



At the New Science Complex Speech By

The Vice Chancellor

Prof. Mabel Imbuga

During

The Opening of the Re-tooling Workshop

For Facilitators of the Research Methods Program

And Orientation Week for the Students

On

Monday February 7, 2011

The Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs

Representation from RUFORUM

Dean Faculty of Agriculture

Heads of Departments

Facilitators of the workshop,

Workshop participants

Students

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

I take this opportunity to welcome those of you who have travelled from outside the country to Kenya and for each one of you gathered here today to JKUAT. The Research Methods students reported to this university on second of February and the facilitators arrived yesterday and others have come in this morning. At JKUAT, we are focused on becoming a University of Global Excellence in Training, Research and Innovation for Development, and that is the purpose of us coming together this day. Let all of us gathered here today foster a working relationship that not only is going to impact on our own lives but also to the communities, the region and the world at large.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Research Methods programme brings together students and staff from across the region. We have representation from Sudan, Uganda, Malawi, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Burundi. We have here a mix of expertise amongst resource persons in different areas; statisticians, agriculture, natural sciences, life sciences and many other disciplines. Development relies heavily on the investments in research. In order to generate reliable information that can stand the test of time, it is important to have an integrated approach to issues that shall draw from expertise of a wide range of disciplines. I therefore congratulate each one of you for taking your time to be here to today.

The initiative to develop a Research Methods programme was arrived at following wide consultations among stakeholders under the leadership of RUFORUM. The programme was initiated in response to the real need for high quality applied research relevant to the challenges and opportunities in the region. JKUAT, among the RFORUM universities, was honored as the first institution to host this programme on behalf of the region. We are therefore privileged to provide leadership in modeling this programme and moulding the first graduate. In this regard, the University is fully committed to supporting this programme to ensure that quality is maintained. We also request our partners to

continue supporting the programme so that more students are trained to have the critical mass of personnel supporting research in the region.

The MSc Research Methods is designed to train professionals who will support agricultural, natural resource management and socio-sciences research throughout the region. Agriculture, as you are all aware is one of the main pillars of the economies of most of the countries in the region. We are also aware that most exports in this region are based on our natural resources mainly in the raw form. Quality research is therefore important to provide adequate data and information to guide in the decision making processes. Therefore this programme came at an opportune time to address the persistent challenges the region has faced.

This programme aims at furthering the regional collaboration by collectively training Masters level Research Methods specialists. We are drawing resources from across the region getting participation from resource persons from Malawi, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Ghana and beyond and we are also looking beyond having the support of the Statistical Services Center of the University of Reading in the UK. This is in line with our objective of directly or indirectly collaborating with other institutions of higher learning in provision of university education. I therefore encourage you all to create networks that go beyond institutions, our country borders and even beyond.

Coming to what we have at hand, I am informed that the facilitators are here on a workshop and the students will be on orientation this week.

In the workshop the resource persons for the programme will be capacitated in handling the innovative teaching methods adopted for this programme. Therefore, you will be deliberating on the progress so far made in the implementation of this programme. The first cohort of the MSc Research methods has completed its first year and the students are on attachment, gaining experience through practical undertakings in real life settings. This gives you an opportunity to reflect on the challenges and opportunities that are available in the implementation of this programme.

As a first born, parents have had to learn to overcome the teething challenges in the implementation of this programme. I urge you all to candidly deliberate on the progress made, challenges faced and come up with solutions that shall facilitate in the running of this programme. Share your experiences freely; which we shall positively take to ensure that we deliver the best to our students and hence the best output that shall transform our region. I assure you that my office shall take your views positively and shall provide the necessary support to see to it that the programme runs smoothly and that the quality is not compromised.

For the students, I am informed that you will be familiarizing yourselves with the university, your programme and understanding the innovative ways in delivery of this programme. Take this opportunity to be aware of your environment, settle down fast and get down to business. My officers in the university shall provide the necessary support to ensure that your tenure at the university is smooth.

You have an opportunity to interact with all your facilitators at the beginning of your programme. Take time to interact with them as they provide mentorship in your professional development and advancement of your careers. Coming from different backgrounds, different countries and different institutions, you will be greatly enriched in ideas and experiences. We anticipate that at the end of your course, we shall have professionals who are self-motivated, creative, confident, flexible and with strong values. You should therefore be able to drive a regional research agenda that is able to overcome the perennial challenges that have afflicted the region.

It is my humble duty therefore to declare the workshop open and welcome the students to our JKUAT community.

Thank you.