

Acceptance Speech upon receiving an Honorary Doctorate of Education



15 October 2016

Convocation at the University of Swaziland (UNISWA)
Kwaluseni, Swaziland

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Your Majesty and Chancellor,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Your Excellency, The Prime Minister,
Vice Chancellor,
Members of the University Council and Senate,
Distinguished Guests,
Fellow Graduands,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Receiving an Honorary Doctorate of Education from the University of Swaziland, one of the leading Universities in Africa, is a great honour and I owe many thanks to the Vice Chancellor, Professor Cisco Magagula, to the University Council, and the Senate.

My organisation, the Commonwealth of Learning was established by Commonwealth Heads of Government when they met in Vancouver in 1987. Our mission is to help Commonwealth Member States and institutions to harness the potential of technologies for expanding access to education and training. We are very grateful to the Kingdom of Swaziland, for contributing both financially and intellectually to COL. And I would like to express our thanks to Your Majesty and the people of Swaziland for your continued support.

We have shared a close partnership with the Ministry of Education and Training and the Institute of Distance Education, University of Swaziland. UNISWA is an active member of the Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth and offers the Masters' degree in Educational Leadership, developed jointly with institutions in the other small states of the Commonwealth, a fine example of Commonwealth cooperation.

Your Majesty and Chancellor, one key challenge in many developing countries relates to health. The Vice Chancellor believes that having the right number of nurses of good quality can make an important difference in Swaziland. However, training nurses is very expensive mainly because of the cost of learning materials. Over the last two years, under his leadership, a significant volume of new learning materials have been created using free quality content, significantly lowering the costs of training the nurses.

This year, COL supported the Institute of Distance Education, UNISWA for training over 500 teachers in the four regions of Swaziland. If each trained teacher becomes an agent for change and trains five fellow

teachers, one fifth of the entire number of teachers in the country will be better trained to provide quality education to the students in primary and secondary schools.

Let me congratulate all of you who are graduating today. You have worked hard and you richly deserve your success. But let me share three things. First, the 21st century is very different from the past century in which people from our generation graduated. In our days it was enough to do a degree and find a job which lasted until you retired. Now, research shows that you will be changing at least two to four jobs during your careers—which means you'll have to continue to learn, relearn and quite possibly unlearn many things in the course of your lives. In short you'll need to be lifelong learners.

Second, many times life is not a simple equation, and hard work does not always lead to success. We must also be prepared for failure. As Edison said 'I haven't failed...I've just found 10,000 ways that do not work'. Let's stay positive and persevere until we succeed. In fact, there is no substitute for perseverance.

Third, thanks to technology, we're all connected some way or another. Success will depend on how well you network, and here we don't just refer to social networking but actually meeting persons from different backgrounds and disciplines to discuss ideas and find solutions to the many challenges that we face as people.

Last year, I visited scenic Swaziland for the first time. And while I have visited many game parks in Africa, it was the first time I saw lions, just nearby—majestic, fearless and at peace with their surroundings. My message to you, my fellow-graduands, would be to be like these lions and lionesses—majestic in your accomplishments, fearless in your convictions and at peace with both human beings and your environment.

Lastly, Your Majesty and Chancellor, this award would not have been possible without the unwavering support I get from the wonderful team at the Commonwealth of Learning and others around the Commonwealth who have contributed to my success. This honour also belongs to them.