

Prepare students for Vision 2030 and beyond

BY MWANGI WANJUMBI

Some interesting thoughts occurred to me as I watched a live transmission of the graduation ceremony of a local university recently. I could not help but share the joy and excitement with the students.

At the same time, I could not avoid reflections on the influx of job seekers into the ever lean job market, especially after all the universities have released the rest of their graduating students in the second half of the year. Naturally, the graduates will venture into the real world with very high expectations of high paying jobs that could lead to joy and happiness thereafter.

Unknown to them however, is that theirs will just be the beginning of a new chapter in life, after spending at least 16 years wading through the school system. Also, many have had their hands held tightly by their parents and guardians. However, the chances of the tight grips being loosened this time are reasonably high, as they are released to experience eventual adulthood.

Without doubt, the younger graduates who are the majority are now expected to think on their own particularly about careers, relationships, nation building and many more. Whether they are properly prepared on this is another matter all together.

Meanwhile, our education system has by design prepared most students for formal employment. Nevertheless, not all education can be applied in the formal employment situation given our level of economic development and therefore skills needs. In the 1980s for example, Kenyans interested in chemical engineering were studying abroad only to come back home, to undertake careers that are different from this area of learning. There were limited job opportunities then, in that area of training.

Further, many students have pursued their education based on available learning opportunities and not necessarily their personality orientation. Subsequently, they are not able to apply what they learn in real life situations.

It may be understandable then why former Higher Education Minister William Ruto seemed to discriminate on some areas of study - yes majority of those who study the seemingly discriminated areas are not able to articulate their practice. Nonetheless, every area of study is relevant in the improvement of the welfare of humanity one way or the other. The problem then lies elsewhere and not with the search for knowledge.

Ideally, the education system needs to as much as possible establish a way of aligning study programs to student orientations and not necessarily the grades acquired in the pre-university education. The psychology of learning indicates that the brain has three compartments. Scientists and mathematicians are endowed with left brain orientation which is associated with logical thinking and analysis of situations and events. They are said to think around formulas and mostly within the box.

On the other hand, the right brain is associated with artistic orientation. Those endowed with the same such as designers and majority of writers are said to think outside the

box. The third category involves whole brained people. They can align themselves to either logical or artistic activities and still fit well. Somehow, the latter are the minority in the society.

Additional research indicates that the degree of success in careers and vocations is very much dependent on aligning the same with personal brain orientation. Suitable alignment yields smooth progress and success during studies. At later stages, those concerned easily apply the knowledge through creating and innovating products and solutions in their various occupations.

Inevitably, we may not afford to be complacent especially in a continually dynamic operational environment. That explains why the ability to create and innovate is a much sought after attribute more so in workplace situations. Indeed, it is the basis of competitive advantages.

This ability to create and innovate is further boosted by other unique abilities. Key of them is talent or inborn abilities. Notably, each one of us has an inborn ability or more. Talents can be attributable to sports, writing, preaching, singing, dancing, and in fact any activity in life.

Those able to align their inborn abilities with their careers or vocations end up not only excelling but completing tasks with ease compared to everybody else. They also develop infinite passion and enthusiasm leading to situations where work becomes child play. The more the inborn abilities are developed especially through learning and continued practice, the higher the chances of persistently climbing the ladder of success. Therefore, the earlier these abilities are detected, the better for each one of us.

So, as the graduating students join the real world, are they properly equipped with the right knowledge that can be traced to their personal orientations? If not, it is best to go back to the drawing board at this early stage. Those who are right on target may not have many challenges as they face the real life situations. Some may easily secure placements in the job markets whereas others may easily venture into self employment.

This situation may be even more attractive especially in the event that they have undertaken entrepreneurial studies. The same are today necessary for all especially during the learning process. It does not matter whether one is pursuing law, engineering, medicine or any other profession for that matter. After all, everybody will end up dealing with customers, marketing, business accounts, plans and others in whatever profession, therefore the need to understand the inevitable business dynamics. Incidentally, the said alignment also applies to the numerous students who have just or are in the process of commencing university education.

As a nation, we all need to explore strategies of enabling everybody to align their studies, careers and vocations with personal orientations. The ideal situation is when people eventually find themselves engaged in child play situations in lieu of 'working hard,' as is most often the case. It is only then that the country will achieve the threshold of becoming close to a talent based economy, which will effortlessly achieve the aspirations of vision 2030 and beyond. More still, the country may acquire functionally educated masses that are capable of continually adding value to the welfare of humanity.

(Mwangi Wanjumbi is a Management/Leadership training consultant and CEO of Newtimes Business Solutions. www.newtimesconsultants.com)