

**Third Annual Julius Nyerere Memorial Lecture
Presented by Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka in 2006**



Biography of Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka was a cabinet minister from 1996 and became Deputy President.

She is now executive director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). She holds a Masters Degree in Philosophy from UCT, an Honorary Doctorate from UWC, and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Witwatersrand Technikon in 2003.



The Presidency: Republic of South Africa

Address delivered by the Deputy President, Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, at the Third Annual Julius Nyerere Memorial Lecture, at the University of the Western Cape, Library Auditorium, 06 September 2006.

Vice Chancellor, Professor Brian O'Connell,
Vice Rector Academic Affairs, Professor Stan Ridge,
Vice Rector Students Affairs, Lulu Tshiwulla,
Tanzanian High Commissioner, His Excellency, Emmanuel Mwambulukutu,
Members of the academic staff and Students,
Distinguished guests,
Family of S, Walters,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It has been said that the benefits of Adult Education “are by no means universal neither are they negligible” which presupposes that the results and benefits from adult education depend on an integrated effort. It means that adult learning should not take place in isolation.

It has to be an integral part of improving the quality of life of adults, youths, families and communities. It has to respond to real needs.

We meet here today to honour one of the finest politicians and elder statesmen to have emerged out of the African continent, Julius Kambarage Nyerere, says one African intellectual, Professor Ali Mazrui who described Nyerere with the following words: “In global terms he was one of the giants of the 20th Century... He did bstride this narrow world like an African colossus.” p 9. (Nyerere And Africa: End of an Era – Biography of Julius Kambarage Nyerere 1922 – 1999, President of Tanzania.) Godfrey Mwakikagile, (2002, Protea Publishing, United States).

One of his biographers also pays tribute to Nyerere by saying he was: “A towering intellectual, and a paragon of virtue, he had profound insight and highly analytical skills and knew exactly what he wanted to do for Tanzania and for Africa as a whole. Yet he was not without fault, and admitted his mistakes, unlike most leaders who see that as a sign of weakness and not an attribute of leadership.” p 8. (Nyerere And Africa: End of an Era – Biography of Julius Kambarage Nyerere 1922 – 1999, President of Tanzania.) Godfrey Mwakikagile, (2002, Protea Publishing, United States).

He was one of the most consistent campaigners for education that improves basic conditions of people his approach to education was for education to be an integral part of community life. – The Ujamaa villages were such an attempt. However, they did not come without controversy.

Mwalimu Nyerere as he was affectionately known by his people came from that pioneering generation of African leaders, who led struggles against colonialism and imperialism, who led their countries to independence from the late 1950’s to the early 1960’s. Among such luminaries are leaders who left unparalleled legacies like Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Patrice Lumumba (Congo) and Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia) and our own Oliver Tambo just to mention a few.

They led the struggles for the emancipation of Africa at a time when the world was divided into two bipolar positions by the Cold War between the East and the West. The challenges of rebuilding their countries from the ravages of colonialism were enormous beyond belief. But their achievements were significant.

Julius Nyerere was one of the most influential leaders in the twentieth century, and his death in October 1999 marked an end of a political career that spanned almost half a century. It also meant an end of era of the African founding fathers who led their countries to independence in the sixties. At the time he passed away he had left Africa with a rich legacy in humanism, modesty and humility, all invaluable lessons for our continent.

At a time when Africa was plagued by dictatorships, corrupt leaders and leaders who overstayed their welcome in power, Nyerere showed the way by stepping down from being a President of his country

without people having had to force him out of power. That was an important lesson for all those who believe in democracy.

In my generation every young person who was ever an idealist, who dared to dream about a better Africa, about the role of education in liberation had to know about this great African – agree or disagree with him but you could not ignore his ideas or be indifferent to the originality of his thoughts – the passion for pro poor policies and the painfully simply but not simplistic ways with which he approached even very complex issues.

Speaking to students at the University of Dar es Salaam he once described Tanzania as a country under siege from poverty and the university students represent the emissaries on whom the whole society invest and give everything so that they can go and get help to rescue the nation. They are sent out to seek help out of the siege he said. If they go and not come back with help, the nation dies under the siege, and that will be after giving all the nation has to the emissaries.

I think those of us who are fortunate to have higher education even in South Africa, are indeed emissaries. We need to think about our responsibility to resource the nation both in small and in big ways and to rescue our people from the siege. So ours is not a small contribution.

As a committed Pan-Africanist, Nyerere provided a home for a number of African liberation movements including the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) of South Africa, Frelimo of Machel when seeking to overthrow Portuguese rule in Mozambique, Zanla of Robert Mugabe in their struggle to unseat the white regime in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

He also opposed the brutal regime of Idi Amin in Uganda. Following a border invasion by Amin in 1978, a 20,000-strong Tanzanian army along with rebel groups, invaded Uganda. It took the capital, Kampala, in 1979, restoring Uganda's first President, Milton Obote, to power also not without controversy nevertheless a remarkable show of force by an otherwise very peaceful and loving Tanzanian people, even at war it was a war for peace.

For some of us it is in the education arena that Nyerere's influence and ideas have proven to be long lasting and with an enduring impact. Indeed he will always be remembered for his efforts of linking education and the everyday and basic needs of the people.

My own views about education as a student of education and later as a teacher were profoundly impacted upon by this great intellectual and educator.

In the *Declaration of Dar es Salaam* Julius Nyerere made a ringing call for adult education to be directed at helping people to help themselves and for it to be approached as part of life: 'integrated with life and inseparable from it'. (Nyerere 1978: p. 29). For him adult education had two functions to:

1. "Inspire both a desire for change, and an understanding that change is possible.

2. Help people to make their own decisions, and to implement those decisions for themselves.” (Nyerere 1978: p. 30)

Again bearing in mind about ABET (that) “the gains are by no means Universal neither are they negligible!” which should mean that ABET has to be an important part of our education and with development interventions, a tool to intercede in the Second Economy and to develop and empower women. It must not be in isolation from broader developmental interventions and the macro-economic context.

Having said this, I must also add that lifelong education as against literacy and adult basic education is a much more ambitious proposition which takes on board the concept of a learning nation.

In a country such as ours where skills shortage and skills inadequacy is so glaring, lifelong learning must be seen as a way of life with basic adult education as only a stepping stone, to those with any certificates or qualifications, it has to be a way for self improvement to move from being qualified to being able.

There is indeed a difference between being educated in the formal sense and being productive and acquiring competencies and capabilities, being educated does not automatically mean “you can”. Qualifications show us what learning you have been exposed to, books you have read and so on. Ideally education and learning to be productive must happen together. When it does not happen we must use life long learning to close the gap.

In the case of the Republic of South Africa, we have not made the kind of progress that we require in ABET or life long learning education. There has been an increasingly enabling environment which is yet to give us the results we so desperately need. We all have not taken full advantage of the political environment we have created, which does not mean I think, we have created a perfect environment but it is enabling. The Department of Labour’s qualifications framework is part of this enabling environment.

“A survey of the 1996 Census statistics shows that 4,066,187 adults had received no schooling at all, while 3,512,415 had received some primary schooling. Out of a population of 40,583,573, this translates into a percentage of 18.67% persons who had very little or no schooling” (2004 : *Statistics South Africa - Stats in brief ten years of democratic governance*).

“The 2001 Census figures show that 4,567,497 adults had received no schooling at all, while 4,083,742 had received some primary schooling. Out of a population of 44,819,778, this translates into a percentage of 19.3% persons who had very little or no schooling.” (2004: *Statistics South Africa*). This represents a major challenge and socio-economic deprivation. While these statistics are not new they are very indicative.

Our Department of Education is working on a programme to take our work on ABET to new and greater heights. That work will need to be integrated in the broader developmental agenda, as part of the Integrated Developmental Plans (IDP’s) and Local Economic Development (LED’s), to achieve what is envisaged in the Nyerere dream referred to earlier. It remains troubling that some of our Sector

Education and Training Authorities (SETA's) employees choose not to use training resources to train people at lowest and sometimes even peripheral aspects and not for cutting edge critically needed and relevant capabilities.

Further to that we have to lift our people out of functional literacy to skills that make them effective and productive citizens, who are also critical thinkers, citizens who are able to take full advantage of opportunities in our economy and benefits of democracy. Too many South Africans are missing out and instead they are becoming dependants of the state. Our Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) is much about growth as it is about the sharing of it.

The phenomenon of unemployed graduates, who are without abilities to self employ and self determine, after spending three to four years of post secondary education is an indication to all of us of a challenge in our education at a tertiary level.

Universities and government have to share responsibility for this state of affairs and take corrective actions sooner, for the emissary has gone and not brought back help. This has been the underlying motivation for ASGISA and the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), in the short term to equip the emissaries. The solution lies in large part in more fundamental institutional and curriculum reform.

It has become accepted worldwide that all individuals require a sound general education in order to participate effectively in increasingly complex social and economic environments. A good general education is therefore no longer simply a basic human right, but a strategic necessity, but so is lifelong learning. To give people another chance to acquire competencies that will make them survive better and live better.

Lifelong learning is also not age bound so it is crucial for the development of both young and old citizens. We cannot talk positively of a growing economy if we cannot share the benefits of that growth. We know that the biggest limitation to shared growth in South Africa is skills. We also know that millions of our people have no means to tackle challenges of growth without acquiring appropriate life long learning skills and also know that you are educators and students and as policy makers and private sector you hold the key to this puzzle.

We must move away from historically simplified adult learning that is sometimes more sentimental than practical and equipping. We have to count the cost to individuals of being given an education that is not relevant to the real needs of those individuals. The poor they are the less they can afford the luxury of irrelevance.

The disjuncture between the demand and supply in the skills and learning arena is a luxury our country cannot afford even for a noble goal of academic freedom as that freedom and right comes with responsibilities. and accountability in relation to what we plough and what we reap.

It is a case with life long learning which must be connected and give a real change. It must assist with socio-economic justice in a direct and simple manner, but not simplistic. The curriculum developers are not paying enough attention to issues of relevance and ensuring that we all pay attention to the skills and competencies learners acquire when they come out of higher education and other training programmes, including SETAs. Government, business and labour are all guilty.

In the Tanzania of Nyerere there was so much poverty that it was harder to see opportunities for economic growth let alone empowerment. In South Africa we have missed so many opportunities because of skills. We import artisans, welders even for regular scheduled activities such as statutory shutdowns of oil refineries. Our lifelong learning interventions must deal with these distortions, in policy and proactive and ongoing manner. In my language we say "Umuntu Ufunda Aze Afe" which recognises the fact that you learn until you die.

In South Africa we have 70% of the potentially economically active youth out of work, in poverty and under-skilled. Our life long learning has to address these matters. As we speak we believe that our economy has to grow at a minimum of 6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per annum by 2010. If only we get the skills alignment right and a skills revolution going. It is in the life long learning arena that we can advance a significant part of this skills revolution, in the short and medium term.

But, concurrently we also need a skills revolution in the curriculum of tertiary education, as well as in the quality of public education, especially around teacher training as teachers are becoming a scarce and priority skill in South Africa. I am referring here mainly to teachers of mathematics and science, technology and language teachers (including African languages teachers) in public schools. But in general the culture of teaching which has been significantly eroded.

In identifying growth areas in our economy we have isolated the growth and areas in which inadequate service provision constrains growth. These are:

- Infrastructure limitation as a constraint,
- Sectoral Development: e.g.
 - Tourism,
 - Business Process Outsourcing (BPO),
 - Bio-Fuels,
 - Agriculture and agro-processing,
 - Cultural Industries,
- Second Economy Initiatives - targeted at especially and in particular education,
 - Youth, and,
 - Women, both in urban and rural areas.
- Service Delivery, and, especially basic services at municipal level,
- Human Resource Development (HRD) – The biggest cross-cutting constraint.

Since the issue of appropriate skills arises as the most constraining factor. In ASGISA we have established the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) as an interim response to deal with skills shortages. The skills that we lack and desperately need not to do the work of established education institutions such as schools and Universities, but work with them to deliver.

- **Engineering skills** - (100 000 per annum),
- **Planning and Management Skills** – especially for Local and Provincial governments, and Education and Health managers.
- **Artisans** – including welders, plumbers and boilermakers,
- **Teachers** – in public education – in mathematics and science – the inability to communicate by graduates has been identified by employers as a major problem that contributes to the unemployment of graduates.
- **Cross – cutting skills** – at the very top where experience is needed –
- **Information and Communication Technology,**
- **Project managers,**
- **Finance skills** – but entry level and middle level skills are needed to avoid further shortage at the top.
- **Skills for Growing Sectors** – e.g. ICT – we need about 500 000 ICT practitioners at different levels as we speak.

Lifelong learning is very critical to the challenge of sharing growth so we have to use it as such.

South Africa is hugely indebted to leaders and pioneers like Nyerere who achieved the liberation of their countries earlier than us and thereby showed us a way, what to do and what not to do, so that we also avoid doing the same mistakes that they did and benefit from their strengths. Humility and solidarity is one of the greatest lessons Tanzanians and Julius Nyerere bequeathed us. Indeed we are very grateful to him for showing us the important role of education in development and nation building.

I thank you.