

“THE TEACHER AS A RESOURCE: QUALITY AND UTILIZATION”

**Closing Remarks by Eddah Gachukia
First Teachers’ Conference -June 2019, Kenya School of Government**

Introductory Remarks

Congratulations to the Teachers’ Service Commission for organizing this important First Teacher’s Conference 2019, whose programme is enriched by a healthy mix of achievable objectives. The role of technology in teaching and learning, and the review of current regulations and policies for their implications to the teaching service, are in particular relevant.

The TSC has an important mandate not only to hire and regulate teachers, but also to provide for the continuous capacity building of teachers. The focus on the 21st Century mandates Conference facilitators and participants to adopt a forward looking strategy, in order to map out the future of education, and the need to prepare teachers for their future. (I would have loved to be a participant especially on the critical issue of Quality Assurance for effective Teaching and Learning).

As I make closing remarks, I have a distinct disadvantage coming as I do at the tail end of valuable presentations and discussions. I could however not resist accepting the invitation due to my long involvement in education as a teacher.

Allow me at the outset to confess I have greatly benefited from two great leaders.

- One Dr. Julius Otundo, a renowned education expert, a consultant at Riara University School of Education and curriculum delivery enthusiast.
- The other Caroline Wakoli; Executive Director, Emerging Leaders Foundation. A motivational speaker specializing in the Youth Affairs. Caroline excited me in the address of teachers when she read the Abraham Lincoln’s letter to his son’s teacher.

1. Teacher in 21st Century

Whenever we engage in a review and discussion of Education in the 21st Century, we must be careful not to neglect the traditional, multiple roles of teachers besides instruction. I must declare at the outset that the ongoing changes in our education curriculum are of particular interest to me. Good teachers double up as;

- counselors,
- encouragers/uplifters,
- caregivers,
- security providers,
- instillers of hope and promoters of individual capabilities,
- they assume the role of parenting of children under their care, among others.

These roles must remain critical.

When we consider the 21st century knowledge and skills our students need for the future, we must ask ourselves these important questions:

- **What about the teachers?**
- **What instructional skills do 21st -century teachers need to prepare our students?**
- **How do they differ from the skills teachers needed in the past?**

One of the major changes that has significantly changed education delivery is the introduction of focus on providing **'life skills'**. The shift aims at students learning to obtain knowledge by themselves, and to work in ways that enable them to come up with new ideas. Generating new ideas is a key tenet of modern society. Education is only considered to be of impact if it causes **transformation**. The meaning of the word education arising from the **Greek word *educ* is to deduce from within**, unearth the hidden potential in the learners that will in turn enable them to meet the needs of 21st century survival skills and beyond. This shift has far reaching implications for Teacher preparation;

i. We therefore need to train teachers who have the ability to facilitate learning effectively in order, to help learners deduce their future skills for learning.

- **We need professionals who are culturally competent, talented, innovative, creative problem-solvers, skilled and critical thinkers.**

- New technologies give an opportunity to critical thinking and problem solving. We must therefore provide students with skills that help them **work collaboratively and sensitively in a team, become good decision-makers, plan and manage their time effectively, listen to one another and choose the right communication strategy at the right time.**
- Training institutions need to understand that teachers whose competency levels are low will have difficulties in harnessing learners' competency and skills needed for survival.

ii. To achieve these new teaching requirements, we need 21st – century skills in all teachers at all levels of training. Teacher education and job performance are two contexts in which the term competency is used.

- Competencies are the requirements of a “competency-based” teacher education. They include the **knowledge, skills and values** a teacher-trainee needs to demonstrate for successful completion of a teacher education programme. Teaching competencies require equal amounts of knowledge, skill and attitude.
- We need to understand the skills and sub-skills students require for successful communication and personal development; those that would assure them a competitive advantage in life.

These include:

- **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving skills** i.e. thinking logically, estimating and guessing, turning problems into opportunities.
- **Self-Direction and Learning** which lead to developing memory, being assertive, making personal changes.
- **Collaboration** which involves persuading others to work in a team, discussing alternatives and reaching compromises for win-win situations, rather than the winner takes all mentality.

iii. We also need to train teachers who can lead students to solve world problems through positive global citizenship, social entrepreneurial skills and environmental awareness, among other requirements.

The central figures in the educational process are teachers whose transformative agenda should be clear and purposeful to the learners' desire to learn. The success of training and education depends therefore,

on the **teachers' preparation, display of knowledge, and performance quality.**

The critical teaching skills and life-long learning competencies of professional teachers therefore comprise:

- performing complex pedagogical duties;
- being well-spoken;
- good mental and physical health;
- being stable and tolerant;
- having a propensity to work with the younger generation;
- good communication and observational skills, tact, a vivid imagination, and
- leadership skills

Pedagogical culture is, therefore, an integral part of a competent teacher. It consists of three components which are vital for the 21st Century teacher, namely

- a teacher's acceptance of the values of pedagogical work;
- a technological component, which facilitates solving different pedagogical tasks; and
- a heuristic component, which allows the learner to discover and learn things individually. **It involves setting goals, planning, analyzing and self-critiquing.**

iv. The integration of ICT in teaching and learning has become an integral part of the 21st century learner. **Teachers therefore need to increase their innovative skills by enhancing their ICT skills.** Innovation impacts on the pedagogical system, improving the teaching process and its results.

Among the aims of innovation are;

- increased motivation in teaching and educational activity;
- an increased volume of material studied per lesson;
- accelerated training and
- effective time management.

Another important component of the competent teacher is pedagogical experience. Advanced pedagogical experience can be transferred and passed on to others, as well as be reproduced in training techniques and methods, so as to be used by fellow teachers, providing high results without additional time expenditure.

21st -century competencies have been defined as the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to be competitive in the 21st century workforce.

Teacher preparation and professional development should therefore be reworked to incorporate training in teaching key competencies.

The 21st -century teacher needs to know how to provide technologically supported learning opportunities for students, and know how technology can support student learning.

In Summary

The 21st Century Teaching Competencies should therefore include;

a. Demonstration of exemplary leadership.

Teachers need to lead the teaching profession by: participating in professional development and growth activities; and developing professional relationships and networks. Teachers advocate for schools and students by implementing and adhering to policies and practices positively affecting students' learning through highly effective instructional leadership and demonstration of high ethical standards.

b. Establishment of a respectful environment for a diverse population of students:

- Provides an environment in which each child has a positive, nurturing relationship with caring adults;
- Embraces diversity in the school community and in the world by using materials or lessons that counteract stereotypes and acknowledge the contributions of all cultures;
- Incorporates different points of view in instruction;
- Understands the influence of diversity and planning instructions accordingly;
- Treats students as individuals by maintaining a learning environment that conveys high expectations of every student;
- Adapts teaching for the benefit of students with special needs by cooperating with specialists and using resources to support the special learning needs of all students;
- Utilizes research to provide effective learning activities for students with special needs;
- Works collaboratively with families of students and other significant adults by communicating and collaborating with the home and community for the benefit of students, and knowing well the content they teach. (This involves the challenge facing teachers in remote areas).

c. Effective and innovative curriculum delivery by:

- High level professionalism, sensitive to students learning and success.
- Developing and applying lessons based on an effective course of study through integrating functional literacy instruction throughout the curriculum, and across content areas to enhance student learning.
- Honouring the content appropriate to their teaching speciality by demonstrating an appropriate level of content knowledge and encouraging students to investigate the content area to expand their knowledge and satisfy their natural curiosity.
- Demonstrating they recognize the interconnectedness of content areas/discipline, by displaying knowledge of their subject, by relating it to other disciplines and global awareness of the subject.
- Making their instruction relevant to students by integrating 21st - century skills and content in instruction.

d. Facilitating learning for their students

Teachers need to show they know the ways in which learning takes place, and the appropriate levels of intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development of their students by:

- Identifying developmental levels of individual students and planning instruction accordingly;
- Assessing and using those resources needed to address the strengths and weaknesses of students, and
- Planning instruction appropriate to their students by:
 - collaborating with colleagues to monitor student performance and making instruction responsive to cultural differences and individual learning needs;
 - Showing their acumen and versatility by: - using a variety of methods and materials suited to the needs of all students;
 - Displaying their awareness of technology's potential to enhance learning by: - integrating technology into their instruction to maximize student learning;
 - Helping students to grow as thinking individuals by integrating specific instruction that helps students to develop the ability to apply processes and strategies for critical thinking and problem solving.
 - Helping students to work in teams and develop leadership qualities by organizing learning teams for the purpose of developing cooperation and student leadership;

- Reaching out to their students best by using a variety of methods to communicate effectively with all pupils and consistently encouraging and supporting students to articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively;
- Best assessing what students have learned by using multiple indicators, both formative and summative, to monitor and evaluate student progress and to inform instruction; and
- Providing evidence that students are attaining 21st -century knowledge, skills and dispositions.

e. Reflecting on their practice as professionals:

Teachers need to analyze student learning by:

- Using data to provide ideas on what can be done to improve student learning and linking professional growth to their professional goals, and
- Participating in recommended activities for professional learning and development.

Conclusion

The 21st Century teacher needs to function effectively in a complex, dynamic environment by using a variety of research-verified approaches to improve teaching and learning;

- Colleges/Universities should have the capacity to train teachers who can help students apply learning outcomes in their daily lives.
- Teachers being integral players in students' success should be trained to have the capacity to solve world- wide challenges that include poverty, environmental degradation, health related problems, food shortages, conflicts, drug and substance abuse, human trafficking, greed/corruption, inhuman ethos, joblessness of the youth, gender related violence, bad leadership, harsh political environment, lack of Godliness, among others.
- The need to agree on matters of teacher training and their continuous capacity building is critical in this transformative agenda.

The implementation of the new curriculum –CBC is timely and critical for Kenya's future and impact in the world!

Closure