

SPEECH

BY

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CHIEF SPEAKER

DURING

12TH GRADUATION CEREMONY

ON

*The Theme: The Role of Ethics and Values in
Sustainable Socio-economic Development*

ON

7TH JULY 2017

AT

**MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY HAPPY VALLEY
GROUND, THIKA**

1.0 Salutations:

- Chancellor, Prof. Victoria Wells Wulsin,
- Prof. Simon N. Gicharu, The Founder of Mount Kenya University (MKU) and Chairman, Board of Directors,
- Members of the University Board of Directors,
- Prof. David K. Serem, Chairman, University Council,
- Members of the University Council,
- Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners present,
- Honorable National and County Government leaders present,
- Prof. Stanley W. Waudu, Vice-Chancellor,
- Members of Management Board and Senate,
- Members of the Staff,
- Graduands and Students,
- Distinguished Guests,
- Ladies and gentlemen.

2.0 Opening Remarks

It is indeed a pleasure for me to serve as the Chief Speaker at today's graduation ceremony.

I sincerely thank the University Management for inviting me to speak on "*The Role of Ethics and Values in Sustainable Socio-economic Development*," the theme of the Mount Kenya University (MKU) 12th Graduation Ceremony.

Madam Chancellor, allow me to join other speakers in congratulating all the graduands for successfully completing their studies and congratulate MKU for choosing such a topical theme that is very relevant today, not only in developing countries but also in the so-called developed countries. This theme is relevant both to the graduands and to all of us.

Ladies and gentlemen, before I delve into my presentation, I wish to reflect on the historical perspective of Mount Kenya University, a University that started as a dream. I am aware that the dream to establish MKU was mooted in 1996 by Prof. Simon N. Gicharu after he returned from Granfield University in the United Kingdom, UK. While in the UK in 1995, Prof. Gicharu noticed a large number of Kenyans who were travelling to Britain to seek higher education, a trend that created a huge burden on the national economy. As an attempt to fulfill his dream, he started offering a Computer Outreach programme, which later gave rise to Thika Institute of Technology in 2000.

The precursor of MKU, Mr. Gicharu's dream was realized on 30th May, 2008 when MKU was established through the grant of a Letter of Interim Authority by the former Commission for Higher Education, CHE.

Ladies and gentlemen, Prof. Gicharu's choice of science and technology as niche training areas sets MKU aside from many local universities. By offering courses in Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing, Public Health, Nutrition and Dietetics and Law; as well as in education, social sciences, business and economics, hospitality and tourism, and all the rest, MKU produces manpower in critical areas.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to make some remarks on morality, integration of scientific enterprise with human values, aims of education, linking morality with academics, role of a teacher in moral development and the role of community in moral development.

3.0 Morality

Morality is all about what is right and wrong, good and evil, acceptable and unacceptable. This plays a critical role in determining human behavior and socio-economic performance.

For example, according to Emmanuel Olifemen Elakhe:

“Economic principles describe how goods are created, acquired and distributed in ways that accommodate cultural and social values.”

In view of the afore-stated economic principle by Elakhe, integration of scientific enterprise with human values is necessary.

4.0 Integration of Scientific Enterprise with Human Values

Madam Chancellor, although science provides us with knowledge and technology represents the practical application of the knowledge in manipulation of the material world, survival of humanity depends on integration of science and human values. Therefore, any separation of scientific enterprise from human values has adverse effect. Consequently, socio-economic development should be viewed as a process consisting of material development and ethical quality of living.

At this point, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to explore the broad perspective of this theme as presented by the Mckeever Institute of Economic Policy Analysis (MIEPA). The Mckeever Institute of Economic Policy Analysis socio-economic discussions from “The moral economics” perspective is advanced by the World Faiths Development Council as follows:

1. The word “development” embraces all dimensions of human existence. The proponent of this theory at MIEPA argues that, economic growth is defined as annual increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as measured on a per capita basis. From a moral economic perspective, vital human values that lead to the growth of economy at individual and family levels are not reflected in analysis of GDP.

Such values include love, humane factors, spirituality, family bonds, health, clean air, clean water, hope and so on. Consequently some countries whose economies may be suspected to thrive on black markets, drugs, illegal trade, escalating inequalities and so on may still be considered to have high per capita-based GDP disregarding vital human factors involved.

2. The “Moral Economists” therefore advocate that, the concept of social-economic development must be viewed from “the moral economic systems perspective”. I will adopt this approach in discussing today’s theme.

A moral economic system helps us to include the social effects of values that cannot be exchanged in a market place within the analysis of social economic growth of a country. This includes consideration of family values and other humane values when determining wages, pricing of commodities and so on.

Consequently, quoting David French's (2017) writings entitled, "The myth of the virtuous poor", and the Biblical beatitude "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20). I wish to ask you this one question; Does God like poverty? In addition, would God then reward the person who makes others poor by stealing from them or marginalizing them financially?

According to David French, the current social science data on American population shows that:

1. Only the half of the young American generation is seen to have done better economically than their parents.
2. That the death rate of the poor white population and of the working class population in America is actually rising, and
3. This rise in death rate is primarily through suicides and drug overdoses.

Here in Africa and especially in sub-saharan Africa, a vast population is living on less than one dollar per day. Similarly, statistics show serious economic inequalities in Africa, including South Africa.

Additionally, low socio-economic status among the youth in Africa has led to dangerous vices such as the Arab Spring in North West and Northern parts of Africa; radicalization in East & West Africa; and xenophobia in South Africa .

This brings me to a third question namely, “who actually loves poor people?”

Additionally we have seen bright students abandon their education due to poverty-related challenges. Is this what we want to consider as the way to righteousness? Is this really Godly?

The answer is a big” NO!”

Thus, something needs to be done.

So, where do we go for solutions? The solution is within us!

If we want to be a prosperous nation, through the moral economic system model we must all respect and uphold *“The Role of Ethics and Values in Sustainable Socio-economic Development”*. This is why I commended MKU in the choice of this theme. If the escalating poverty and inequality are to be eliminated, the moral economic system model shall have to be adopted by each one of us in this country and in Africa at three levels, namely;

- (1) At corporate level
- (2) At individual and family level, and,
- (3) At the universities as a special catalyst

**i) Corporate Intervention in Enhancing Ethics,
Morality and Values for Sustainable Development**

The corporate level includes; the government, NGOs, private sector etc. All corporation must work together to end corruption and ensure accountability and prudent use of resources. When I was serving as the Vice-Chancellor at Kenyatta University, many people came to benchmark with us and as we steadily expanded our facilities one after another, everyone asked us where we got the money. In fact, someone publicly pronounced that our institution needed to be investigated on what was our source of money. Our answer was simple and truthful, namely, **PRUDENT UTILIZATION OF OUR LIMITED RESOURCES!**

If everyone in the government, in every organization, private or public, NGOs including the faith-based organization does his/her job prudently, diligently, and truthfully, many resources would be saved for use by all! This ethical consideration, which is somehow lacking amongst many corporate leaders, will make a lot of difference if upheld diligently.

ii) Individual and Family Intervention in Enhancing Ethics, Morality and Values for Sustainable Development

At individual and family levels, we must be disciplined. For instance, students must do their assignment to pass well in their exams.

As individuals and family members, we must do our savings well enough and avoid careless spending; we must learn to be our brothers keepers; we must avoid risky and careless lifestyles including, gambling, laziness, drugs, alcoholism etc. You are all aware that, many children are out of school due to their parents' careless lifestyles. By these children must be counseled to try all ways possible to cut the cyclical chain of family poverty by aspiring to make a difference. We must pay attention to details.

Additionally, at an individual level, we must have courage to make an intervention as a vital requirement while greed that leads to selling your vote; corruption and stealing of public funds; or election of poor leaders under the influence of stolen money; all these unethical practices

will lead to low socio-economic growth and escalate poverty at individual and national levels. We must strive to make a difference now!

In other words, David French puts it very clearly saying, no one wants to be poor! Everyone wants to be successful! However, it is a lifetime accumulation of those small decisions for yourself and your children that make the big choice between success and failure in life or between poverty and comfort in life. Remember choices have consequences! This applies at individual and family levels, as well as institutional levels.

In other words, there are moral failings at institutional, individual and family levels that lead to low socio-economic development, escalating poverty and inequality in Kenya and in Africa.

We all must rise up and play our roles with diligence in order to make a difference.

Madam Chancellor, Adma Smith, the Father of Economics said:

“Economic activities of the humans can be regulated or modified by moral values.”

It is true that excessive greed, hatred, corruption and craving among other bad human behavior can be regulated by moral values. Socio-economic development as a pursuit of material wealth and for the sake of happiness without ethical restraints is not sustainable.

iii) Universities Intervention in Enhancing Ethics, Morality and Values for Sustainable Development; Linking Morality to Academics

Universities must wake up to the realities of the need to train students to be job and wealth creators; Universities must help students in acquiring soft skills; professors must be a role model to students in all ways; Universities must be ready to point out clearly where things need correction by use of research-based evidence in advising on policies.

Teaching academic content without regard to content on morality raises the questions:

- a. Who is responsible for teaching morality?

- b. Is it society's responsibility, including teachers, to pass on the virtues of civilized life to the next generation?
- c. Who gets to decide which morals to pass on?

Madam Chancellor, the words of Jordan Catapone, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rick Weissbourd provide answers to the three questions.

According to Jordan Catapone (www.jordancatapone.us):

"Education is valuable, but getting one is not the issue. What students do with their education is what counts. Will they apply their knowledge to make the world a brighter place or a darker one? "

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said (www.techhub.com)

“Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. compared education without morals to a “ship without a compass”.

Ladies and gentlemen, Dr. King’s words indicate that intelligence without character is not enough. Therefore, we must think about impacting moral development in learners.

According to Benjamin Franklin:

“Nothing is of more importance for the public well-being, than to form and train up youth in wisdom and virtue.”

According to Jordan Calapano:

“As we equip our students with powerful education, our participation in the development of their moral character helps to ensure that they will participate in more positive learning environment in their youth and preserve a mature community in their adulthood.”

Conclusion

As I conclude Madam Chancellor, allow me to direct today's theme to the graduands of the 12th Graduation Ceremony.

To you graduands, this graduation ceremony marks the beginning of a new phase in your life, so, what is your role as a graduate entering the labour market in ensuring ethical contribution to socio-economic growth?

1. Be courageous to make a difference.
2. Aspire to advance your education to make a difference as a scholar.
3. Always aspire to do good to the society and as the Desiderata puts it, "... Keep interested in your own career, however humble; ... be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be, and whatever your labors and aspirations, ... keep peace with your soul" as you always exercise moral consciousness.
4. Have reason to direct your thoughts to truths that will give you confidence, hope, joy and love.
5. Have reason to turn your mind from inspirations that will make you transgress the norms of the society.

I wish each one of you fulfillment in your lives.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL