short courses might be more relevant than the 3, 4 or 7 year courses for the vast unskilled and unemployed.

These professionals cannot fund such important projects from their own pockets or salaries. Our government, patriotic business and other endowed institutions must come on board. Our young people must be ready to roll up their sleeves before buying that Lamborghini car.

Impumelel' isentabeni!!!