

SPEECH

BY

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ON

THE OCCASION OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE  
POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

ON

11 APRIL 2014

09H00

AT

**SAFARI COURT HOTEL**  
**WINDHOEK**

Director of Ceremonies  
Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia, Prof Tjama Tjivikua  
Distinguished Members of the Council of the Polytechnic of Namibia  
Honourable Minister of Education, Dr David Namwandi  
Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament  
Honourable Governor of the Khomas Region  
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
Faculty and Staff Members of the Polytechnic of Namibia  
Distinguished Invited Guests  
Dear Graduates  
Members of the Media  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me first of all to express my warm greetings to all present, and let me also extend a special greeting to the Honourable Minister of Education, who is with us at this 19<sup>th</sup> graduation Ceremony of the Polytechnic of Namibia. I would like to thank the Rector of the Polytechnic and the institution for inviting me to be guest speaker at this auspicious occasion.

Congratulations to Prof Tjivikua and the Polytechnic on achieving your institutional dream to transform to the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The nation as a whole shares your excitement in anticipation of the birth of the new university.

I am particularly happy about this development because I have worked with the Polytechnic for many years and I can testify to its vision, energy, drive, and quality of its education and services. Indeed, the Polytechnic and Standard Bank have for years nurtured young talents through a fast-track on-the-job development programme that has seen dozens of its students and graduates, and of other institutions as well, join the corporate ladder of my institution and others. Congratulations once again!!

Director of Ceremonies

Dear graduates, good morning to you, too. Thank you for the honour and joy you have given me by being here with you on this magnificent occasion. The first thing I would like to say is, congratulations to all of you! Today, we recognise and celebrate the successful completion of your studies at the Polytechnic of Namibia. Congratulations for having the courage, perseverance and the resolve to complete your studies. You have achieved academic success and thus you have ample reason to feel proud; your parents feel so, too; so do faculty and the Polytechnic community; and indeed so do all of us. Well done!

I am pleased that many proud parents are here this morning to witness their children attaining a significant milestone in their education journey. Dear graduates your success in this education journey is owed to the steadfast and loving support your parents have provided you. They have been there for you all the way. Is it not fitting that you should take a moment to say thank you to them?

Ladies and gentlemen, an American journalist Sydney Harris once stated that **“the whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.”** I, therefore, have no doubt in my mind that you, with the well-recognised qualifications you will be receiving this morning, should open up rewarding career opportunities and further provide you a strong foundation for lifelong learning. Yes, you will be receiving your passport to the future, as it has been my passport to a successful career in business.

Director of Ceremonies

Whenever there are changes in our lives, they bring uncertainty and anxieties to many of us. And so despite the fact that you, the new graduates, are armed with credible qualifications, it is not unusual that simply contemplating life beyond your academic life brings about a feeling of uncertainty. There are a number of reasons for this and first and foremost, amongst others is that in general worldwide the economy is not growing at the pace we would like to see it performing and consequently, it is not creating as many jobs as we would like to see. Namibia is no exception to this and its economy is not growing fast enough to absorb all the people looking for jobs. To provide jobs the economy must grow. This is worrying given that a number of young people will not have an immediate opportunity to put their learning to practice and thus acquire further skills.

Therefore, an important question to all of us is what do we need to do beyond acquiring good qualifications? There is no easy answer to this question. It is clear in my mind that part of the answer will come from us focusing on increasing the competitiveness and productivity of our economy. This is not an easy task as it requires that we get many things right. In this regard, there are many positive signs in our country that are encouraging all of us. Just a month ago, the Ministry of Trade and Industry launched the Industrial Policy and in two weeks' time the Ministry of Education will be launching the National Commission of Research, Science and Technology. This is an important development, as the country at systemic level is beginning to find mechanisms for driving innovation. Without developing innovation capacity we will not be able to make our economy competitive, which will also mean an inability to draw in foreign investments.

Without growth in the economy we will not be able to create jobs. This brings me to the theme of the year for the Polytechnic titled **“universities as transforming agents in economies”** which is relevant because it recognises that for our economy to grow we require the collective and cooperative effort of government, industry and business and higher education.

The second area that needs attention is that higher education qualifications need to be aligned to the demands of industry. I, however, need to tread with caution on this because the Polytechnic is doing extremely well in this regard, given that your programmes and qualifications are industry-focused and practiced-oriented and this makes demand for its graduates high in the market. However, it is equally important that institutions should not prepare graduates to be job seekers, we also need a new calibre of graduate who are to be job creators. In this regard institutions need to ensure that entrepreneurship is incorporated into their curriculum. For those graduate who have not been exposed to formal entrepreneurship programmes, it is important to avail opportunities for learning skills for running businesses as well as provide opportunities for those entrepreneurs with good ideas to develop them into businesses. Again the Polytechnic needs to be commended as through many of the initiatives from its centres of excellence such as the Namibia Business Innovation Centre, FabLAB Namibia Technology Centre, Centre for Enterprise Development to name a few, it is making a tremendous contribution.

Director of Ceremonies

The question we need to ask is how do we proceed when so many seem to be losing hope? Again this has no simple or single answer. No matter what the situation we might find ourselves in it is important that one proceeds with confidence, keeping in mind that as a Polytechnic graduate you are well-equipped for the next step and ready to make a difference. Just always remember that your attitude can be as important as your aptitude in navigating the waters ahead. Thus you need the quality of mind and spirit that would serve you well under these circumstances. You also need to be optimistic and have a *“can do”* attitude that focuses on possibilities rather than on problems, as this goes a long way towards achieving one’s goals. With optimism, focus and effort you will be able to deal with whatever comes your way.

Director of Ceremonies

So far I have spoken about knowledge, skills and employment – but this leaves an incomplete picture to those who understand the value of education. Mr John Adams, the Second President of the United States of America speaks; of two types of values of education, first being the one that teaches us to make a living – and indeed that is what I have been focusing on – and secondly, being what teaches us how to live. The latter value of education is what brings the best in us. It nurtures good character and values such as care, integrity, resilience, respect, responsibility and harmony. This is the value of education that manifests itself as we venture into the communities applying our knowledge, using our critical thinking and deploying our talents to make us succeed as individuals, but also enabling us to transform our societies. It should be borne in mind that one cannot succeed with the value of education to make a living without having embraced the value of education of how to live. The two are interdependent.

Director of Ceremonies

In my opening I indicated that I am thrilled be here this morning because graduations provide us a window into the future. Therefore, as I stand before you I foresee and know that there is much more to come from our graduates, whether it is supporting a new invention, a million hours of time shared in community engagements, or a million lives touched. This I know because there is a, somewhat, magical transformation that happens when we give zealous minds opportunities to do things they believe in. Thus this event is not simply about recognising your academic achievements, but it is about turning knowledge and skills into gifts to develop our communities and the nation. And that is what education is about.

As you continue on your journey into successful futures, I would like to leave with a few words of advice:

- First, self-awareness is the key to effective application of gained knowledge and an essential step toward maximising our skills. Armed with the knowledge of who you are, your strengths and weaknesses, your habits and values, and what drives you, can help you improve your judgment as well as help identify opportunities for professional development and personal growth.
- Secondly, life will always throw challenges in your direction. When that happens, it calls for you to be cognisant of your strengths and weaknesses. Being aware of these elements of your personality will help you face and overcome any challenge with grace and confidence.

- Thirdly, just remember that you are because of others. No journey can be made without others – be they on the same journey as you or not. Show your appreciation and respect for all who have helped you on your journey, from your family, friends, and lecturers to future employers. Know that your achievements are born out of their faith and support.
- Finally, as you forge ahead always think of others who may need a boost on their own way. I hope you will actively find ways to help others attain similar achievements as you have, and I trust you will find greater joy seeing those you helped even surpassing your own achievements.

To the graduates I wish you an exciting future ahead. My hope for you is that you will find pride and joy in doing something that is meaningful and something you believe in in life. In the process continue to create hope and opportunity for those who will come after you. Congratulations once again!

I thank you.