

A COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

THEME: *ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE FOR PRACTICAL
COMPETENCES IN THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL
REVOLUTION*

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

BACKGROUND:

During the **1870s** – Queen Victoria’s highly regarded surgeon General stated at the Queen’s Annual banquet that:

“In the world of Medicine- no Surgeon will ever interfere with the internal organs of any human being! – He was referring specifically to the internal organs of a human body as sacrosanct - *beyond the reach of any Surgeon’s knife!*

Then, in **1891** the Head of the office of the US patents requested the US Authorities to seriously consider legislation to close the Office of patents because according to him there was nothing more the human mind could ever discover.

After a couple of decades in **1945**, the then CE and founder of IBM Thomas Watson stated at the IBM annual dinner that no one would ever really need to buy and own a computer. This was the time for large computer main frames.



Thereafter, in 1977, the then CE of General Equipment Ken Olsen told the GE that there is no need for anyone to own a personal computer.

In the late 90s with the advent of mobile telephony in Uganda, the majority of Ugandans swore that they would only use a mobile phone over their dead bodies! – that the mobile phone was so distracting and intrusive! a nuisance really!

THE LESSONS WE DRAW FROM THE ABOVE HISTORICAL FOOTNOTES:

Lesson 1:

That there is absolutely no limitation to human ingenuity- The human capacity to be imaginative, resourceful, resilient and driven with a growth mindset is boundless.

Lesson 2:

That there is nothing in this world which cannot be improved!

Lesson 3:

That the realization that the Stone Age did not end because people ran out of stones, but innovations disrupted the realities of those days!

Lesson 4:

That the ideas that appear dumb now are the pillars for tomorrow's civilized work, lives and livelihoods in a word- *innovation is timeless, raceless and borderless!*



Lesson 5:

That collecting mere titles is a waste of time when what is changing are really underlying skills!

Lesson 6:

That every generation rising from relative obscurity must choose either to fulfill or betray their generational mission on earth.

Lesson 7:

That every disruption has three components to it:

- (i) The technological enabler
- (ii) The business model innovation
- (iii) A new commercial ecosystem.

WHERE WE ARE NOW:

In the words of the World Economic Forum Chief Klaus Schwab;

"The pandemic has opened for us all a narrow window of opportunity to reimagine, reshape, and repurpose our lives and livelihoods."

Covid has strategically placed us at the cusp of new opportunities and possibilities.



The fourth Industrial Revolution tectonic shifts that have occurred in the way we work, live and relate.

- The emergence of generation RE
- Our industries are consolidating
- New business models are emerging
- New technologies for new operating environments are being developed
- Consumer Behaviours are evolving

In Uganda, Covid has crippled productivity and constrained household incomes.

Sectors have been wiped out! However, new sectors have been created- Disruption and dislocation will continue for decades to come. Hence the opportunity for rebooting, reskilling, and upskilling.

WHAT IS THE PROMISE OF THE FUTURE?

- i. Will it be youth dividend or youth disaster?
- ii. Will it be half full VS half-empty perception?
- iii. Will it be hope or despair?
- iv. Will it be future proofing or retooling?

As we all know, **60%** of the people unemployed in the entire world are Youth and every year **12 million** of them are looking for jobs.

And more than **60%** of the Youth between ages **15 to 30** years cannot enter formal jobs!



Among them, **200 million** Africans between ages **15 to 30** years are unemployed!

Now at the cusp of the technology revolution, Africans and Ugandans face the six forces of change:

- **A new work order** which is connected, calculative, creative environment.
- **The era of the maker** where we develop prototypes, harness 3D technology, small bulk expenses, digital manufacturing
- **The sharing economy where** what is yours is mine, we share while keeping costs low
- **The new creative economy where** we find our niche, focus on connecting, convergence, customization, and consolidation
- **The connected and engaged customer** and a need for Building our audience, Crowd sourcing, Crowd funding, mobile apps to engage and create loyalty
- **The anywhere liquid workforce era** where we are witnessing independent workforces, talent clouds, arrival silos



This is a global movement. It is a worldwide Revolution! Studies show that **73 million** jobs will be lost around the world- but 103 million jobs will be created.

The fourth Industrial Revolution which pretty much is driving the above six forces; celebrates the advent of technologies facilitating **Cloud Computing, Machine Learning, wide use of Data, algorithms, Artificial Intelligence** – enabling conversations to happen with our Computers/Artificial Intelligence assistants such as Siri, Alexa and Google Assistant can follow verbal instructions and answer your questions.

We are in a world where robots can hold real conversations including cracking jokes and mimicking emotions.

We have apps that can record the dreams we have while sleeping- Tech capacities to track and record your thoughts.

Many of us have ceded our access to knowledge, information and opinion to Facebook (metaverse), TikTok, google.

Daily, we continue to experience tectonic shifts in e-commerce, eLearning, eHealthCare, and in all sectors.

Our universities which are the only Centres of deep knowledge, cutting edge research, and scholarly discoveries are being challenged to the core, to build the only skill that matters: **Adaptability**



Adapting is the science and art of exploring, pioneering, and harnessing the creative genius of students through setting up soft and hard infrastructure. A hub of collective ingenuity, ideas, insights and imagination – where students dare to dream and dream to dare!

- A hub which hosts massive open online programs (MOOCs), such as Edx, Vdemy, Coursera, Wikipedia. Before Covid there were 1.2million online learners. Now there are 13.8million online learners.
- A hub with open minds, curiosity and experimentation
- A cultural hub of lifelong learning,
- A cultural hub of Entrepreneurship driven research,
- A cultural hub of soft skills that specifically support the pioneering spirit of innovation, startups, alternative thinkers and volunteering social entrepreneurs.
- A hub that glorifies inquiry, experimentation and discovery on a daily basis,
- A hub that has got used to failure as a badge of Honour

WHERE WE SHOULD BE

"Energy cannot be created or destroyed, it can only be changed from one form of energy to another."

Albert Einstein

The generational mission question for the University, through the leadership transformation Team, is to adapt or lose relevance and sustainability!



The first Pathway to the Future is Adopting the Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies in: **learning how to learn** - in developing mental tools to master new skills i.e., retooling, upskilling, reskilling, micro skilling in analysing the trends implications and risks of:

- The future of higher Education
- The future skills of Education
- Re-engaging the Alumni
- Solving the adaptability paradox.

The second pathway is shifting from the institutional and technical fixed mindset to a growth mindset through an agile, purpose driven and flexible collaborative networks at all levels of the University.

With the launch of the hub, Nkumba University will become a tower for focused observations and opportunities to create, capture and deliver true innovation value.

Hence the University faculty will need to participate daily in developing and nurturing these attributes between and among their students -

Inculcate a deep sense of aspiration, self-awareness, unceasing curiosity, and embracing vulnerability- for example:

The faculty could start a lecture with a 15 minutes reality check or brain teaser:



- What is the frequently ignored social problem that you can solve today?
- Why don't you just fix it or tweak it?
- What is your source of inspiration and motivation?
- Is there anything else we are missing here?
- What else can you do different?

Then, 10 minutes to the end of a lecture is our lightbulb moment.

What is your Corporate social investment formula?

Define the **Challenge**

Specify the **Solution**

Describe the **Impact**

Share in class what your community investment formula is – the CSI of your life:

Routine repetition of the above lecture room exercise will yield a globally competitive CV or resume as a catalogue of CSIs

Then, the final lecture room question is: What is your 1 + 2 formula?
Your core subject=1 and the two additional online digital skills=2

In addition, you could consider at the start of a lecture, to give examples of areas worthy the attention of an innovator, improving public sector sponsored projects such as missed opportunities in 'Bonna Baggagawale, gaps in 'Emyooga', Youth livelihood, the



Parish development model, the 17 UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Uganda's four biggies of the National Development Plan III.

And finally, brainstorming on skills such as digital animation, digital sculpting, digital marketing, clout score tracking, software development, infographics, Tech Finance, data analytics, cyber security, machine learning, tech medical, tech education, tech every sector.

THE ROADMAP AHEAD

- Nkumba University innovation hub needs a winning strategy on technology adoption, retooling new skills, information, ideas, insights, collaboration with the public, private and Civil Society, data-driven knowledge- legacy approaches can be reinvented.
- The university has to recognize and act upon the urgent imperative to build alliances with broader ecosystems.
- Build campus facilities targeted to incubate, pilot, accelerate, scale, and commercialize new ideas and Innovations irrespective of sector.
- Prioritize strategic partnership through public, private and civil society collaboration- in terms of Labour policies, regulations etc.



- Build fail forward and climate-smart Solutions.
- Accelerate opportunities to attract subject matter experts here at campus, investors, Business and Industry Captains to attend the fortnightly start-up weekends. Each **start-up weekend** is a platform for debate, testing, assumptions, online cooperative movement, brainstorming, showcasing discoveries, confidence-building in creating, capturing and delivering broad value creating pitches to potential investors.

FOR THE STUDENTS ITS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT:

Self-awareness is key. So, challenge your deeply held assumptions about your past and Destiny, learn from the best but remain yourself.

You don't need a ton of money to start- find your own starting point, generate ideation, leverage your critics' insights.

A need to have an entrepreneurial mindset- making your hypothesis more specific.

There is no textbook for you to start, no MBA required.

Every start-up idea is different.

Plan to succeed not win.

Decide to be one of the next billion entrepreneurs.



"Hope is wishing something could happen."

"Faith is believing something will happen."

"Courage is making something happen." – anonymous

Humility is the new smart- don't overvalue yourself, remain teachable, shift from Mr. or Miss know-it-all to learn-it-all.

Maintain a rich pipeline of small, context tailored innovative and profitable project ideas.

Co-create with the local communities, local government, business and industry- in addition to other local, regional and international innovation hubs.

MY PARTING THOUGHTS ON THIS GREAT DAY ARE:

In Africa, we do not wait for the storm to pass, we have **learnt to dance in the rain.**

In Africa today and in Nkumba specifically, the leopard has given birth- the sun is shining brighter while at the same time it is raining.

Finally, God will not do for you what He cannot do through you.

God bless the Nkumba Innovation Hub

God bless us all.

Thank you.

PETER KIMBOWA, **PhD**