

SPEECH READ BY MR EBEN COBBLAH AT THE FIRST GRADUATION CEREMONY OF HOPE LA FLEUR COMMUNICATION CENTRE

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DATE : SATURDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2006

VENUE : MMABATHO STADIUM – VIP LOUNGE

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The Management of Hope La Fleur Institution  
The Governing Body  
Ladies and Gentlemen  
Distinguished Guests  
All Protocol observed

My association with Hope La Fleur goes way back 1989, and I am highly elated to have this opportunity to the Management for selecting me to be the Guest Speaker at this most important function, which happens to be the first Graduation Ceremony of this institution of Computer Training, which I believe, is going to assist the employed and especially, the unemployed in their quest for work or greener pastures.

I would like to start my speech which, if allowed will rather describe as a discussion paper, by quoting the words of two great academics and educationists I have always admired.

The first is the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Educationist and Pedagogue, John Dewey and I quote: “ I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform. All reforms which rest upon the laws or the threatening of certain penalties, or outward arrangements, are transitory and futile....But through education, society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move ....Education thus conceived marks the most perfect and intimate union of science and art. Conceivable in human experience” (quote closed) 1987

The second is a quote by Cicero, the ancient Roman Statesman, and I quote: “ What greater or better gifts can we offer the public than to teach and instruct our youths?” (quote closed).

What do we deduce from these two quotations? One can easily say that societies will not succeed in their socio-economic development in modern

times, if their citizenry do not have the required education, be it technical or social.

I will like to read an excerpt of a report gleaned from the USAID Programmed, which is mainly an organization with a development intent.

According to their report on development for more than 30 years, USAID has applied Information Communication Technology (ICT) to development. Today, the majority of USAID Programmes worldwide have an ICT component. According to a recent survey of current programmes, 95 percent of the more than 80 USAID Missions worldwide have one or more ICT activities in their portfolio, comprising 351 separate ICT for development activities. About 30 percent of these activities focus on ICT as a sector (Eg, the software development industry), while the remaining 70 percent focus on ICT as a development tool (Eg. distance learning and teacher training).

Most recently, the internet and related information technologies have increased the importance of ICT as a sector in its own right, driving economic growth and transforming social and economic activity faster than the steam engine, railroad, and electricity did in earlier times.

Another example is that ICT is now used to instruct students and learners including children from distance, lower infant mortality rates, control population growth, battle HIV/AIDS, promote sound practices agricultural production and natural resources management, and support relief and reconstruction efforts. All these are just few examples of what Information Communication Technology can do for us in modern times.

The contributions Hope La Fleur has already made in producing people of your caliber in the ICT industry is now well known. During the complex metamorphosis from a humble beginning to what it is now, students and peoples from all walks of life, with or without any skills have been able to acquire extensive knowledge and training in ICT.

I am one of the many who admire and value the quality that is added to all kinds of skills. I remember, before I became familiar with ICT, that as a post graduate student at the University of Stellenbosch, I was given my first assignment – to look for more information on famous sociologists. I entered the University library confidently and highly motivated that I was on the right road to academic glory. To my astonishment, I found all the students seated behind computers looking for something. I approached the librarian and made my request known. To my astonishment, she gave

me a piece of paper and told me: Mister, this is your password, the computer number 12 is yours. I went and sat down behind the computer without any idea about what I needed to do. I will stop here, ladies and gentlemen, guess the rest. There is no doubt, ICT has replaced traditional methods of doing things.

To our graduands, I trust that you will continue to be an important educational resource which is currently desperately required to reconstruct, not only South Africa or your own lives, but the entire African Continent.

Your initiation and participation in the search for computer literacy, can serve South Africa and Africa in new ways of inspiring, and I congratulate you on your enthusiasm and commitment.

I would also like to express my personal gratitude to the Hope La Fleur Management Team with special reference to Mr and Mrs Hope for the work they are doing, not only in the provisioning of ICT education within the Mafikeng Municipality, but for maintaining an educational tradition that prioritizes a critical understanding of technical training in our complex socio-economic context.

I am confident that ICT education, this afternoon, have had the privilege of an education that will be very relevant to the complex job related problems facing the North West Province and South Africa at large, and that our first graduates from this institution will be able to face the challenges posed by the labour market.

At this juncture, I would like to acknowledge and applaud the contributions made by Mr Hope in the key intervention he has made in strategic areas such as making sure that the systems of the school does not collapse at the given time. His contributions have made enormous impact on today's graduation ceremony, which co-incidentally, is the first one.

This afternoon, we are at the dawn of Hope La Fleur's success, celebrating the graduation not only of the newly qualified ICT students, but also of practicing ICT experts in their own rights, who will continue to play a key role in the life this institution, which will be a reflection and enrichment of your almameter.

You are not only graduating as ordinary folks, but you are graduating as experts in your own right, as people we can describe as computer literates.

You are about to become members of a profession you will will never leave – you may not teach but one day you may find yourselves telling other novices the right way to start up and shut down a computer or how to click on the mouse! It is then that you will realize how much you have acquired at Hope La Fleur.