

Benny Popoitai: Commitment to Total Quality Assurance

Address by Mr Benny Popoitai, Deputy Governor of the Bank of Papua New Guinea, at the Divine Word University 2013 Open Day, Port Moresby, 5 May 2013.

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Fr. Jan Czuba, President of the Divine Word University (DWU), DWU Community (administration, staff and students), DWU Development Partners, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Good evening to you all. It is indeed an honour to be invited to make the Key Note Speech at your 2013 Open Day celebration and activities.

The theme of your 2013 Open Day is “Commitment to Total Quality Assurance”. I note that this theme is consistent with DWU’s mission and core values that strives for academic excellence and quality academic programs. It is a theme that is not only appropriate but very relevant given the stage we are in with our nation’s development and the many challenges we face in nation-building. Equipping our young people not only with the required academic qualifications but the necessary and important societal values of living and working together harmoniously before they enter the workforce and mainstream society is very important. I therefore at the outset must thank the DWU for its commitment, drive and vigour in striving for total quality assurance in preparing the next generation of workers and leaders of our country.

If you google Total Quality Assurance or TQA, you will get about 29.2 million entries or results on the internet. The results throw up other related terminologies like Total Quality Management (TQM) and Total Quality Control (TQC). Why so many results? It is because TQA, TQM and TQC are not only hot topics in management and performance benchmarking but also vital in driving excellence and ensuring competitiveness in the fiercely competitive workplace we face today, whatever the industry or service you may refer to. TQA in short, as many of you would be aware, relates to ensuring a product or output meets required or expected standards in a suitable delivery time.

Education, as we all know, is at the heart of every nation’s strives to develop. Providing access, opportunities and quality education is therefore very important for the prospects of our young nation. Our educational institutions should not only aim at turning out quantities of students but more importantly, a high quality of graduates. This is where DWU fits in well with the engagement of the Australian Universities Quality Agency in 2011 to conduct an independent External Academic Audit of your activities and programmes. I was humbled to learn that DWU was the first university in the country to voluntarily go through the independent External Academic Audit in recognition of education as a public good, the many challenges faced in PNG and the need to demonstrate a system of accountability and learning culture for our education institutions. Such initiatives aimed at improving academic performance and status are very worthwhile investment and truly reflect the genuineness of the DWU Council, Academic Board and Development Partners. If the audit recommendations are implemented successfully, which I am sure they will through your 10 year Action Plan, this will mean quality programs/courses offered which will further increase stakeholders and general public confidence for the DWU in producing quality graduates to assist in the delivery of social, economic, cultural and political development of our country.

DWU’s drive towards TQA is highly commendable. One has only to read the daily newspapers, listen to the radio or watch the television to see the serious problems we have in our society today – some worth mentioning are corruption, crime, unemployment, poor socio-economic indicators and social disharmony. We have generated high economic growth for over a decade now but still struggle to ensure we all live together in peace and happiness.

The efforts by DWU is consistent and complements the Government's 2050 Vision Strategic Plan which sets out Human Capital Development as one of its priority pillars, in fact at the top of the list. An article in the Post Courier on 29 April 2013 (this week Monday) reported the Government's focus on higher education, with funding between K40m and K50m on higher education reforms over the next five years to meet global quality standards. There will be amendments to the Office of Higher Education (OHE) Act to make OHE the regulator to oversee the operations of the universities and higher learning institutions. I am pleased to note that the initiatives taken by the DWU will place it well ahead of its peers and the reforms about to take place in the higher education system of our country.

We at the Bank are also constantly looking at ways to up skill our human resources and improve our work processes and engaging professionals and independent persons/firms to review our work process as part of the ongoing quality assurance program. Institutions and firms that have quality assurance program built into their work processes will no doubt benefit from the investment and stay ahead of the pack.

Regarding initiatives from the Bank, we are looking at sponsoring programs at the universities such as the Banking and Finance courses already taught at the University of PNG. We are also embarking on financial inclusion programs and are talking with the Education Department to develop curriculums to be taught in our primary and secondary schools. In addition, the Bank has an ongoing graduate development program and we will be coming over to DWU in the coming years to continue to sponsor top students in Business Studies programs. The Bank to date has sponsored a number of DWU students who are currently working with us. The Bank has also engaged DWU services through Fr. Jan Czuba to conducted training on Ethnical Leadership in Business where all Bank executive and management team including myself attended in March 2013. This is a simple testament of the confidence the Bank has in your students, academic staff and your efforts to offer quality research, teaching, learning and community engagement and will further strengthen the relationship.

I have the opportunity today to be shown around the school and have witnessed firsthand the upgraded educational facilities. I am overwhelmed by the effort and the commitment of the University Council, Academic Board and Development Partners into ensuring quality education is offered. I am sure you will all agree with me that the University has come a long way in the last few years.

On your Open Day celebrations, I had the opportunity to visit the many stalls and display exhibitions put out by the various DWU faculties. If I were a judge, I know I will have a tough time deciding on who is the winner because they all, to me, met TQA standards and are all winners.

In the next couple of minutes we will witness awards for the faculty displays held today. May the best team win and I wish you all an enjoyable evening for the rest of the program.

Thank you all.