**Seizing Transformative Opportunities and Powering the Vision through Innovative Technology**

**Nakuru High School Career Fair 2013**

**Key Note Speech**

**By**

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Good afternoon,

I am humbled by this invitation to join you in this process of self discovery and growth. I attend many forums meeting people from various cultural and professional backgrounds but I can assure you that being among young people who are at the verge of their life’s purpose such as yourselves is the most gratifying experience. I spend most of my time as Vice Chancellor with vibrant youth in a very dynamic institution- KCA University, where with each passing day students use what they learn and experience to make a living and positively influence the people they come into contact with. I want to take this opportunity to welcome you to join KCA University even as you advance in knowledge and drive change in your community.

Today you are putting in place a block of life in the structure that is your life. You will be required to make a choice based on the information you receive here today and in other forums such as this. I hope in this short speech to give you “a boost” in the right direction and contribute to the great life that you will enjoy even as you make the right choices.

I have chosen two great icons of our day as examples of what you are capable of achieving here in Nakuru and wherever else you come from or will go. Their stories are not unique, they live life as most of us do however, what makes them unique is how they perceive life and the decisions they make as a result. I will try to share their lives as realistically as possible without sounding too academic.

Steve Jobs, who was co- founder and CEO of Apple Incorporated until his death 2 years ago, identified 3 life lessons from his success. One, nothing happens by mistake. Your experiences and environment are there to build you not destroy you. Steve Jobs was born to a single, teenage mum who gave him up for adoption. The couple that was meant to adopt him rejected him when they found out that the child was a not a girl. They were rich and could give him the life that his biological mother hoped he would receive. But he was not a girl. Another couple, not wealthy at all, adopted him and loved him. They supported him in his endeavours even when they could not afford it. Steve Jobs categorically states that he could not see the bigger picture when his parents struggled to pay his college fees and he eventually dropped out of school, but at the height of his success he could then see how all the events of his life worked out to make him the CEO of one of the most successful companies in the world.

His second lesson is that you have to find something that you love doing. It is perhaps too early for you to determine that now however, as you engage in academic and positive extracurricular activities you are most likely to discover your purpose. In 1985 the Board of Directors fired Steve Jobs from the company he had started. He says he felt ashamed at losing his job, he even wanted to relocate away from the town where he lived and everyone knew him. However, he realized that despite losing his job he still enjoyed doing what he had been doing in Apple- working with computers. As a result he began two other very successful companies, one of which was eventually bought by Apple and saw him return as CEO.

Remember lesson one? Nothing happens by mistake. He attributes his success at the time of his deepest lose to the fact that he loved what he did and losing his job could not take that away from him. He still had ideas that he was excited about and could work towards achieving. You have to find what you love doing because this love, this passion, will keep you going even when you are down and out. It will make you persevere the difficult moments. Don’t settle, find what you love doing, this is lesson number 2.

Steve Jobs died on October 5, 2011 due to pancreatic cancer. Yet the world still celebrates him every time individuals all over the world use an iPhone, iPad, iPod, Apple Macintosh computer, or watch an animated movie produced by Pixar (his 3rd company). Shall we ever forget Steve Jobs? Probably not, the same way we still remember Albert Einstein, Leonardo Da Vinci, Michael Jackson, and Tupac is probably the same way we shall remember Steve Jobs. According to Steve Jobs, “your time here on earth is limited so don’t waste it living someone else’s life”, “don’t be trapped by dogma which is living the results of other people’s thinking”, and “don’t let the noise of other people’s opinions drown out your own inner voice”. Your time is limited, don’t waste it, do something meaningful. This is lesson 3.

My second example is well known to many in the world. She has been ranked the richest African- American of the 20th century, the greatest black philanthropist in American history, and at one time she was the world’s only black billionaire. Her name is Oprah Winfrey. I will share with you her 3 life tools for success. She describes how when she got her first job in a TV station as a news anchor. She was initially excited at the money and career prospects. However, as time passed she realized that she was not enjoying her job; people were trying to change how she looked, talked, and responded to her news stories, she was also trying to be like other news anchors who she thought were great at the time. Eventually, the TV station fired her from her news anchor job and because they could not pay her the final dues in one go decided to send her off to host a talk show in another of their stations.

Oprah states that immediately she sat on her chair to host the talk show she knew she had finally found what made her happy. Her job was no longer a struggle but light and enjoyable. It felt right! She knew that she had found what she wanted to do for the rest of her life. Her spirit agreed with her mind, agreed with her soul- she felt at peace with where she was. Oprah advises not to ignore your intuition, your instinct, or your gut feeling. This is your greatest GPS (Global Positioning System) for life- if it does not feel right do not do it- if you are hanging out with a group of friends that you know are leading you astray, if you are engaging in something that you feel is not right even if many others seem to be doing the same, STOP. It is not right for you and will probably bring you trouble if you persist.

Tool number 2 is failure. Yes, Failure. Oprah describes failure as life’s way of telling you that you need to change course. It is not there to destroy you but to help you move in the right direction. How do you deal with failure? You ask one of life’s key questions- What is this here to teach me? What am I supposed to learn from this? Instead of asking “why this happening to me” ask the question “what is the lesson I am supposed to learn from this experience?” You are likely to go through the difficulty faster and easier if you do not fight it but instead mine it for the lessons it can teach you to move on to the next level.

Oprah’s final tool is happiness. She asserts that happiness is achieved by two very simple processes: let the past stay in the past, it has no power over you and the second is giving back to your community. How do you deal with your past? You acknowledge it exists, you forgive yourself and others where applicable, and you move forward, towards the new opportunities presented by the now and the future. You cannot move forward successfully if you carry around baggage. Make peace with yourself and others where possible and move on. To greatness.

Process number 2 is giving back, service to others. Oprah states that her own experience has been that when she is low and she encourages someone else who is low she then finds herself feeling better. When you experience rejection and show acceptance and love to someone else in the same situation then you are bound to feel love and warmth despite your situation. Psychologists call this the “helper’s high”- the high we get when we give. You do not have to be rich to give, you can give what you have currently which is your time, skills, and physical strength. Volunteer at a local children’s home, hospital, Sunday school. Take time to learn some peer counseling skills and listen and offer counsel to your friends. Carry out a story book reading session with the younger children in your neighbourhood and expose them to the beauty of imagination. When you give back your life, job or whatever you are doing it becomes a gift, a gift that you can keep on giving. Oprah says this about giving- it brings joy, happiness, and adds value to the giver. Tool number 3 is happiness which is equals to forgiveness and giving.

This forum’s theme “Seizing Transformative Opportunities and Powering the Vision through Innovative Technology” captures 3 critical elements of success mirrored in the two stories I have shared with you. That is opportunity, vision, and innovation. Steve Jobs and Oprah Winfrey not only seized opportunities that presented themselves but they also sought opportunities in what many of us would see as failure. They seized those opportunities by being creative, innovative; doing something that only they can do better than anybody else. They created a niche in the world for themselves. This is what innovation is about.

Let me now take a few minutes to address pupils who are here with us today. Since I returned to Kenya and assumed the responsibility as Vice Chancellor of KCA University three years ago, I have given a lot of speeches about our education reforms. I talked about responsibility a lot. I have talked about teachers’ responsibility for inspiring students and pushing you to learn.

I have talked about your parents responsibility for making sure you stay on track, and you get your home work done, and don’t spend every waking hours in front of the TV, with friends or on the phone. I have talked about the government responsibility for setting high standards, and supporting teachers and head teachers, and turning around schools that are not working where students are not getting opportunities that they deserve.

But at the end of the day, Nakuru High School system can have the most dedicated teachers, the most supportive parents, the best students in the world and none of it will make a difference, none of it will matter unless all of you pupils fulfill your responsibilities, unless you listen to your parents and grandparents and other adults and put in hard work, that is what it takes to succeed. This high school will not make a difference if that does not occur.

What does this mean for those of us in the top leadership of our educational system? First, we need to eliminate the traditional bureaucratic concepts which believe that value is created by administrators to a new innovative belief which states that value is co-created by all stakeholders in the school system. In this scenario, the individual st is inudent is in control to the co-creation experience. Second, eliminate traditional belief which states that teachers and parents interface is the locus of value extraction to the new paradigm which believes that administrators, teacher’s parents and pupils interaction is the locus of value creation.

Lastly eliminate the classic paradigm which focuses on value chains and quality of internal process to a new thinking which focus on the quality of schools and citizen interaction as the outcome of value based services.

To finish off, I want to read out a quote from one of Dr Martin Luther King Junior’s speeches. “Not everybody can be famous but everyone can be great because greatness is determined by service…”

Go out there and be great! Thank you and God bless.