



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

OPENING REMARKS BY MINISTER FOR EDUCATION DR. J.G. KIANO, EGH, PhD, DURING THE SECOND CONFERENCE ON TEACHER EDUCATION IN 6TH MAY, 1968

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here today to participate in this “Second Conference on Teacher Education” in Kenya. The last conference of this sort was held in 1956 – some seven years before the Independence of this country and I think you will agree with me that the time is now ripe for us to reconsider our teacher education programme. As we all know, in formal education the importance of the teacher takes second place only to that of the pupil himself. The quality of the teacher is of great concern to the educational system. It is because of this fact that periodic review of our teacher education programme is most vital.

At Independence in 1963, Kenya inherited an educational system patterned almost exclusively on the British model which was designed largely to train a class of persons black in colour but foreign in thought, culture, outlook and behavior. The word “training” is used when referring to teacher education itself personified the attitude that trainees were to be given a stereotyped formal education of the traditional European type. But at Independence, Kenya became a new nation and her peoples were now free to assume new dimensions in their thinking, feelings, aspirations, hopes and actions. They realized also that Independence meant that they were on their own and that they needed confidence, determination and courage in their actions. In the circumstances, the existing educational system was obviously inadequate and needed to be modified in order to accommodate the new strains and stresses which had been placed on it. Thus it became necessary to find ways and means of modifying the system.

I was very fortunate during the beginning of February this year to accompany His Excellency the President during his tour of Eastern Province. The President spoke at length on the importance of education both to the individual and the nation as a whole. He stressed very much that while teaching all available knowledge in the various subjects, our pupils must be taught thoroughly about their country and Africa as a whole, i.e. our history, our culture, our social and economic institutions so that we may have educated Africans, not carbon copies of foreign societies and

ideologies. This is indeed very important and as the Minister for Education, I am determined to see that this approach which His Excellency has indicated shall be incorporated in our education system without delay. We have in my Ministry the Curriculum Development and Research Centre and I intend to draw the attention of this Centre to this very important approach given by His Excellency, Education is vital to our nation. It is the key to progress and prosperity. It molds the minds and character of our young generations. It must therefore be handled with careful thinking and prompt execution of the plans.

For a start, my Ministry in 1964 established the Kenya Institute of Education. You are all well aware of the Institute's functions of experimentation and development of local and more suitable materials – functions which up to 1966 had been carried by separate centers such as Special Centre, Science Centre and Mathematics Centre. These two new institutions, i.e the Curriculum Development and Research Centre and the Kenya Institute of Education, are housed at the former Central Teachers College and it is intended to merge them functionally as it is now clear that curriculum development and teacher education are inextricably intertwined.

Some people may think that a teacher is just a person from whom the children could get facts. Today, much more is demanded of the teacher. Although he must still give information to his children, the teacher's main job is much more comprehensive: he encourages his pupils to develop their mental abilities to the highest degree possible, he guides them in forming positive and acceptable social values in life, he encourages them to develop themselves into self-reliant individuals; he also guides them into acquiring healthy physical habits and positive and enquiring minds and attitudes. In other words, the school teacher is a person who is responsible for helping children to grow up mentally, physically and spiritually. He must therefore learn to understand the child, and, as a result of this understanding, present the subject matter in such a manner that the child's interest will be stimulated and maintained. The old way of teaching sometimes put too much weight and too much emphasis on memorizing. But the new ways recognize the importance of training for independent thinking and activity and this is why teachers must encourage their pupils to take part actively in the work of the classroom.

An idea continues in the minds of some people that the aim of education in their schools is to help the pupils to obtain many facts and much information. There is no doubt that it is important to know facts, but in the world today, our pupils face the problem of an ever-changing society, with ever-changing emphasis on what knowledge is important. Our pupils, then, must be trained to acquire positive approaches and attitudes as well as inquiring minds which will enable them to adjust themselves in our ever changing world.

One of our first purposed in education must be to help the child to become clear thinking individual who is capable of taking care of himself in any situation in which he finds himself placed. Thus the pupil at school must be made to think for himself and the subjects he studies

must be presented to him in a manner which helps him to think. This means that you should not always tell the pupils everything; you must encourage them to question, to reason, to think, to discover for themselves. While he is being helped to become a mature individual, and the child must, at the same time, become aware of his membership in a community, and his responsibilities to that community. If we remember that the child is to be educated so that he can successfully adjust to a changing society, we must not have the idea that everything must be taught this year exactly as it was taught last year. That is, our teaching must not be static.

We must prepare our pupils to live happily and usefully in the world as it is today or may be tomorrow, but not necessarily as it was yesterday. It is vital that what a child learns in school be connected with his everyday life. To offer an example, the arithmetic he studies would be related to his personal experiences in his home, the playground, and the market. History should concern itself with the story of the development of the government of his country, his town, of transport, of the everyday things he uses instead of just being concerned with battles and the dates of reigns of distant kinds.; The subjects which the child studies in school must also be connected as far as possible with one another; certainly teachers must be ever watchful of opportunities to relate what they are teaching to other subject areas.

Since teachers are the backbone of the whole educational system their education is perhaps the most vital factor affecting our future. I have already mentioned some of the failings of the past system but what of the future? On Independence we inherited some 36 teachers colleges many of which were small, isolated, understaffed, narrow in outlook both educationally and socially although eminently successful in their own context. Our independent government considered that these colleges did not and could not effectively portray the outward looking future. Some changes thus became necessary. Administratively and as funds became available they were amalgamated to the present 26 larger and more efficiently run teacher training colleges. It is my intention that this number should be further amalgamated to some sixteen large colleges of about five hundred students in which students from all over the country will be educated. As it is important that Kenya becomes one nation, we regard the mixing of students at the teachers training college level as most vital.

In the training of our teachers today we seek to ensure that the trainee is an educated person who possesses a firm grounding in the subjects which he is to teach, and who has a considerably deeper knowledge of the subjects which he is to teach, than the level at which he is obliged to teach them. This is especially true of our primary school teachers who have to cover the whole of the primary school curriculum. I know that the content of the teacher's education programme is something very close to your hearts and will no doubt be discussed fully in your discussion group on the "Curriculum and structure of the Course". In this context we must also consider the teaching staff of our teachers colleges because they must also have a deeper knowledge of their subjects than was necessary in the past. In 1964 only we percent of the intake into teachers

colleges had had post-primary education. This year for the first time, over of the students entering teachers colleges have had some secondary school education. This trend will continue and as students start at a higher academic level it will be necessary to up-grade or even replace some of our teacher educators so that they will be capable of meeting academic demands placed upon them. Furthermore we must make a greater effort to staff our colleges with local persons for obvious reasons. In making this point I am not in any way questioning the efforts of the expatriates from many countries who are helping us through this difficult period of our history, but I am sure that they realize that in working themselves out of a job they are doing at the same time a great service to this country, a service which does not go unappreciated by our government.

However, teacher education cannot be confined to instruction in academic subjects. The competent teacher must be educated to see and interpret the needs of the country not only in the classroom, but as a less formal level in the community in which he lives. He must be a leader, an innovator and an enlightened parent he must understand what he is doing and why he is doing it if his education is to be of true and lasting value to the community and country which he serves. If, therefore, the African teacher is to cope inadequately with the monumental task that lied before him he has to be well prepared for his job. He must be willing to get into the spirit of the age, willing to share his skills and knowledge with his fellow teachers and the community at large- he must be able to seek more knowledge on his own initiative, and above all he must be flexible and willing to experiment and not be afraid of failure. This puts a great onus on you as teacher educators, because you, yourselves, must have the same attributes if you are to be successful in inculcating them into your students. I am quite sure that you and your colleges are doing excellent academic work, but I understand that some of you may still be afraid of being innovators experimenters, and that some may be afraid of being innovators, experimenters and that some may be afraid that student anarchy may result from greater freedom being given to your charges in the way of effective student councils. But it is only through this method of participation in problem solving by the students that colleges can truly be preparing their protégés for the leadership which will be expected of them when they go out into the world. Of course this must be done with discipline. Disciplines will always be most important in the educational system.

In your deliberations', I hope that you will discuss the problems of student leadership in the knowledge that a teachers college is not a glorified primary school, with tutors as benevolent parents, but a place of experiment, trial and innovational and if students make mistakes – and they will – this is also part of the process of learning which may too often be forgotten. In making mistakes, self-discipline, which is really the best form discipline, which is really the best form of discipline, is learnt. To be true leaders in society teachers must be able to think for themselves, to act in a considered manner and to solve problems for themselves. And this

training is every bit as important in our colleges as the content of the syllabuses in English and mathematics or other subjects. It will not be on the time-table but it must permeate the whole college life, because it is only in this way that progress can come to our schools, our education and our country.

The possession of knowledge by itself is not enough: it has to be applied and it is this art of applying the acquired knowledge which is very important and which must be learned during the general education stage.

Mentioning it reminds me that perhaps I ought to say something about general education as opposed to specialized education. I am aware of the fact that many people regard academic education as constituting the whole of general education. This is not correct as general education, which is the main concern of both the primary and secondary sectors of our educational system, is more embracing than academic education; it embraces those bodies of knowledge in the curriculum which are judged by the nation as a whole to be important areas of knowledge which every child should possess. This would include the bodies of knowledge that encourage mental development, those which encourage physical development and those which encourage the development of the soul or if you like the mind. It will therefore be clear that academic studies, as we have so far known them, have not adequately encouraged the development of the body, and it is because of this fact that we are diversifying the curriculum in our secondary schools in order to include the so-called practical subjects whose study is aimed at developing the body and creating appropriate attitudes towards work as well as manual dexterity.

We must further recognize that practical or technical education embraces more than mere vocational education. In the same way that we do not in our primary and secondary education aim at training finished geographers so to speak but that we aim at giving them an awareness of the principles which should be learned in that body of knowledge called geography, so in our teaching the practical subjects such as typing, carpentry, technical drawing, metalwork and so on; we do not aim at producing finished typists or technicians who will require no more learning after that.

We attempt to give them positive attitudes toward these forms of activities and awareness of the principles which underlie the study of these subjects upon which principles they can add more and more expertise. No doubt in so doing we do give the basic skills which are necessary in the appreciation of these subjects and also which form the foundation of further training. In other words general education aims at providing basic knowledge considered to be important and forms the basis for further specialized training. This I believe to be the function of our primary and secondary education.

I am aware of the fact that in developing countries such as ours the need for training technicians, artisans and craftsmen is very great and consequently, the temptation to turn general education

into specialized education is extremely high. But I would like to say that it has been found that those people who have had appropriate and adequate grounding in their general education take much shorter time training in the specialized institutions. They also have shown themselves to be mature and of wider outlook. In any case, in an age when specific skills are getting outdated so fast, it is perhaps more important to provide a suitable foundation which would enable a person to adapt himself as skills and techniques change. It is I believe, therefore important that we do not start specializing too early, whether this specializing be of an academic or vocational nature.

Perhaps at this juncture I should mention something about the role of examinations in our educational system. It is important that we realize that the examination's function in the educational system is an evaluative one. In other words an examination's function is to assess whether the educational objectives are being achieved effectively. We should therefore take care not to allow the examination system to determine what is to be taught in our schools. The process of determining the content of the curriculum is so important that it must determine the educational objectives. It is after an attempt has been made at achieving these educational objectives that it becomes necessary to evaluate whether the goals have been reached successfully. In other words, we must not put the cart before the horse; or, if you like, we must not let the tail wag the dog. I must not be misunderstood as saying that examinations are not important. I should be understood to be saying that they are important but that they have a specific evaluative role which must not be confused with that of determining curriculum content. The curriculum content controls the kind of examination set to evaluate related achievement.

Actions of service are the life-blood of good government. Our Government, under the wise leadership of our President His Excellency, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta has sought always to adhere to this and benefit our people. During the four years that Kenya has been governed by us, the people of this land, tremendous achievements have been made in the service of our people particularly in the field of education. All of us present therefore are so in the field of education.

In closing my address may I say how pleased I am to have been given this opportunity to talk to you and I hope your deliberations will be objective, reasoned and will give my Ministry and the Government guidance in this approach to teacher education. I look forward to reading your final report which I can assure you will be given the necessary consideration by all concerned.