



public works

Department:  
Public Works  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**Regent Business School Graduation**  
Moses Mabhida Stadium, Durban

Saturday 26 November 2011

**Address by: Hon Thulas Nxesi MP**

CHECK PROTOCOL

The Principal and the Executive Director of the Regent Business School  
Mr Mokgwatsane, CEO of the VWV Group  
Members of the congregation of the Regent Business School  
Ladies and gentlemen, and  
Most importantly: the prospective graduates

Thank you for inviting me to be a part of this celebration today – because it is a celebration. We are here to celebrate the hard work and achievement of the students, who have sacrificed their time and resources – or in many cases, their parents resources – to make it to this milestone in their careers.

And let's not forget the contribution of parents, families and other sponsors who gave support and made it possible for you to be here today. Let us also pay tribute to the many students here who work during the day – and at night and weekends continue with their studies. You have my sympathy – I can empathize because as a registered student I do exactly the same thing.

On a lighter note, for those of you who watch parliamentary proceedings on TV, if you happen to see me deep in thought studying a document – it may well be that I am working on the latest assignment.

In the time available I want to speak about the relevance of business studies to the public service.

Now many of you are employed in the corporate world – or aspire to find employment there. Many more of you – imbued with the entrepreneurial spirit – will use your skills, knowledge and passion – to start your own businesses. Good luck to you. South Africa needs you – because as you build your business you also generate income which increases aggregate demand for goods and services – which in turn generates jobs and further economic activity.

Probably – only a few of you are employed in the public service or aspire to be public servants. I am here – in part – to invite you to consider this as an alternative for the following reasons:

- The public service increasingly offers competitive salaries and conditions particularly at the entry point.
- The public services form the major part of what we refer to as the ‘social wage’ – such as education, health, social grants etc – which provides a lifeline and opportunities to the poorest South Africans – and I for one believe that this is vital work – indeed, it is an honour to serve in this capacity.
- Public services – including my own Department of Public Works – have a bad record in relation to efficiency and service delivery. We have to tackle this as a priority. The good news is that I believe we are beginning to turn around the situation. Let me give you a concrete example: in under three years the Department of Home Affairs – measured against any criteria for customer

service – has been turned around. Let me tell you that one of the first things I did after being appointed to Public Works was to put together a team – which included turnaround experts from Home Affairs to advise and share their experience.

- Finally, I want you to consider a career in the public service – because we need your skills – business skills. At the risk of being accused of plagiarism, let me emphasize this point: “Your country needs you.”

Let me say a little more on the theme of the relevance of business studies to the public service. As I was preparing for this presentation, I looked at the programmes offered by the Regent Business School – most of them are directly relevant to what we do in the public service. Let me give some examples:

The MBA includes the following electives:

- *Business Ethics and Corporate Governance* – directly relevant to our campaign to root out corruption in the public service. Allow me to digress and make some general comments about corruption in public life:
  - First, corruption undermines the public’s trust in the institutions of government.
  - It also represents a massive betrayal of our people – particularly the poor. Let’s be clear here. When you defraud government, you are defrauding the poor – you are robbing the hungry and those in need.
  - Public corruption is also hugely demoralising for all those honest, hard-working public servants who do try to make a difference.
- A second elective: *Public Sector Management* – I think I need to take that course.
- Another elective: *Investments and Portfolio Management* – As the custodian of the state’s immovable assets – the Department of Public Works has a larger

portfolio of land and properties than Old Mutual. It is essential that it is managed professionally.

- Regent's various post-graduate diploma courses, and certificate courses cover such areas as *financial management*, *Human Resources Management*, and even *management for Estate Agents* – all very relevant to Public Works.
- I was particularly interested in two of the short courses offered:
  - *Change Management* – reminding us that even if we have the best plans in the world to improve the running of the Department – unless we carefully manage that change process – we can create new problems for ourselves; and
  - *Performance management* – again very relevant to the stage of development that we are in as the public service. I need to share with you that – in order to improve service delivery – government has embarked on an outcomes based approach to delivery – combined with performance measurement to ensure the attainment of the projected outcomes.

Let me end on that note: having convinced you all that business studies are critical to the development of the public service and improved service delivery – and hopefully, having convinced some of you to consider a career in the public service.

Again congratulations to the successful students and a big thank you to the parents, families, lecturers and administrators who make it possible.

I'm going to leave you with a quotation from that great philosopher and educationalist, Aristotle, writing over 2,000 years ago:

*“The roots of education are bitter – all that studying - but the fruit is sweet.”*

Enjoy the fruit of your studies. You have deserved it. I thank you.