

INNOVATION SHOULD BE THE NAME OF AFRICA'S GAME

by Witus Matukane

1 February 2012

Reading Field Ruwe's article ("You lazy intellectuals", January 30), one is reminded of the book Capitalist Nigger, and Reuel Khoza's Let Africa Lead.

All these intellectuals have a common theme and picture of Africa; they want to see Africa begin to do something for itself. The popular "African Renaissance" and "I am an African" assertions by former president Thabo Mbeki should form the basis of African rediscovery.

South Africa is undoubtedly one of the best countries in the world in the disciplines of education, infrastructure development, management of conflict and diversity (except for the xenophobic tendencies in our societies) and politics.

We have produced academics of high stature, businessmen and women of an international standard, and we continue to display to the world that we are a learning-loving nation (the recent accident at the University of Johannesburg bears testimony to this, as does the overflow of other institutions of higher learning). The question is: what do we do after all this studying?

Some argue that getting a decent job is enough, others want to become business people, while others dream of becoming renowned entrepreneurs. All these make a positive contribution to the country's economic growth and development.

However, to prosper we need to become innovative in our business dealings. Engineers, scientists, scholars, academics, intellectuals and medical doctors should focus more on innovation of dynamic instruments of economic growth and development.

For example, we have vast areas of arable land which could be exploited by agricultural scientists for food production and security.

Where are they and what are they doing? They are giving lectures rather than producing food for local markets and exports.

South Africa, viewed as a gateway to economic growth and development of the African continent, should realise the importance of the leadership vested in her by the world. Ours is a relatively stable country compared to other African countries.

We should complement that with new discoveries and inventions.

Studies have confirmed that South Africa imports more than it can export.

A country that does not manufacture its own materials will always rely on other countries, such as Brazil, Russia, India and China, for supplies.

One can only hope joining South Africa to the aforementioned economies to form BRICS will assist us to develop our economy for the betterment of Africa.

It is time for Africa to lead. We need to be trendsetters.