

Message of the Vice Chancellor on the Labor Day of 2022

Dear Colleagues,

After three years without meeting at these circumstances of the Labor Day, we are blessed to meet and celebrate together as one family of INES-Ruhengeri. This is not just a day for “guhekenya”. It is an opportunity to come together and celebrate the achievements while gathering the necessary motivation to face the future.

The Labor Day which, originally started as a day of claims for the rights of the employees, has progressively become a day to celebrate the workers’ achievements. It is therefore a great opportunity to understand the value of labor and joys related to it despite its challenging side.

This is the time for the management of INES-Ruhengeri to thank each and every one for the role played in the growth of our beloved institution. According to the current data, there are several reasons to celebrate the growth of our institution: despite the challenges caused by COVID-19 crisis, INES is stable. The number of the students has grown to 3426 with around 203 international students from 15 African countries. 1640 students (48%) are females while 1786 (52%) are males. 2759 (80.53%) are in STEM (44% are females against 56 % males). 665 (19.41%) are in social sciences and arts (65% females against 35% males). Day program students are 3237 (94.48%) against 189 (5.51%) week-end students. New partner institutions sponsoring the students have come on board. Currently the sponsoring institutions are the following: MINUBUMWE, FAWE-Rwanda, New Life, Direct aid; MINADEF; Red Cross, CHANCEN International-Rwanda and IUCEA. The figures show the growing trust of parents and partners. Most interestingly, many students with excellent performance in high schools have chosen to join our institution.

As an educational institution, INES-Ruhengeri is in the sector of service. While agriculturalists and industrialists calculate their benefit based on the tones of products and of course money made out of the sales made, the sector of service, especially education, does not follow the same trend. Apparently all the service providers calculate the number of customers and money made in a given period. Training institutions can also fallow the same logic but educational institutions have a different logic. Their benefit is not reflected in the number of the customers not even in the money from school fees. Educational institutions focus on the quality of the graduates which is proved through employability and relevance in the society. Our responsibility is therefore higher than we may have been thinking.

From a Latin verb “educere”, education is a process of to bring up, to lead forth, to extract out. Education is not about accumulation of knowledge and skills but a process of driving the potentialities of knowledge and transformation of self and of the world. Education addresses human intellect and helps the person to reason and apply knowledge through critical thinking and problem solving. Educated person is expected to have intellectual openness, thinking capacities before certain situations, but also behavior with appropriate ethical standards. Are we there? What are the mechanisms put in place to reach such a demanding profile? Good policies can be availed, good infrastructures and facilities can be purchased, but the secret of successful education is the sense of responsibility of the educators. When talking about educators, some may think that this is the responsibility of the lecturers yet it is not true. In an educational institution every employee is an educator. We are all educators. We bring together our competences and motivation in order to drive the potentialities among the students so that they may meet the expected profile. This requires togetherness in this special mission. Knowledge is needed, competences are needed but above all, love for the students is the key for the success of our mission. We are called to loving the students who come to us. By using the concept of love, I should avoid any equivocal understanding. According to Aristotle’s definition, love is about wishing and striving for the happiness of the beloved one. Our mission is therefore to passionately strive for the happiness of the students!

Given the importance of our mandate, we need to work on some of the loopholes that may setback the efforts made: **Communication skills** are facing problems due to the history of the Rwanda education but also because we are monolingual. This should not be an excuse for any of us. Either we do it well or we leave it to those who are able. Teaching in Kinyarwanda to an international class is unprofessionalism to be severely punished. **Critical and creative thinking** are not visible among many of the graduates. Assuming responsibility is not enough. We need to work on this setback through the adoption of new teaching and learning methodologies. **Entrepreneurship** among the fresh graduates has become an issue. There is no need to wave the responsibility by jumping into the blame game. Let’s focus on what we can offer and offer the best we can. Among others, let’s see how the module can be better focused on the student’s exit profile. Lecturers of entrepreneurship should focus on the very program of the students instead of getting stuck in the generalities. The existing tools to promote innovation and talents (INNOVIC, Career day, Talents shows, Miss and Mr Bright INES, etc.) are

to be owned and supported. **Digital literacy** is compulsory for the graduates of the digital era. A good educator must adapt swiftly to the changes for the benefit of the student. Being BBC is not an excuse to help the dot com generation. Mostly, the blended teaching and learning as adopted by our institution, is a *kairos* for the mastery of the digital tools. More could have been voiced out, but let's end the list of challenges to be addressed by underlining **professional behavior**. One day the CEO of Skol explained to INES team that during the recruitment, he focuses more on behavioral patterns rather than knowledge and skills. He said that one can be trained on knowledge and skills but he can hardly be trained on behavior. This is indeed the right key to success. We need, not just intellectuals, but also well behaved graduates (*Bashoboye kandi bashobotse*).

As I go to the conclusion of my remarks, I would like to wish you happiness as you work for INES-Ruhengeri. The work you do is not just a source of revenues; it is mostly a source of self-accomplishment. Human work bears with it the whole human dignity originated from the creation in the image of God and the call to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another (CCC 2427). Work is also an expression of human natural generosity and a way of giving back to the society. Work is therefore a source of joy and an expression of gratitude despite the global trends to scramble for greener pastures, revenue accumulation and enjoyment. Work is indeed a noble source for self-fulfillment and should be done with passion and love for a better world.

Guided by INES Strategic plan 2019-2024, everyone should feel the responsibility and joy to see INES concept of University of Applied Sciences a reality. This will be pushed through internationalization, digitalization and efficient linkage with the community and the industry. Let's use this opportunity to help the students to proudly shape their future. We shall be happier when their dreams become true.

Thanks a lot for your dedication to work but mostly to life as members of INES family! God bless and protect you.

Happy Labor Day!!!!

Fr Dr HAGENIMANA Fabien

Vice Chancellor