

Conferment of Honorary Doctorate – Acceptance Speech by NESLYN WATSON-DRUÉE, MBE, FRCN,

"Chancellor, Pro-Chancellors, Vice-Chancellor, Graduands and Guests

I join you in the celebration of Achievement by extending my congratulations to the achievements of all Graduands here to day

I am humbled and appreciative to be conferred this Honorary Doctor of the University, by UCE, one of the top six most improved Universities within the UK. It is indeed an honour to be enrolled as an Honorary Doctor with prestigious names most notably, Dame Gillian Weir.

In accepting this Doctorate I pay tribute to UCE, a University which has been acclaimed as a National and International Champion of Equality and Diversity. I am proud to acknowledge that this honour to me is underpinned with the 2004 British Diversity Award - ***Diversity Persuader of the Decade*** and a short-listed candidate for the 2005 Manager of the Year, by the International Association of Business Owners.

My Honorary Doctorate is conferred in recognition for major contribution to the personal development of staff in the National Health Service (NHS) particularly those in ethnic minority groups. My mission in this endeavour is similar to UCE: think success; think employable; provide opportunities for life long learning with flexible programme that seeks to maximise progression and retention within the NHS underpinned by excellence in teaching that encourage participants to transcend internalised oppression social and economical constraints.

May I that I value this privilege to be make such a high level impact with the NHS, the world's largest employer. The NHS is leading the way in human resources policies with strands such as:

- ✍ Making the NHS a model employer;
- ✍ Ensuring the NHS provides a model career;
- ✍ Improving staff morale and
- ✍ Building people management skills.

It is in the latter two policy strands that I have made the most impact as a naturalised immigrant, managing director of Beacon Organisational Development Ltd., chairman of Kingston Primary Care Trust and a responsible citizen.

As a descendant from a small third world country, Jamaica, I often reflect on the fiscal policies which impact on education, the value of education and the attitudes towards educational policies, teachers , lecturers and university staff.

On behalf of all graduates here today may I offer our thanks to the dedication and professional of educationalists, administrators and support staff within education.

Nelson Mandela in his famous Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy states that:

“The success of any nation is too a large extent dependent on the nature of its education and training system.”

A 1996 report ⁽¹⁾ of *The Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life* indicated:

- ? In the developed OECD countries of the world, there is almost total literacy capability; between 88–93% participation in pre-tertiary levels of education; and at the tertiary level, about 40 % of the age cohort participate in most countries;
- ? In non-OECD East Asia and Pacific Islands, while participation rate at the primary school level is nearer 90%, some 100 million boys and girls are still out of school; participation in tertiary level education is limited to under 5%;
- ? In South Asia, participation in primary education is near 70% but some 380 million young children still continue to be out of school; tertiary level education is only available to about 3–5% of the age cohort;
- ? In Latin America and the Caribbean, while initial participation rate in schooling is high (86%), completion rates are low (less than 50%) and some 20 million youths are out of school; in the tertiary sector, less than 6% of the age cohort get an opportunity to go to college;
- ? In the Arab States, close to 23 million children are out of school, some 80 million individuals remain illiterate and less than 10% of the age cohort are in post-secondary institutions; and
- ? The grimmest statistics apply to Sub-Saharan Africa. Some 80 million children of the appropriate age cohort are out of primary and secondary schools.
 - o Of those who are in school, less than 2/3 have adequate teachers, classroom and ancillary facilities. In terms of access to tertiary education, less than one person per 1000 inhabitants can ever dream of a post-secondary education.

Graduates let us be mindful of the and value of education and the value of those who commit themselves to advance educational opportunities for multi-heritage and multiethnic Britain.

Attention to *The Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life* issues challenge educational establishments and partners to place a special emphasis on the personal development of educated and skilled citizens to drive the political, economic and social reconstruction of a new society.

⁽²⁾The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Finally, Graduates may I share a vision of a non-racial, multi heritage and multicultural society, with recognition within our institutions of the need to embrace the diversity each person brings to the progressive development of a new world?

(1) Harrison, Paul (ed.). (1996). *Caring for the future: making the next decades provide a life worth living*; report of the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life. Oxford, UK : Oxford University Press. p. 359.

(2) Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations, Article 26.