Developing a Global Edge
Give us wings and see us fly

Every Year, the Wings To Fly program offers secondary schools scholarships to top performing pupils ranked in top fifth percentile in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exams, who are economically and socially marginalized from every district where Equity Bank has a branch. The Wings To Fly program caters for their secondary school education including tuition fees, text books, uniforms, shopping and pocket money. It also takes the beneficiaries through a leadership and mentorship programme that aims to unlock their potential as leaders. Through the Annual Leadership and Education Congress, we connect them with leading lights in business, politics and other spheres so they can aim even higher. Because we believe where you come from must never determine where you are going.
Editorial

Dear Scholar,

Welcome to The Mentor Magazine issue no 3.

How does a young person develop an edge in a world that is becoming increasingly competitive? How does one ensure relevance and authenticity? How does one become a responsible member of the global community? How does one successfully compete with the best in the world?

The world is changing at a rapid pace. There are amazing new discoveries and innovations—all designed to bring efficiency and convenience to our everyday lives. What works today could be obsolete in a few short years. What does this portend for the young person? It means that to remain relevant, to be competitive, there is need to align oneself with the times; to develop a broad mindset and curiosity that will ensure you are malleable to new trends and insights.

Kenya is renowned as an innovation hub, with companies and individuals developing new technologies and products. Many are invariably referring to Kenya as the Silicon Savannah because of cutting edge innovations. There is every indication that Kenya will continue to play a pivotal innovation role in the region and continent. Indeed, a number of international technology companies have relocated their regional offices to Nairobi.

The reality however is that other countries in the world are also pitching their best in ICT development, science and agriculture. A young person in Kenya is therefore not only competing with peers in Africa, but in Brazil, China, America, South Africa, India and elsewhere in the world.

In a sense, the world is a classroom.

Africa is considered the new frontier; with a vibrant youth population, increasing literacy levels and a focus on developing good leadership, the continent is projected to remain on a high growth trajectory. The question for all young people is, are you preparing to take part in this revolution?

Former US First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt once said: “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” What are your dreams for the future? What actions are you taking to get to where you want to be, as a student or as a young professional?

Throughout this edition of The Mentor, you will hear from renowned experts and professionals drawn from an array of fields including ICT, Public Service, business, academia and entertainment. They addressed close to 5,000 students who attended the 3rd Equity Annual Leadership and Education Congress held at the Kenyatta University in August 2012, whose theme was Developing a Global Edge.

These stories offer insights into how others have achieved greatness and how you too can. They are an invitation to greatness, a call to ownership and responsibility to be everything a young person could possibly be; to have the edge that will set you apart.

Enjoy and let these articles inspire and motivate you in discovering and exploiting the greatness in you!

The Editorial Team
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Positioning Yourself for Personal Leadership Roles

Life Demands Preparation

There is no pain that is perpetual. Pain ends with achievement and that’s what we need to appreciate. However, you can choose to do it the other way. It’s for you to choose whether to invest your time and forego pleasure for the four years in school and have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits for the rest of your life, or have pleasure for the four years in school and most likely regret for the rest of your life.

It’s all about choices. That which you can conceive, if you can execute, you can achieve. There is nothing you can conceive that you can’t win. When I won the Ernst & Young World Entrepreneur of The Year Award (in June 2012), it didn’t come easy. The competitors included the biggest manufacturer of microchips; the world’s biggest ship builder from China and an entrepreneur from Mexico who is the 34th richest person in the world.

This was one thing that I was committed to do. We had worked for many years in socially and economically transforming lives and livelihoods of our people. So I practised for almost a month to prepare for the contest, practising in front of the panel tasked with preparing me for the contest. For the next one year, I would enjoy the pleasure of being the Ernst and Young World Entrepreneur of The Year.

Pick the mantle
There is nothing you can’t achieve but you must know what the price is. No river can be blocked permanently; no matter what you do it rises to the level of the blockage and it overflows. That’s how human nature is built; you give it a challenge, inspire it to conquer the challenge and it rises above the challenge.

You are talented youth and you should make a difference. In 1998, we as Equity Bank felt the need to be agents of change in our country. We therefore decided to invest in the most gifted students who naturally have the potential for leadership, and we started picking the best girl and the best boy in the districts we operated in, investing in them, expecting that by the time we had a critical mass of them in positions of leadership, then they would deliver the dream we had of being agents of transformation in the country. So far, we have over 1,550 of them.
It has taken us so far 14 years—pain for 14 years but I am sure by the time we reach 3,000 of those transformational leaders, this country will not be the same. It will be in the hands of very well prepared, well meaning, gifted and highly exposed leaders who will have found a purpose of leaving the society better for mankind. It’s not always that you will sit in the shade of the tree you plant, but for us, I believe if we won’t sit in the shade of those great leaders, our children and grandchildren will.

We realized that our society wasn’t equitable enough, it wasn’t inclusive enough. As we analyzed the data of the students we were getting—we were getting a few from the high class in our society, the bulk of them from the middle class but very few from the lower classes in the society.

We realized we weren’t creating an equitable society. So we decided to create another generation of leaders who would work hand in hand with the transformational leaders but they would be social transformers, and social transformers could only come from those who are disadvantaged. And that gave birth to the Wings to Fly. In the next 9 years we will have 10,000 transformational leaders. We thank our main partner The MasterCard Foundation with support of UKaid, USAID and Kfw who have made this happen.

Keep your eyes to the ball; what do you want to become? Whoever doesn’t know where he is going can never get lost. Each of us must have a goal that he wants to achieve. Don’t think of a goal that to a great extent has a monetary value; yes it will be part of the achievement, but any goal that has a monetary value is not a goal worth living for because you can easily achieve it and once you achieve it, then life ceases to have a meaning. You must have a goal that is larger and bigger and greater than yourself; that’s when you live a meaningful and purposeful life because that goal becomes a lifetime goal.

Reinvent yourself

Change and realize that change is brought by reinvention. Keep reinventing yourself. Your past is the past. Focus on the present, and most importantly, the future. How can you reinvent yourself? Reinvent your psychology and your mindset to the new reality so that you move on. Majority of us get stuck—physically we might be present, but mentally we are stuck elsewhere. Change is brought by creativity and innovation.

You are too gifted to reduce yourself to the level of an average human being. You must acknowledge that you are destined not for the average but for the greatness of our society. That’s where compassion comes in, you will not be able to have larger than life goals if you are not compassionate, because then you become self-centered.

Start thinking and creating the future that you want, because the building blocks start today. The first block is character and values. Behaviour forms culture; it is informed by values. It’s very important that you embrace the right values so that you start depicting the behavioural trends that will endear you to others because your success will depend on how you relate with others.

It is through your character and value systems that you earn respect. Respect is not given, it is earned. You must learn to focus on what is important. For now it is your education. It is your performance and track record that will open for you doors of opportunities and set you apart from the rest. Everyone gives way for the best!
Success Can Become a Habit

It's hard to prepare for success if you don't know what it means. The Oxford Dictionary offers two meanings of success. The first definition is that success is the attainment of fame, of wealth and social status. The second is that it is the accomplishment of an aim or purpose.

Many people in society define success probably using the first definition. When you think of musicians, artists, actors, politicians, business people, you think of their achievements. Their achievements may have brought them fame, wealth, celebrity and status. All of these things are to be celebrated, because their success can also inspire us.

But what I found more fascinating is the second definition that talks about a defined purpose. This definition is exciting because it means that each one of us can define what success is. If you go on a trip but you didn’t know where you are going, it would be very difficult to know whether you have arrived at your destination. Unless you define success for yourself, you won’t be able to see your own accomplishments and you won’t be able to direct your motivations and your effort.

Success is a choice

By defining success, you can act on it. And by acting on it, you can realise it. This is a leadership lesson. Success is a choice. Just take a moment and think about it: what is success to you? Is it about completing secondary education? Is it about going to university? Is it about getting your first job, maybe you first paycheque? Is it about supporting and helping your family? Maybe it is about getting married and starting a family.

All of these are possible. They are possible milestones and they would be very significant milestones in a very successful life and a very successful career. But I believe success is much more than a series of goals because our goals change. They change over time, as we grow up, as we mature, as we start to experience the world.

Values

Our own opinions about what success is also change. That is important to know because the world is also changing. Success has a lot more to do with our values, which in turn inform us about the changes and the choices that we make.

Let me share a little about my life’s story, and I’ll relate it to making choices. I grew up in Malaysia in a town called Ipoh. I was a beneficiary of scholarships through university, and even graduate school. And when I finished my university degree, and got my master’s degree, I joined the United Nations. And after a couple of years, I joined a very large multinational, a very large company which took me around the world.

Two years ago, I joined The MasterCard Foundation. I love my job because this work does not feel like work. In fact more than anything else, this job has taken me around the world. It has brought me into contact with very inspirational people, and has also given me some sense of understanding of how to interpret the world. My definition of success has changed over the years. When I was in secondary school, I defined success as about getting the best grades in the class. By the time I joined the business world, I defined success as getting a promotion and being recognised by my boss and by my peers.
Those things were important at that time because that success came with some rewards and the rewards enabled me to look after my family, to look after my mom, to be generous to my friends and in some cases to be generous to strangers who had needs.

Often times, in very quiet moments, I would ask myself: ‘Is this it? Is life just a series of boxes to be ticked or is there something more? One day I answered the question and I discovered something very important for myself. I was successful by the first definition -- by society’s definition. I had responsibilities, I had the ability to influence a lot of people and so by society’s standards I had achieved. And when I thought about it, I realised I had achieved but I was no longer emotionally and intellectually connected to those achievements and to that definition of success.

What used to be very important to me was no longer important to me. I came to understand that there was something much more profound. It sounds very sentimental. I always encourage people to think about the value of empathy. It is the ability to connect with people, the ability to appreciate someone else’s situation, somebody else’s feelings. For me it was empathy that started to create a direction and it started to create conditions for how I would define success and what I would do next. It was actually more than a connection. It is a connection to family, but it is also a connection to the world and to people I may not have the chance to meet. To me, my measure of success became what my contribution is going to be during my life.

Journey to success

All of you know that Wings To Fly is about creating conditions, creating experiences, to begin you in your own journey to success - however you might define it. This program is more than a program it’s about not just learning from your school, not just learning from your mentors, it’s about encouraging you to think, to think for yourself. To explore ideas, to seek input, but also to create spaces and to ask yourself what path do you want to take. We have hopes for you, great hopes actually that you will achieve great things but it’s up to you to define what that greatness will be.

I’m going to share three questions which I usually ask myself when I have decision to make and I hope that you will maybe use some form of this question when you have a decision to make. So the first question always is, ‘What’s most important to me? The second question is ‘Am I satisfied? Am I fulfilled?’ And the third question is ‘Could I do more?’

Remember that life is a journey and as you go on this journey, you will be transformed. But part of this journey is also about thinking about the talent and the strengths and the gifts that you have and the experiences that you have; about not only how you’ve been transformed but how you can transform the world.
You Are The Future of Africa

Let us talk about our continent. You are a citizen of Kenya, an African country. Many of the problems you face here are faced in other African countries. You, the young people of Africa, are the future of this continent. You are the future of Kenya.

Africa’s recent past has not always been very good but now things are changing. The ’80s used to be referred to as a lost decade for Africa because most African economies performed very badly. On the political front, there were coups and civil wars. In economic terms we actually regressed. We had made some progress in the independence decade of the ’60s, and we continued to make some progress, though less dramatic in the ’70s, but somehow the ’80s were a bad period in our history. But now things are changing.

On the political front, in the ’80s, only a handful of African states had democratically elected leaders, but today there are about 25. In the ’80s most African countries registered negative economic growth rates, but today African countries are registering positive economic rate.

In fact, seven of the fastest growing economies in the whole world are in Africa. Majority of African countries are registering respectable growth rates from 3% upwards. That shows that we can achieve, but it takes leadership. And our leaders at present are doing the right things.

Of course, challenges remain: we still have to work harder, manage our affairs better, utilise the resources at our disposal more appropriately, more optimally than used to be the case in the past.

I have been involved in Aids activism. That is because Aids was a great shock to us as Africans. We bore the highest burden of that disease but we have largely overcome, although not yet conquered. We have at least stabilised the situation. We have converted what was a killer disease into a chronic one. We are making progress in preventing mother to child transmission.

However, we are not yet out of the woods. That is why the group to which I belong, called “Champions of a HIV free generation” goes around the continent reminding and requesting our leaders not to disengage because new infections are still taking place— and we have made progress on this.

We are also making progress on governance, including the management of our electoral practices. Nowadays, a number of our leaders rule for a given period and leave, so that we have peaceful changes of governments. That is good. That is what is needed and that is why we are making progress.

We must concentrate on the things that matter such as education and training for you, our children, on whom our future rests so that we can develop our countries, exploit the many resources of our countries for the benefit of all. And that is where you come in. You are being educated; you are the future of this country but also the future of Africa as a whole.

You are going to be leaders in different walks of life. There are a number of attributes leaders like you should have. One, you must have the courage of your convictions, and practise what you believe in, even if others laugh at you or ridicule you. You must maintain an open mind to enable you to adapt to different challenges over time. In other words, you must avoid bigotry and must have a clear path in your mind.
You must persist and persevere, because as they say, Rome was not built in a day. When you are a leader, you determine to achieve a certain objective. You have to work hard and consistently towards the attainment of that ultimate objective. Now that some of you are only beginning your secondary schooling, you are going to have a couple of years where you are going to have to work consistently, towards passing and graduating from secondary school so that you can go to university. Whatever you choose to be, you are going to have to consistently work hard, declare in your mind what it is you want to achieve.

I have known poverty, hunger and deprivation. During the third year of my schooling, my father abandoned us and disappeared to another part of the country for over 15 years. He came back when I was already a graduate.

I only got educated because my mother persisted and persevered, and I worked hard. During my primary school days, I used to work in the afternoons; during my secondary school days, when I was at boarding school on bursary, again I worked. I faced exactly the kind of situation that many of you have faced. With patience and self-application I am sure you will succeed.

One other attribute of leadership is integrity. It is not only self-enrichment. Of course you are entitled to live in comfort, to be rich and to live comfortably - it is alright to make money for yourself through honest hard work. Wealth must be accumulated with integrity and above all if you are a leader, integrity is very important and so is compassion.

Compassion enables you to put yourself in the shoes of other people. That way, you are better able to appreciate why they are acting in the way they are acting, and that they are entitled to the good life you may be having.

Today and for the future, we want leaders who have integrity, leaders who have compassion so that they care and worry about other people’s welfare. Those are some of the distinguishing characteristics of a leader. They have to be patient, they must be determined and they must work hard.
Seize The Moment

Age and time are some of the greatest things you have. At age of 15, you have many years ahead to accomplish your dreams; at the age of 35, you have less time, at the age of 50 not so much.

You have the advantage of age, you have the advantage of time and you the advantage of a lot of support that will be given to you to ensure that you can make your lives worthwhile, that you can make a mark on Kenya, that you can leave this country a much brighter place.

Principles for life

Let us look at some principles of life:

Principle number one: Only you are responsible for your life. You must take 100% responsibility for your life. You take responsibility for your life at the stage you are at. You cannot be successful by making excuses, you cannot be successful by looking for scapegoats, you cannot be successful by failing to do that which is expected of you. If you fail to take responsibility what happens is that there are consequences that arise from failure to take that responsibility.

One thing you must remember is that you are where you are now because of the accumulation of the actions you have taken in your life so far. You must continue to take those similar actions and decisions and continue to take full responsibility for your actions because when you enjoy the reward, you enjoy it yourself and you enjoy 100% of it. So, remember that bad actions, bad decisions result in bad consequences while good actions and responsibility mean fantastic success.

Principle number two: Be tenacious, persevere; nothing in life is easy. When we walk into a room we click on the light bulb and light comes on, but we never think, who made the bulb? Many of you know Thomas Edison the man who discovered electricity. Stories are often told about the number of attempts and trials he made before that one light bulb became a success. It is often said that he tried over 1000 times. When he was asked why he didn't give up, his response was: ‘I now know 1000 ways that don’t result in getting a bulb’.

It therefore means you have learnt lessons, you know what doesn’t work and that’s important in life as you persevere. Become tenacious; you fail, you fail again, you fail again but ensure that those mistakes that you made will never repeat and you become a better person for it.

I graduated as a teacher and I went to teach at Kenya High school. I am not cut out to be a teacher and like many other young persons do, I left my job without any prospects of another. Meanwhile, I got a scholarship, went to the University of Nairobi to do my Masters degree and found out that they wanted me to do something I was not interested in so I promptly gave up my scholarship. I remember going to this building that had 5 conservation organizations.

The first organization I went to was the African Wildlife Foundation. They looked at me young, green and a C.V. that had very little. Nothing else to show, no experience and they told me I didn’t qualify.

I left and I went to the World Wildlife Fund. They looked at me and told me to come back in a few years and then I went to the third and to the fourth and to the fifth.

By the time I got to the fifth organization, I had a strategy: I was not going to walk out of there till I saw the boss because in all the other four, they didn’t even let me through; they just looked at my C.V. and shunned me.

I was told he wasn’t in but would be back after two weeks. I insisted that I wanted an appointment with him after he came back. I kept calling and they would pick the landline and it would be that young girl again, insisting she wants to see the boss for a job. Eventually, after many calls and visits, I got an appointment.

When people tell you to go away, don’t go away. When people tell you that you are not good enough, don’t believe them. Three months later, I had a job. Tenacity pays, persistence helps and eventually it makes people think, look and check on your attitude and come to believe you have something to offer. I urge you to be persistent, to be tenacious and do not be persuaded that your dreams are not important dreams. Pursue them with single mindedness and you will be successful.
Principle number 3: Ask, ask, ask. It sounds simple but many of us fail because we refuse to ask. There are people who have been through the same life journey you are going to go through; there are people who have solutions to what may seem like very big problems to you, but to them they have simple solutions.

There is no shame in asking, you should not be fearful of asking. If you ask and you don’t receive, ask again. Go to another person, seek a solution. If you are rejected, so what? It’s just a rejection, it’s just a No. In life, there must be YES and there must be NO and you must be ready for the NO answers when you ask and you must treat them with the same generosity and with the same response as the YES answers.

Principle number four: Practise, practise, practise and of course practise means you are acting on something, because you have a goal that you want to realize and achieve. You must practise and perfect in order to get where you are going.

Look at Olympians Usain Bolt or David Rudisha. How did they get to be such legends, such winners? Those guys have raw talent, strong will and a desire to succeed but it’s not enough; they have to act on their talent, they have to act on that desire.

Like them, you have a talent and I hope you have found it and if you haven’t, you must keep seeking it, you must look for it. Because talent is a real good foundation for the success we make in life. Similarly you need to practice in order to achieve mastery in your academic work.

Principle number 5: Your life must be guided by deep principles and values. It doesn’t matter how well you do in life if you have no principles or values, and if you don’t develop the right habits that carry you through life. Somewhere along the way you will fail.

We must practise principles and values, deep abiding principles that will carry us through life; principles of integrity, honesty, humility, gratitude and thankfulness because those are among the things that will make our success to last. If we practise these values, our happiness will be assured.
How can we make the issue of nutrition a goal of national development in order to enable citizens to actually enjoy socio-economic prosperity?

In the year 2000, world leaders committed themselves to achieving what has been commonly known as the Millennium Development Goals. The first one was calling upon all the actors to pull together forces in order to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Today we are only three years from the finish line and I am happy to share with you that there is evidence some countries are making progress. However, there are a number of countries whose progress is inadequate meaning that some of the communities are still suffering extreme hunger and poverty.

Today I’d like to focus on only one of those factors that I believe is behind the slow progress that we see in some countries. Nutrition is one of the factors impeding the achievement of development goals and social economic wellbeing of people. Nutrition is intimately related to development. An effective leadership needs to look at how our development programs factor in the issue of nutrition. My Executive Director Anthony Lake once said that, “nutrition is an essential element of every national plan and it should be as critical as having clean water or as indispensable as education.”

The most important thing to understand in nutrition issues is how it affects people, especially children and population at large. Severe, acute malnutrition in simple terms is called wasting. Wasting is a condition in which a child does not have the weight that it should have at their age. Another condition that is very common among children is what is called chronic malnutrition or otherwise called stunting. While wasting refers to having a low weight at your age, stunting is having a lower height according to your age. Stunting starts before birth and is caused by poor maternal nutrition during pregnancy. In other words a malnourished or poor nourished mother has the likelihood of giving birth to a child who will have low weight or who may become stunted. Another form of malnutrition is what we call micro-nutrient deficiency. This is when you don’t have or don’t take into your body adequate micro-nutrients like vitamins and other micro-nutrients. For example, iodine deficiency and other deficiencies that could lead to anaemia.

I would like to point out that we are increasingly seeing another form of poor nutrition in developed countries which leads to over nutrition or obesity. Obesity contributes to diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis and certain cancers associated with obesity. It is a result of poor quality high-fat high-sugar diets combined with inadequate physical exercise. We will see how this actually links to development and social well-being of a people either individually or collectively as a nation.

Science has proven to us that malnutrition is the cause of more than half the deaths among children before the age of five. What actually happens is that if a child gets malaria, pneumonia or diarrhoea and they are already in the status of poor nutrition they are at two or three times higher the risk of dying than normal children. So children between the age of 2 days up to 5 years are very vulnerable and fragile and they stand the risk of dying especially if they are under nourished. So malnourishment or poor nutrition is no longer considered just as an indirect cause, it is also considered a direct cause of infant or child mortality in many countries.

It is not easy to diagnose the micro-nutrient deficiencies and that’s why we talk of it as hidden hunger. There is of course visible hunger and many people are victims of this and also a form of hidden hunger and that is the one that makes the issue of nutrition very complicated.

Kenya has a vision to become a middle income country by the year 2030. That’s a noble and laudable vision. To achieve this dream, we need to invest in our children; in their education, their access to clean water and more and more in their access to good nutrition.

Because I know you are the future leaders, you are the ones who are going to be grappling with this issue today and tomorrow so we need to lay the foundation for what is ahead of us. Scientifically, it has been proven that a child who suffers from anaemia performs poorly at school because they feel very tired. It has been worked out that if we eliminate anaemia from among children, we are able to increase their productivity as adults by between 5% and 17% and therefore increase GDP by 2% among the worst affected countries.

Studies have shown that iodine deficiency can cause a child to lose up to 13.5% IQ points. Iodine deficiency also creates other disorders.
Your children will be better students when they grow up because they will not be suffering from stunting.


Out of all the five year old children that we have in this country, 35% are stunted. This is about 2.8 million children in the country. These are the children that we will be sending to school a few years from now. We have statistics that show that vitamin A deficiency is affecting up to 84% of children in this country, 73% of children have some levels of iron deficiency and 51% have zinc deficiency. In addition, 60% of pregnant women and 16% of adult men who are working are suffering from anaemia. Estimates now suggest that malnutrition is costing the country, the government of Kenya Ksh147 billion annually. If we are talking about developing and sustainable development we cannot afford to make these colossal losses.

In terms of under weights, out of the 19,000 children alive today, 10,000 are passing away due to lack of vitamin A. These are mortality numbers; children who are dying in every year in Kenya. Breastfeeding children from the day they are born up to six months save lives and it is unfortunate that 11,000 children will die because they are not exclusively breastfed.

Research done by John Hopkins, USA, the London School of Hygiene and other universities, and published in Lancet shows similar effects of breastfeeding your child. It is very powerful. If I can now speak to future mothers and I don’t want you to rush into becoming mothers because we want you to be great, fruitful and powerful leaders tomorrow. But the day you are blessed with a child, please breastfeed that child for six months without alternative feeding. A child does not need anything else at that age.

Good nutrition is important. We must invest in good nutrition because it’s good for physical growth, it’s good for behavioural development; it’s good for cognitive functioning. Proper growth is based on what we take in as food. Good nutrition is good for school attendance; in other words you have more children coming to school because they are fed. You will be aware that many organizations and governments have invested in school feeding programs and it’s important to maintain that. Good nutrition is good for school performance. Good nutrition reduces the risk of diseases and if you do not eat well you cannot perform well. Ultimately income generating capacity and economic development are closely related to good nutrition.

Those of you who are planning to become doctors, you have a very key role to play in the future as you look after poor children who are malnourished and you treat them and help them, while the agriculturalists need to produce food that we need. We also need people who can provide clean water because hygiene can be a cause of poor nutrition. If you don’t have clean water you will not enjoy the benefits of good nutrition. So it is actually an issue.
Giving Back to Others Builds a Strong Foundation for Success

Kenya’s future depends on you, and you have the ability to shape it into the kind of Kenya that you want and deserve. At USAID, we are happy and proud that we can partner with The MasterCard Foundation, Equity Group Foundation and others to give each of you this opportunity of education and leadership.

The Bible talks about the wise man who built his house on the rock. Why did he build his house on the rock? So that it would have a strong foundation and would not crumble. Today, as secondary school students, you are building your foundation, your rock, for the kind of life you are going to live. And your actions today as young people will shape the kind of man or woman that you will become and the kind of future that Kenya will have.

So will your foundation be strong, or will it crumble? Now is the time that you are learning to be fair, to be kind, generous, to live with integrity, to lift others up. If you can build your life on a strong foundation now in school, with your friends and your communities, you will stand strong when bigger challenges and obstacles come your way and try to knock you down.

Leadership is not just about doing things right, but doing the right thing. And you know the right thing doesn’t always make you popular or rich, but the right thing will set you apart as a true leader.

One way that you can build your strong foundation is to give back to others. I’d like to tell you a little bit about how USAID scholarships work and where these scholarships come from. We get our money from American taxpayers; these are regular people—moms and dads, people working hard every day to make a living for themselves and for their children. When they pay taxes to the American government, some of that money is put into USAID so we can help and support youth like you. So the American taxpayer wants to know that you appreciate what you are receiving but they also want to know that you are making the most of it, not just academically, but are you doing things for others, to lift them up, and to make Kenya the best place it can be.

Find ways to give back by helping others, whether it’s in your school, maybe tutoring somebody; whether it’s in your village, wherever you think you can make a difference. Another way to start building a strong foundation right now is to start learning by doing. Listen to your mentors and put what you learn into practice through leadership positions or volunteering, community service, wherever it might be, just learn slowly by slowly by doing it yourselves.

Don’t look down on any opportunity that presents itself. No matter how small it might be, you don’t always have to take the big, prestigious positions. You can learn from nearly everything.

Let me share with you about my life. I started out in some pretty humbling jobs. I used to load boxes onto trucks, I used to deliver pizza, I used to pull weeds and do gardening for my church. Even though those things were not glamorous, they taught me important life lessons such as the importance of hard work.

One of my very best experiences was also one of my hardest. When some of my friends in America were getting good jobs and starting to get good money, I decided to give up all that and decided to pursue the Peace Corps. This is a volunteer organization where Americans go and volunteer around the world.
I was a volunteer in Uganda. I lived in a very small village with no running water or electricity. I got around by foot and by matatus. These were all things that were very different for me and were somewhat difficult. I had challenges because I wasn’t used to the new environment.

I persisted. I kept going. I finished two years in this village and I fell in love with it. I learnt many important life lessons from it. Because of my experience in Peace Corps, I ended up getting the job that I have today. But I took the difficult road to get there. Peace Corps was not easy, it didn’t make me rich or famous, but it taught me many lessons. It taught me to take chances, the importance of serving others, the importance of lifting others up. Most importantly, it taught me not to be afraid to fail.

I wish all of you great success. You are already on your way there, but remember that life is not just about success. It’s about finding joy and happiness in what you do and bringing that joy and happiness to others.

USAID is supporting 3,000 youth in Kenya with scholarships through the Wings to Fly program to provide the education, training, and mentorship that they need to succeed.
Be Yourself

I got into Form one in January 1964 at about the same time as your grandparents. Kenya had just become independent in December 1963. The government of the day decided to look for and pick out a number of boys and girls, give them scholarships and send them to schools that were specifically designated to wazungus at that time. I found myself in a school called Delamare School. In Form One, virtually all my classmates apart from one or two were wazungus. I had come from a little school called King George VI now called Mbagathi Road Primary School near Kibera, I had a number of challenges especially in conversations and following lessons taught in English which I was not very fluent at.

And then they got us to learn other languages like French and Latin. I remember that in these languages, French and Latin, I failed! I tell you this story and I could tell you more; to make a singular point; that at a time of transition, at a time of great changes in a country, a lot is demanded from the young people of the country as we are expecting of you.

At what age do you realise that you are not a part of your mother? At what point in life do you realize that you exist separately from your mother and that you are a continuous consistent human being? At what point in life do human beings start putting themselves into categories such as we are Form Ones, we are boys, we are clever or we are Kenyans? My presentation is about the development of a self-concept. What is a self? Who am I? What am I? Through what method do I come to the conclusion that I am Frank Njenga currently talking to the leaders of this country in the future? The answers can only come through a process of examination.

There is however another form of a deeper question. Why am I? Why do I exist? In his abundant wisdom and mercy, when the good Lord created me, why did he create me? Did he create me so that I can die or did he create me so that I can make a difference in this particular world? These are very complicated questions but the bottom of it all is that you have to know who you are.

Some of the most famous men and women like Maslow were brought up in extremely poor and vulnerable backgrounds. Abraham Maslow was an interesting boy, his teachers and lecturers called him mentally disturbed and worthless. Sometimes your own teachers, parents and neighbours might not understand you, as in the case of this man, that in fact part of the reason why he was disturbed was being excessively clever. Being very rich is a good thing but being happy is critical. Even as we struggle as children or adults, it is critically important that you understand that you will achieve and own that which will give you not just richness but also a measure of happiness. I am suggesting to you that you must find in and within yourselves a higher reason for living. Work hard to be wealthy, work hard to be well educated but equally work hard to be good people.

It is critically important to know why God created you. This is what the Bible has to say about depression; after all the hard work that I had done, nothing was gained for as long as I did not know myself and who I was. This is the conclusion in the book of Ecclesiastes; everything is meaningless; pleasures are meaningless, wisdom and folly are meaningless, toil is meaningless, riches are meaningless. Does that mean that we give up? Does it mean that our creator made a mistake? Not at all! I hold the view, which you too can hold, that your worth as a person is based on your intelligence, your greatness or how hard you work; it is enough that I am a perfect creature of creation.

The rest of my presentation will be about you. You must allow yourself to settle in Form one, two, three, four, at the university and in life. Although you are a perfect creation, you will make mistakes. I have made mistakes. You will continue to make mistakes but you must allow yourself to forgive yourself for those errors. The important thing is that each time things don’t work for you, you get up, brush yourself, learn from the experience that made you fall and get on with it.

Allow yourself to accept that some people do think differently from you. It is therefore important as you go through life that you appreciate that different people have different ways of working. Therefore understand yourself and if you realize you are like Marc Zuckerberg, who needs to discuss things all over, then create discussion groups and enjoy coffee and tell stories as you study.

Another thing we don’t often do is that we don’t reward ourselves. We all do good things. The important thing is to remember that you are worthy of rewards. Rewards do not have to wait until you are adults. You do not have to wait until the end of the year or term. You can, you should and must reward yourself.
It is critically important that you understand that you will achieve and own that which will give you not just richness but also a measure of happiness.

Dr. Frank Njenga - Behavioural Expert/Psychiatrist

What is commitment? Commitment requires that you act even if it is not comfortable to do so. You cannot say that I will only study when I have nothing else to do. You cannot say you will only do your homework when you are not busy visiting your relatives. Commitment requires that you act both when it is convenient and when it is not. The foundation of success is built in moments when no one else is watching. Success is built in moments when the only policeman around is yourself. What you do in those moments is a perfect measure of who you are. But if you always wait for the teacher, the prefect, the parent to watch over you in order to exhibit good and positive behaviour, then I promise you will fail.

I also want to persuade you that there are some things you must avoid. The technical term for this is cognitive distortion. You must accept that things might sometimes go wrong but don’t let things go wrong all the times, you must know that you have a measure of control over events. Like the weather, there are some days that are good and those that are bad. You must understand that at different times we might perform differently because sometimes the external environment, the weather or the internal environment is not right. The critical thing is to remember that the challenges will be there and must be faced.

The other issue is the value of physical fitness. The time to start taking care of your body is now and not tomorrow.

In addition, you have what I call personal rights. These are rights that must not be taken away by me, the government, your teacher, your neighbour and even by yourself. You are entitled to respect. You are an independent human being who must be respected and it is a demand you must continue to make wherever you are. You are entitled to be trusted if you are trustworthy. Whatever relationship you are in with your teachers, parents, classmates and others, you must cultivate an environment in which you are trustworthy. I say so because I am a doctor. In a lot of homes that are run like prisons, everything is locked up because you cannot be trusted to be sensible. Everything in school is locked up behind bars. Well, you must create a situation of trust.

Happiness is a God-given right. Search for happiness whatever your business is. You will only find this happiness by deliberately and systematically finding out who you are. You are also entitled to love. Like trust, people will love you if you love them.

Remember this is your country; accept the privilege and responsibility of being a very proud Kenyan. For example it is my duty to see if I can help you aspire to whatever goals you have because of all the gifts I have received from this country including a free education of a very high quality. My coming here is my duty to you and this republic. It is a great privilege for me.

Finally don’t try to be Frank Njenga or James Mwangi or Mwai Kibaki or your teacher or neighbour. You have every right to be yourself, full stop!
I want to talk to you about the lessons that having kidney failure taught me and how those lessons have helped me find purpose in life. I came across a quote that says that, “Sharing your story is not the only means of influencing people, it’s the best means”.

What I hope you will learn from this is that every single one of you has a unique purpose; and that’s why God created you exactly the way you are. Only you can become a first rate version of yourself and not a body copy of somebody else and the opportunities that you have been provided with are to ensure this. The challenges you have gone through may make you doubt your purpose, that is nothing more than fear and discouragement. It’s not your portion.

I grew up having asthma yet I loved my sports and it was very challenging to participate in sports due to my condition. I remember swimming at swimming galas with my inhaler at the edge of the pool, so that if I had an attack I would have medicine at the other side.

I remember collapsing during a sporting outing and had to see the doctor who said to me, “there’s something wrong with your kidneys”, but he couldn’t tell me what it was. I was 15 at the time, and they kept telling me they couldn’t tell me what it was until I was 21. When they finally found out what it was, they told me I had a condition called Lupus.

Lupus is a condition in which your immune system, instead of protecting your body, attacks it, and for me it attacked my kidneys which led to kidney failure.

I travelled to the U.S. to visit my sister who was living there at the time, and I went and looked up the Lupus Foundation, I went and met the doctor, who asked me, “have the doctors told you that you have a problem with your kidneys?,” He could tell simply by looking at me, I said yes and he said, “Here’s a book on Lupus and kidney failure. I told him my kidneys won’t fail but he said, “even if they don’t, please read.”

The first lesson I learnt is that information is your friend; you need to have information. You have been given access to knowledge and information. The only thing that will give you an edge in this world is what information you gather to become a better person. It’s what you do with that information, and that was my greatest lesson. Information became my friend; I became an expert on my condition, because it was my body. It’s me who knew how I was feeling.

The next lesson I learnt is, you always need people to support you. I know some of you have come from very challenging backgrounds. But you are here today because your teachers, your sponsor, your guardian, parents, the Wings To Fly partners believed you are the generation that can make a difference. They are standing by you because they know the value of that education; it can take you where you need to go. Those are your warriors. Those are the people who stand by you and support you through challenges and difficult times and give you the opportunity to change your destiny.

The other thing that for me stands out as the biggest challenge is the words people say or speak about your situation. So you would have people who would look at me and say, you are sick, we can’t give you a job, even after I had gone through the transplant, “oh, she’s sick, she can’t do this.” They made decisions for me.

In the same way sometimes people you interact with will say things about your situation that are negative. I am here to tell you one thing; your circumstance is not you. Where you are now is not where you will be tomorrow; you are not your circumstance. Don’t you ever let anyone judge you by where you are now, because it’s what you are doing now that will decide where you will be tomorrow.

Author Deepak Chopra says: “You are not your story; you are the author of your story, the actor, the director, but you are not your story.” You will not stay there. I am not Lupus, I am not kidney failure; I am Lorna Irungu Macharia who does very many things regardless of what I go through.

Imagine where you will be five years from now. I didn’t think I would live to be 30; my doctor had told me that I would be lucky if I had 20 more years and at some point, I believed him because he was the expert.
It is 15 years later - I am still here. Because at some point I told him, no, that’s what you think, I don’t think that, I believe I will be here for a long time. I made that decision, and I refused to let the negative things that were said overcome me. When somebody told me, well, we don’t think you can work for us because you are sick, I said, okay, I went and found somebody else, and I worked for somebody else.

I remember going for dialysis, I needed money, it was Ksh 70,000 shillings per month. And I went to look for a job and was told we can’t hire you because you are sick. And Kiss 100 had just opened and Caroline Mutoko called me and asked me, “What is this I hear they have refused to employ you, because you are sick?” I said yeah, that is the story of my life.

And Caroline said, “come over, we are starting a new station, come run my news desk”. And Caroline Mutoko made it her mission to wake me up every morning because you have to be up and at the station by five. And because she knew I was tired, she would call me and pick me up and take me to work with her.

The other thing I want to ask you to do is to challenge yourself. You have been told to read. Books open your mind, open doors, make you dream big. I hope you all read, enlarge your mind, enlarge your territory and not just for science and passing, but for leisure; because you can, because you have the ability to.

I started blogging recently and my first blog is titled ‘Hello Fear’. The reason that I titled it “Hello Fear” is because I truly believe that the only reason that stops us from being remarkable is fear. And fear starts in your mind. You think of all the negative things; how you might fail and how things might not work out for you. I needed to tell fear goodbye; I needed to tell you no longer have a place in my life, and it’s been a long journey for me to say that. And so, whether your fear is I will not pass my exam or I am not good enough. You need to say goodbye to fear because that would truly change your life.

My favorite quote is by a lady called Marianne Wilson, and it goes: “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate; our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure . . . Your playing small does not serve the world”. Do not play small; you are incredibly blessed to be here, because I can tell you that we went through school without anyone ever having put up together mentoring sessions for us. I have gone out to seek people, to introduce myself to people and to seek their help and we have become friends and they have mentored me.

I want to leave you with this one thought: everything that you are going through right now and where you are at right now is where you need to be. I wish you all the best and God bless.
The U.K. government is committed to try to help all children in Kenya not only get an education but ensure it is a quality one. The Government of Kenya has made huge strides through the introduction of free primary education in trying to open up opportunities for all children in Kenya but we know there are still one million children who are not in school.

I just wanted to highlight three brief messages from our experience as the U.K. government in supporting education in developing countries around the world.

1) Education is the best possible investment that any government can make in its future. And that is particularly the case for girls.
2) Focus must be on the quality of the education, not just the quantity.
3) There needs to be new partnerships in delivering improved educational results. We need partnerships which involve the private sector.

What you will need in the 21st century is the ability to think for yourself. Not just to repeat what has been taught to you but to develop your critical faculties, to be able to make your own decisions, to challenge received wisdom, to work out what’s best for you, your family, for your community. Studying is not just about absorbing information, it’s about learning how to think, and how to think critically.

My second piece of advice is don’t study too hard. My own educational experience in school and when I was at the university was a constant balancing act between my studies and all the other things which I wanted to do. I directed student plays, I edited the school’s newspaper, I raised money for charity, I got involved in student politics, I did a whole host of other activities which I wasn’t graded, which didn’t contribute to my final mark. But in the educational system in which I studied, the ability to get engaged in a wide variety of different things beyond your academic studies are considered a very important part of getting around at education. Leaders are not just academically brilliant, they need to have interpersonal skills, and social skills and they need to be able to adapt to a wide variety of different circumstances. So you need to leave time in your day, particularly perhaps your Saturdays or Sundays, not to have your nose in your book but to do all those other things that will make you well rounded leaders going forward.

I am very proud that the U.K. government is here alongside Equity Bank, one of the most successful Kenyan private sector companies, The MasterCard Foundation, a world renowned private sector company, and of course the Government of Kenya who must take primary responsibility for the education of children in Kenya.
“Studying is not just about absorbing information, it’s about learning how to think, and how to think critically.”

Alistair Fernie - Head of DFID Kenya

The third piece of advice is to learn from many different adults as you can. As you grow older, the number of adults who are prepared to give you advice on what you should do with your life gradually expands. You start off focused on your parents, your extended family, your teachers. They will all give you a certain set of advice. My father, who was an accountant, was heartbroken when I told him when I was sixteen years old that I didn’t want to become an accountant. I don’t think he was giving me the best career advice. My mother, who was a primary school teacher, gave me what I thought was better advice which was that I had to find my own way. You need to keep your mind open. You do not know what opportunities may present themselves to you.

Lastly, on the subject of leadership. My conception of leadership is that it is actually service. Those who lead serve those who they are leading, and you will need to think on what you want to serve and lead.

You have great talents, and you have been given great opportunities. How you use those talents is up to you. I prefer to think of Wings to Fly as a metaphor, not for you being birds, solitary creatures, you can fly up to the sky, but as pilots of planes, your planes can carry a number of people, and with the skills and talents that you have, you can fly them to places that they would never have been to. Where do you want to fly to and who is going to be on your plane? Think hard about leadership and service. These choices are yours to make.
Discipline is an important ingredient you need in life to succeed in all your endeavours. It is critical that each student inculcates self-discipline in all their undertakings.

Why is discipline so important? Discipline teaches us to operate by principle rather than desire. Saying no to our impulses puts us in control of our appetite. Discipline disposes our lust and permits truth, virtue and integrity to rule our mind. When an individual is motivated by great and powerful conviction of truth, then he disciplines himself not because of demands of the church or school or institutions but because of the knowledge within the heart.

Self-respect is therefore critical and indeed is therefore the root of discipline. It brings dignity to the individual. It is absolutely important that as the youth, you set your life goals right and work smart towards achieving them. The youth today are bombarded with drugs, immorality and violence that they see on TV screens and the social media.

The world today has many challenges which do not favour the youth and that’s why it takes one to be extra careful to stay away from the many ills. That is where self-discipline and self-respect come in.

Education is a top priority of the Kenyan government in the social sector according to Kenya’s Vision 2030. Vision 2030 recognises that education is the key to solving problems in other sectors such as health, sanitation and environment. The youth should take up leadership in these areas. Our education system is supposed to train high skills that will staff all the other sectors of the economy. Our education is currently wired towards training more staff in science and technology. This is so because science and technology will be an integral part in training of the youth of this country as we strive to attain Vision 2030.

Leadership towards Vision 2030

There is a difference between leadership and management. Leadership is doing what is right by providing a guidance model and own example of what is necessary and what should be done. It involves all the members of the organisation. Management on the other hand is the act of strictly adhering to the rules that are laid down. As a leader, you should be able to inspire others to do the right thing rather than doing things right.
You could be doing things 100% right but they are leading people nowhere. If your actions inspire others, then you are a leader but if they intimidate and even threaten people then you are a mere manager. Leadership is the art of getting someone else do something you want done. A leader therefore must have a vision and should inspire others and influence others without use of authority.

To achieve Vision 2030 therefore, the youth will have to take leadership individually and collectively to push the agenda of this country to the levels expected by 2030. A leader should be creative and innovative and think outside the box. The late Steve Jobs had this to say: ‘Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.’ If you want to be a good leader, aim at innovating things you see and doing things a little bit differently from normal.

As young people in school, you must strive for success in their areas and take leadership positions in order to propel this country to greater heights. Since you have the opportunity to be leaders in the attainment of the goals of Vision 2030, it is instructive that you always to be focused, diligent, patriotic and have self-discipline and drive as a way of life so that you can help contribute to the social, economic and political development of our country.
Almost forty years ago, I joined Loreto Convent School in Mombasa. When I look back, I have no doubt that the counsel that I got from my teachers and my belief in God have kept me sober, humane and understanding. At every turn in your life, I urge you to consider what role you should play in the plans that God has for you.

When I joined Nairobi School for my secondary education, we had career masters and mentors. To this day, my key mentor remains a personal friend to whom I still go for advice. Edwin Nyutho was not only my mentor, but also my literature teacher, arts director and house master.

Edwin had great influence on me. For instance, with his encouragement, I wrote and directed a play that won at the National Drama Festival. Years later, when Kenya was going through change in 2002, I hosted one of the most successful TV programs in this country, “Up Close and Candid”. I attribute all this to the influence my mentor had on me.

Counsel and mentorship

Here is an example of what counsel and mentorship involved. While in Form Two, my entire dorm started smoking, myself included. We were all sent home to bring our parents. After being taken through a counseling session, we were readmitted to school. And the question asked upon readmission was, “Why did you smoke?” Quite frankly, there was no serious reason other than wanting to do what my peers had done. I did not ask, “What are the implications of taking that cigarette?” I learnt that every action has a consequence.

I faced many challenges as I spent more time with my mentor, particularly peer issues such as relationships and dating. As students, we go through life thinking that our teachers are way beyond the pressure that they are putting on us. But by working with a mentor, I managed to soak in the pressure. I managed to set priorities between my peers and the objectives of my life. I stayed with my peers, I laughed with them, I cried with them, but I knew that my life was to be determined by myself and not others. Edwin continued to be there for me even after I joined university and later when I was employed.

I consider a mentor to be someone who I can pour my heart out to, who can challenge me with regard to what solutions there are or direct me on my career growth path.

Vision

When I joined Deacons in 2003, we only had eight shops stocking one brand. Today we have 35 stores running 10 brands. This success can be traced to the vision I set while I was in my A-levels. It is the effect of the mentorship and the grounding that I got from school.

With a vision, I clearly knew that I wanted to be among the business leaders in this country. That was it! A very simple statement. I asked myself, “What do I need to do to achieve that?” And with the support of mentorship and personal development programs, I have managed to get to where I am.
Do YOU have a vision and what is it you require to achieve that vision? Set a vision and then find out what is required to achieve it. I don’t think I am there yet, I’m still working on it because it never ends. The amount of knowledge out there is way beyond what I have acquired. It is a continuous journey with barriers, challenges and pitfalls, which are overcome through mentorship.

The ability to achieve is not based on the resources you have but on the belief that you can do it. Once you know what you want and you believe in it, don’t worry about the money, the people or anything else. Just pursue the goal and the people and resources will surely come to you. Make a plan, discuss it with your mentor, correct it as you go on and I am sure that God’s favour will be with you.
Age doesn’t matter; you can be successful at any age. But you have to believe in yourself, and you have to do some things now and not later. You have to start now to do the right thing so that you can be successful.

A brand is a mental imprint, a story that is told by a product or service. It’s all about bringing to life certain things so that we can understand them and get excited about them. A brand is a story that makes you think and feel certain things about certain products.

So if a brand is a story, the question is how can you become a brand?

You have to start becoming a brand now. And a brand means that your talents, strengths and everything about who you are be appreciated by the people around you.

Many of us are talented but do not know how to share those talents with other people so that they can be appreciated. You must learn how to share your story with other people so that they can start to appreciate you.

I started something called Gibebe. It is something that I started as a brand and is also the title of my book which I launched in 2011. Gibebe stands for IMAGINE, BELIEVE, BECOME. The letters GI come from imaGIne, BE from BElieve and the last BE from BEcome. That forms the word GIBEBE. The pronunciation is Swahili for ‘carry yourself’. It is your responsibility to take charge of your success.

The first thing is to imagine. We all have dreams. Do you think you are capable of achieving that dream? So imagining is knowing that you have a dream, writing down that dream and making sure that you do what you need to do to achieve that dream.

The first time I started learning about who I am, I was in form three. My grandfather, who I was very close to, told me, ‘I know you have something special that you are meant to do with your life. But I’m not sure that you realize it.’ He said, ‘You have a crown on your head.’

Owning the crown
Your crown is made of all the things that make you successful, your personality, your talents, your strengths, all the things that you have that can make you successful. But unless you realize what your crown is and embrace that crown then you will not achieve what you were meant to achieve.

You have a crown on your head. Remember your crown is made up of your talents, strengths and your personality. And you have to take that crown, embrace it and do what you need to do to succeed. If you don’t believe you have a crown, and you don’t believe in yourself, how will you make the rest of the world believe in you?

The first step in knowing who you are is to realize that you have a talent, that you are a leader and to step up and begin to take charge of that leadership. I was in school when I began to take charge of my own things. I became a prefect in school, I became a chairlady of a committee in school, all because I was embracing what my grandfather had told me. I started to read a lot of books.

Ask yourself what you need to do to show that you are a leader and to succeed. Knowing who you are is being self aware. You understand yourself and begin to share that with people. How do you understand yourself? You have to place yourself in situations that teach you more about who you are. Get involved in different activities so that you can discover more about who you are. Whether it’s in sports, drama or being active in class are some of the things that will help you discover more about who you are.
Joyce Mbaya - Founder of GIBEBE

It is your responsibility to take charge of your success

Power of vision

There’s a quote that says, “We are happy when for everything inside us, there is a corresponding something outside us”. It means that when you know yourself, then you can truly be happy because you can express that to other people. This quote means it is important for you to know who you are because you will be happy when you know who you are and you are able to share that with other people in order to be successful.

After knowing who you are, the second step is to have a vision. Success is a journey not a destination. As a young person, you do not wait to be successful; success needs to start now. If you have a dream, start acting on your dream now. Believe in yourself and follow that journey now. A vision means that you have a map of where you want to go. So when you write down your dream, keep reminding yourself about it whenever you feel discouraged. It will give you the strength to go on.

Vision is perhaps our greatest strength, it has kept us alive to the power and continuity of thoughts throughout the centuries; it makes us peer into the future.

A few years ago I had the chance to participate in a TV show called “The Apprentice Africa”. I was the youngest person on the show and for me to go there, it was because I had a powerful vision. If you start having a powerful vision now, it means you can achieve some of the things that I achieved at a young age. That is how powerful a vision can be.

I believed in myself and I had a vision, so I was able to be selected out of so many people, to compete and be selected to be part of this great show. It really changed my life. So if I can do it, so can you.
I work for Kenya Red Cross, a humanitarian organization formed through an Act of Parliament in 1965 as a national organization. I was born in 1959 at a place called Modogashe in Garissa. My parents died when I was very young and I was an orphan at the tender age of five years. I was adopted by a family that did not come from my tribe or community. I was happy to be adopted in Mombasa where I grew up. Because of growing up in a different environment, I did not learn or speak my mother tongue.

Being an orphaned child did not deter me from succeeding in life. I started working with the Red Cross way back in 1973 when I was doing my high school. I decided that I wanted to be part of the President’s Awards Scheme. I had to learn first aid to earn my bronze medal and to do so I had to go either to the Red Cross or St. Johns Ambulance because those were the two organizations that were officially recognized to train in First Aid.

I went to the Red Cross in March 1973 when I was in Form One. I continued to be active at the President Award Scheme and in 1977 I earned a gold medal presented by the founding father of our nation the late President Mzee Jomo Kenyatta.

**Fulfillment in service**

From initially doing a First Aid course, I was asked by the Red Cross leadership then whether I wanted to be part of the wider activities of the Red Cross in a Mombasa local branch, where I became a member.

I had to do intermediate First Aid so that I could become a member of Red Cross Youth Club of which I was a member for about 11 years. It is here that I spent most of my free time doing community service.

I can therefore say that I started working for humanities at a very tender age and I look back to those years and see them as very important years in my life. I have been with the Red Cross for more than 40 years initially as a volunteer but now as a paid staff.

Today the Kenya Red Cross is the largest humanitarian organization in this country. It has about 64 branches countrywide, 6 regional offices around the country and around 60,000 volunteers. These are people who are members, who volunteer their time free of charge and they do not ask for payments.

We have about 1,200 paid staff who work for our programmes all over the country; it’s a big national organization. Other core activities of the Red Cross are disaster management, health and social services, water and sanitation and in the area of organizational development.

Kenya Red Cross has been the number one partner to the government of Kenya since independence in the area of social mobilization. We go to schools, colleges and to the public to ask them to donate blood regularly. We do dissemination and counseling sessions and ask people to donate blood and then the Ministry of Health and the National Blood Transfusion service take the blood. You actually grow healthier, stronger by donating blood. You do not become sick nor less active. 60% of the blood collected in this country is through mobilization of the Kenya Red Cross. This is something we are very happy to do.

Another programme that we have started working closely on is drugs and drugs abuse. This is a major problem and it is something that is affecting schools across the country. We do not need to lose leaders of tomorrow through this condition—which is a major problem especially along the coast region, Nairobi and all major towns.
Kenya Red Cross like many other organizations in this country was mismanaged about 10-12 years ago. I want to say this without fear of contradiction that Kenya Red Cross was mismanaged because of poor leadership. It’s all about leadership. As young people, you should embrace leadership not only for tomorrow but even the present because people like to say that youth are the future generation, but young people are leaders even right now.

I would like to advice you on image. Image is important; your personal image, credibility, integrity cannot be compromised, once compromised it is finished. Ten years ago, Kenya Red Cross lacked professionalism because they couldn’t afford professionals. They did not want to do the right things.

One of the major things I managed to transform at the Kenya Red Cross was the efficiency of emergency services. We used to say that we are the largest ambulances private owner, yet we only had 5 ambulances. In a period of two years, we now have 31 ambulances and about 7 more on the way. We are in 16 towns today; my dream is that by 2013 when the county government begins, we will have a minimum of 1 or 2 if not more ambulances in every county.

I would urge you to dream, aspire, have a vision and see how you are going to fulfill those dreams. Ask yourself, what would you require today to be where you plan to be in the years to come? If you want to go to University, what do you require to get there? What grades do you require in your Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examinations? And what area of study, is it Law, Medicine, Journalism, Engineering or Finance? By answering these questions, you start preparing- you are your future now.

When I talk about this to my children they always tell me “we cannot do this it’s hard, it’s difficult, it’s boring”. I tell them the word ‘cannot’ should not be on their dictionary. Everything is possible in life. Regardless of where you come from, you can do it as well.

The journey is never going to be easy. It’s going to be bumpy, daunting, challenging, full of pitfalls but these challenges should never let you turn back or give up. You should keep on moving, believing in yourself that you will be successful at the end of the day.

You must take control of your destiny and never take the opportunity you have for granted. Take it with two hands, take it like an egg, hold with two hands and don’t let it drop. Ensure it hatches and delivers the results that you would like to see.

“Everything is possible in life. Regardless of where you come from, you can do it as well.”

Dr. Abbas Gullet – Secretary General, Kenya Red Cross
Habit is that thing that you do often and almost without thinking, especially something that is hard to stop doing; the usual behaviour of an individual.

Achievements in any sphere is habit-enabled. If you want to do anything, if you want to achieve, you must form the correct habits that will enable you to achieve whatever you are working for. Useful habits make a person; you are who you are because of the habits you display.

It is important to study the habits of scholars because brilliant minds with poor habits are valueless. If you score an ‘A’ and yet have crooked habits, you can be sure that your brilliance is valueless.

The quality of an education system is measured by its ability to produce graduates with life skills; right skills for application. The central role of any education system, particularly that of Kenya is that it’s character formation.

Aristotle, a prominent scholar said: ‘We are what we repeatedly do; excellence is not an act but a habit.’ You can only be excellent if you do a certain thing repeatedly, and if whatever you are doing is excellent in nature.

Sieve your company

Habits don’t just happen. The words you listen to result in the kind of feelings you tend to harbor in your mind so that the entry, the starting point of the habit that you will form is what you are listening to.

If you are listening to positive people, people who are encouraging, then you find that you form good feelings in your mind, and good feelings lead to good thoughts. So the kinds of words you listen to, the literature you read, the kind of books you read, the people you listen to, are they saying things that encourage?

If you are a person with good habits, working hard in school, doing the right thing, respecting the rules of the school, then you form the right habits and this leads to your destiny.

It’s very critical therefore for you to understand that you have the opportunity from the beginning to associate with people who say the kind of things that will lead to good habits. You can block out negative friends who discourage you from achieving the goals that you have set for yourself. Always ensure you only allow the correct things into your mind; good images, good thoughts and good expectations.

Scholarly habits that work

1. Understand the goal. If you are a good scholar, you must understand your goal. You must constantly feed your mind with images, information, thoughts, and even read literature on your goal.

The drive created when somebody has a clear understanding of their goal creates a mental picture in the mind producing a burning desire to accomplish the goal and the benefits to be derived are more crystallized. You see the benefits more when you set a goal.

2. Self Discipline. The exercise of self discipline is pursuing one goal at a time. If you are a student in high school, this is not the time for you to start looking for girlfriends or for boyfriends.
3. **Optimism.** This is the habit of expecting good things; the habit of ‘yes we can’; the habit of ‘I will remove my parents from the slum; the habit of ‘I will educate my brother’; the habit of ‘I will make it in school, in spite of hardship’. People who are optimistic do not invest their time or emotional energy into things they have no control over.

4. **Planning.** A good scholar must plan. For one to plan, they must have all the information. They must visualize the activity from where they are to where they are going. As a good scholar, you must understand where you are, and where you are going, and plan your life; you must always know the challenges that are there.

5. **Set goals.** You must set goals; the big goal is what you want to achieve. Scholars understand the power of goal setting and the fact that human minds are goal-seeking like a compass. If you don’t set a goal for your life, your mind will not take you there.

Scholars set high standards and goals for themselves, resulting in very high achievements for their lives. When somebody is goal-driven, they can’t be distracted. If you set a goal and you are working for something, there is no way you are going to be influenced by your peers to do the wrong thing. You can only fall victim to peer pressure if you have no goal you are working for, so you must set your goal because your goal removes you from the danger of being distracted.

6. **Team work.** Good scholars understand the power of teamwork; they understand that you achieve more when you study in groups. When you share, you get more than when you are alone. Habits that will determine your destiny and therefore your legacy—the only thing that you will be remembered for long after you are gone.
I note with pleasure that the number of scholars under the Wings To Fly program has continued to grow since I launched this program in 2011.

The introduction of free primary education in 2003 was a clear demonstration of the commitment of my government to give Kenyan children a strong foundation in education, and prepare them for their future roles in building our nation.

Significant improvement in access and retention at the Primary level has been recorded as seen in the numbers that sat the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exams in the year 2012.

Kenya’s Vision 2030 gives education a central place under the Social Pillar. Access to quality education is the surest way to promote inclusivity and equity in accessing opportunities and resources.

It is through education that we shall, as a country, develop the human capital necessary to move our country from a developing country to a middle level economy.

I have been particularly encouraged by the close interaction that has been growing between the private sector and the education sector. This partnership will no doubt positively influence the relevance of education to the private sector.

We are happy with the programs that Equity Group Foundation and The MasterCard Foundation with their partners UKaid, USAID and KfW have put in place to promote and support access to education by our youth.

Let me also commend the Ministry of Education for the pivotal role they have been playing in supporting the Equity Group Foundation in their education.
endeavours. I take note of the great work done by the District Education Officers in chairing the Equity Group Foundation District Scholarship Selection Boards.

This is very commendable as you are taking your rightful role in giving guidance in education matters and helping to ensure that this program benefits the most eligible children.

"Extract from the key note speech delivered by the 3rd President of the Republic of Kenya, HE Mwai Kibaki when he commissioned the 2013 class Wings To Fly scholars. The former President also presided over the commissioning ceremony of the 2012 class."

The 3rd President of the Republic of Kenya Mwai Kibaki poses for a group photo with the 2013 Wings to Fly scholars, various stakeholders and partners.
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WHEN I JAV I TAP!
What lies ahead of us is within our power. Within us we have the power to build a great future. Within us we have the power and the potential to be great leaders. Your past has nothing to do with your future.

It doesn’t matter what people would say of you. You are God’s special gift to this world. You are special in God’s eyes.

We are all created for different reasons. There are doctors, there are physicians, there are teachers, there are engineers; all sorts of people. The only person who knows the story is the builder.

What is success?
The word success stands for;

1. S - Select your goal.
What is your goal? What is your purpose? Each of us was created with a purpose. What is your purpose?

2. U - Unlock your potential.
In each one of us there is so much unexploited potential. At the moment, you’re only exploiting 10% of your potential. There are very few people in the world who utilize 25%. Those are the people we call geniuses. How much of your potential are you exploiting?

3. C - Chart your course.
When you came into this world, there was a purpose for you and every single day, there is something you are aiming to achieve. There is something you are working towards, whether becoming a teacher, a surgeon, an engineer, whatever you’re aspiring, it is important to chart your course.

4. C - Committing yourself to your creator’s plan.
Nobody in this world came by mistake. So we need to commit ourselves to the greater plan even though we may have our own plans, but ultimately, God is the one who plans.

5. E - Expect problems
Starting from where you live, to the people beyond your family that you’re going to be interacting with, you will find problems. When you encounter a problem, use it to propel you to higher grounds.

6. S - Stand firm on your commitment.
You must be committed to your purpose. You must have a drive, a passion, a commitment to your plan.

7. S - Surrender/Submit yourself to your creator.
There is only one person who can stop you from becoming the person that God intended you to be and that is yourself. You are the reason for your failure. It’s all about you, because within you, you have the power to make the right or the wrong decision. Your attitude is your greatest altitude. If you choose to be cynical, if you choose to be negative, life will be negative around you. Choose to have a positive attitude. A positive attitude is infectious to the people who hang around you.

Principles of making destiny decision:

1. Check your course
What is your purpose? What is that one thing that you do that ignites power, strength, excitement, joy, and happiness? You need to identify your purpose. Behind every great accomplishment is a purpose and behind every enduring experience is a purpose because purpose puts the seasoning. It excites you; it gives you a fresh start. Purpose is going beyond the ordinary and doing extraordinary. The difference between ordinary and extraordinary people is purpose. What does purpose mean?

P – Pray more than the ordinary person.
A purpose is so huge. It is a great accomplishment that you want to exploit; it is something that you have a passion for.
U – Unite more than the ordinary person.
You are an eagle. Eagles fly with other eagles. They don’t interact with sparrows, chicken and other birds. They fly at higher levels. They are very visionary birds and they fly with other eagles at the same altitude. Whom do you hang around with? You have to interact with people with whom you share the same purpose, the same goal, the same aspiration, the same ambition.

R – Risk more than the ordinary person.
You must be willing to take a risk more than the ordinary.

P – Plan more than the ordinary person.
You need to plan. Alan Lakein said “Failing to plan is planning to fail.” You have to plan more than the ordinary person.

O – Observe more than the ordinary person.
Observing would mean identifying more with the needs of the people around us; their struggles, their issues. It is being able see another human being not with our naked eyes but to see the need in that person, to empathize and to feel for that person.

S – Sacrifice more than the ordinary person.
Sacrifice means going the extra mile. Being able to say that I am able to do this within 10 minutes but I believe by talking to this person or by doing this job for an extra 30 minutes makes a difference in my life.

E – Expect more than the ordinary person.
It is important that we constantly work towards giving the best; much more than we can ever think of.

2. Chart a course.
Any road can lead you anywhere as long as you don’t know where you are going. Your destination is in your hands. You have the power to know where you are going. Keep checking your compass to ensure that you’re not flying to grounds that you are not supposed to be in.

3. Attitude is everything that you ever need in life.
As long as you have a positive attitude you will make positive actions towards achieving your course. Your attitude is your greatest strength. Make sure you hang around friends who are positive and who give positive energy to what you’re doing. Make sure you hang around people who inspire you; people who move you out of your comfort zone and help you exploit your potential.

Consider your creator.
It is not the education experience or competence that helps you achieve your purpose, but it is only through Him who created you that will strengthen you. God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond all that we can ask or think.
Can you picture yourself in four years, five years time? Or even ten years time? Build a mental picture of exactly where you’d want to be; because that acts as a guide to you.

If you are traveling from Nairobi to Meru, and you don’t have an idea of which road to take, what will you use? You will use a map. It will ensure that you will not be distracted. Have a clear picture of where you want to be. Once you have that long term goal, you will find it very easy to achieve that goal because distractions will not be presented to you. You will have that clear idea.

**Passion**

The second thing is to have passion in what you do. Enjoy your studies. Have a passion for them. Don’t just study for the sake of exams. People who have a passion for what they do, usually excel in what they do.

If you don’t have passion, you don’t have an interest, you don’t really care, then it’s going to be extremely difficult. But if you have a very strong and powerful passion, a strong interest, everything will be easy. You can spend hours and hours on that particular subject area. So develop passion and it’s just a matter of the mind.

You can have the talent, but you have to have that mental strength. And a key foundation of that mental strength is having the passion and having the interest. It would be very difficult to break a world record if you don’t have that mental strength or if you think everything is impossible. Think of everything as possible and be passionate, strongly passionate about it.

The third thing we should all have is teamwork. Teamwork, study groups, learning from each other are important because what you learn from each other sticks in your mind. Giving back to the community is also important, the more you share, the more you get. So there’s nothing wrong, and in fact there are many benefits you get from sharing.

To conclude, have a very clear picture of where you want to be and strive hard. Remind yourself of these things each and every day and am sure you will achieve your goal.
I came from a very poor background and I am proud to say so. I came from a typical African family with 11 siblings and my father retired before I went to high school.

I grew up at Jericho, Jericho-Lumumba area of Nairobi and I used to walk to school sometimes without breakfast. I know what it means to stay without food, not to get your school fees, not to plan on what you are going to do next.

I joined Starehe Boys’ Centre in 1967, and I will never forget the late Dr. Geoffrey Griffin (Director, Starehe Boys 1959-2005) because he actually took me through the University of Life.

There are a number of lessons I learnt in school:

1. Everybody should be able to make a mistake but you are supposed to learn from it and move from there.

2. Time. I was taught that time is the only thing that you cannot save. Once it is gone, it is gone! It is not about looking at the clock. You must plan to use your time so that it benefits you. There must be time for everything. You must have a timetable and say this is the time to read, this is the time to go and play, this is the time to go and pray.

3. Be satisfied with what you have. Do not feel that your colleague is better than you in any way. Respect each other based on human value. This is extremely important.

4. Dedication: In order for you to succeed in life you must be dedicated and you must aim high. Set high targets. If you don’t aim high, then know you are not going to succeed.

You must have a goal in life. You must prepare yourselves to do what you want to do, whether it’s music or whatever profession you want to pursue.

It is what you do with your life that is important, not where you were born.
I want to share my own story, my journey.

I went to a school in Nairobi called Kilimani Primary School. It doesn’t seem long ago and I remember how people used to tell me that I look bad. Basically it was just tribal stuff. But as I grew up I began to have this intense belief in myself. As you go through life there are always going to be people whom I call negative wizards.

Negative wizards are also called ‘Yeah Buts’. Yeah Buts are the people who say ‘yeah but’. When you have a great idea; when you say let’s innovate, they say ‘Yeah but’.

Rise above negativity

There are negative wizards out there who don’t want you to grow. When you start innovating or start becoming a pioneer, when you start doing things differently, when you start standing out and get the best looking car they want to always pull you down.

What we are talking about is how to build a consistent moral fabric of your own personality that will make you weather the storms. Don’t think there is something wrong when you are attracting problems. It is not in attracting the problem where the problem is, it is in how you react to those problems. How do you look at people and judge them if they do something that you don’t like? How do you look at the world? Do you look at the world and believe that everybody is good or bad? You must have a fundamental difference on how you look at the world.

When I went to America to study, I didn’t have enough money and so I used to work in a kitchen. I would go to study or go to the laboratory when I was so tired but I still made it through. There are opportunities in life that you will get to test yourself. God doesn’t give you anything that he knows you can’t overcome.

God made you all perfect. Be careful with the things that make you not perform because a lot of them are in your head. If you want to be successful or if you want to innovate, it is not just having the ideas in your head. All ideas are free and anybody else could have them. Innovation is about execution of the idea.

When I left America I came back to Kenya because I believed in the youth and thought that there are very many ways to transform the people in this country. But when I started a business, there were a lot of people who said that was a bad idea while others said that it would fail.
However, even Harvard School [check which school] has now come to our company and written a case study wondering how this thing is succeeding in Africa. We innovated and created a company that nobody had seen before.

We decided to innovate when people were starving, we created a help line that runs year after year and assists those who lack water and food. We have innovated with The Kidney Foundation, a call centre, so that people can call and get solutions if they have problems. We have another solution for farmers and they can call if they have problems.

We saw how America was changed by young people, especially in the election of Obama. We saw how China and India were changed by their young people and we asked, why not Kenya?
The cheetah is the fastest animal in the world. Let me give you some statistics and compare them with who or what we are. First, the cheetah can run up to 120 km per hour. It can run from zero to 100 km per hour in three seconds. Average amount for an experienced driver or a rally driver is about 5 to 6 seconds. The fastest car, a saloon car, takes about the same time. So a cheetah is very fast and it is fast because its prey is very fast; Thompsons gazelles and hares are very fast animals.

The cheetah fascinates me. But the thing that disappoints me is when I see a cheetah in a cage in the park. This particular animal is safe everyday food is brought to it and it doesn’t run for its food. If this animal is sick, it is treated by the veterinary officers there. It is in a comfort zone and it will never actualise its potential in running and catching its choice food.

In the situations and circumstances that you find yourself; maybe some of you are in a comfort zone, maybe some of you have never decided to take a challenge to be who they are or where they are. Maybe for you things are just easy and you are not necessarily dreaming or daring to be something bigger than yourself.

I am going to explain to you, using the example of a cheetah. In that comfort zone of a cage, when you leave your current circumstances in school, you will be faced with many challenges and if you stick to what is safe in many ways. You may never realize your full potential. I want to suggest to you that possibly the reason why people don’t succeed in life is because they are afraid of failing.

Demystifying failure
The first myth of failure is that failure is an event. That is a myth. It is not true that failure is an event. If you face bad experiences, when you do not pass an exam or a test, it doesn’t mean that you are a failure. It does not mean that facing one bad experience or not meeting one particular goal or expectation that you are a failure.

Let me give you one particular example. In my experience working with young people, I got to know two young people, Daniel and Sheila who are twins. I got to know them when I was pastoring in a church. Their parents died of HIV/AIDS when they were still in high school, one of their brothers also died of HIV/AIDS and yet another one disappeared and just never communicated.

These two young people had an attitude that in as much as they had been given a raw deal in life, they were determined to succeed. In their determination, they worked hard through school and graduated. I had the privilege of being at Sheila’s graduation last year. Her brother has a job today and has a positive attitude towards life. These young people did not look at the bad situations in life and say they were failures. Failure is not an event it is an attitude of the mind.

The second myth you have heard is that failure is an enemy; that failure is a bad thing, that not to accomplish is a bad thing. Failure is not an enemy. We can learn from our failures. We are not perfect but we strive for perfection.

Third, failure is not final. Some of you may have made bad choices in life. Nobody is beyond redemption. There are opportunities to make right what has happened to you.

When I was in high school, my grades weren’t always good. But the interesting thing is that when it came to extracurricular activities like sports, I was active in Rugby swimming, football, hockey, tennis and also in creative arts such as music and debate club.
Failure is not an enemy. We can learn from our failures. We are not perfect but we strive for perfection.

Gowi Odera - Pastor / Social Entrepreneur

I remember my teacher one day telling me that I would never amount to anything!

Around the end of second term in Form Four, it occurred to me that school was about to be over. So for the next ten weeks I applied myself to school work.

After high school, I applied to colleges in the USA. One of the colleges wrote back with an application form for me to fill, and in it, I was required to indicate what I did in school outside academics. When we sent this letter, the college wrote back and said that they were going to give me a scholarship because they had seen a leader in me.

Those were people who had never met me. But when they assessed my involvement in the social and community life of my school, such as being the chairman in some clubs, they said that this is a leader. I had taken leadership positions in my life before but I want to tell you that for the first time it dawned on me the kind of leader that I was.

Indeed as much as I did not get as many ‘A’s as many of my colleagues did, I got much more when I was invited to go to a school on a leadership scholarship. We have known of academic scholarships, athletic scholarships; I was admitted on a leadership scholarship! Somebody believed in me and did not see a failure.

Always remember that failure is not final.
My father became bankrupt when I was finishing my 'A' levels, so there was no possibility of advancing my education after I finished my high school.

There was no one to take care of things, so I didn’t go to university. I went to Strathmore College on a Ksh 10,000 loan my mother took.

I saw my friends going to university and when I went back home, I found that my mom had sold all the property, was living in a four by six foot room, with only the gas cooker remaining from all the other assets, and my father had abandoned the family, I cried.

But I asked God to give me the strength to take care of my mother. We started slowly, through hard work; sometimes working up to midnight and overnight. We managed to raise approximately Ksh. 50,000 with which my mother set up a little pharmacy shop.

Because of the suffering I had endured, I decided to dedicate myself to teaching people, being available for youngsters and to serving society and God.

That is how I started my life. I now have my doctorate in Political Science and my area of teaching is Ethics and Governance.

**Focus on vision**

In 2002, after my Masters degree, I helped start the School of Finance and Banking in Rwanda. In 2004, I decided I wanted to touch a few of the leaders in this country, so I asked my Vice Chancellor to start the Strathmore Business School, I told him that I wanted a business school of international standard. I did not have money, neither did the university have money but God gives. So I started working. If you have a vision, God will provide you with the means, although not without the sacrifice necessary.

The worst thing is to lack a vision. I started Strathmore Business School in 2005 and I signed partnerships with some of the top universities in the world including Harvard Microeconomics of Competitiveness, Department of the Kennedy School of Government, the Lagos Business School and the Gordon Institute of Business Science in South Africa. How did I do this? I had a vision, I had passion to do what I wanted to do and I went out to do it.

I was fortunate to have studied with diverse people from all over Kenya. I would like to tell you that it is important to appreciate people of all types and characters and to love your country. When I was in Form Two I was asked to go the United States on a fully-paid trip, I said, “No. I love my country and I am going to stay here.”
Because of the suffering I had endured, I decided to dedicate myself to teaching people, being available for youngsters and to serving society and God.

Dr. George Njenga - Deputy Vice Chancellor, Strathmore University, Research and Quality Assurance

Love everybody; not only the Africans around you but also people from other continents. Everybody must be part of you. You must remember that in a few years’ time, you will be the people sitting in leadership. May you never have differences because of ethnicity.

I would also like to tell you to be honest, to have integrity and never to steal or cheat and to always be committed to your word. Keep your word always.

One of the most important things I have learnt in my professional career is excellence. Whatever you touch as a professional, do it like the best in the world. Never leave anything half done! And try to make those people around you work equally hard. And if this is costly, because you are going to lose friends, please do lose bad friends. Keep only the good friends in your life.
I’m a Teen Member
Why I love my Teen Member Account:

- It helps me save
- I get my Teen Member Card
- I’m trained on how to manage my money

Open your Teen Member Account today
A lot of times when I listen to news or read the newspapers, or listen to people speaking in groups, I hear people saying a lot about the problems that we are facing.

The reason I went into entrepreneurship or the reason I started a business is because whenever people are talking about problems, that is a sign of opportunities. What all these big companies including Equity Bank, did was to respond to problems that were not being addressed.

In my day to day work, I found that most of the time people will complain about the government or they will not be very happy that every small business they deal with is not as efficient as the corporates.

I provide software solutions that automate government functions and I also provide software solutions that automate small businesses. The reason I have picked on those is because that is where there are a lot of gaps when it comes to technology. When I studied Computer Science at the University of Nairobi, one of the things that people asked me is where I would work after graduation because everything was manual.

One thing that is very clear today is that we have one of the greatest opportunities as a younger generation to actually transform what is remaining to be transformed. The older generation, which we may say are the people who were born in the 40s, 50s, 60s have been creating what we are using today. What needs to be used in the next twenty years is definitely going to be created by the generation that is in school today and the generation that is leaving our universities today. And there are a lot of innovations you can create to solve problems that make a lot of things inefficient around school, in life and in businesses. It is about looking at a problem and actually solving it.

Relevant innovation

What I would like to add about innovation is that one of the biggest challenges I see every day as I interact with other young people who are trying to build tools to respond to various technology needs is that people are not looking at building products that people can pay for.

Apple company made a lot of money from the iPhone because people thought it was a good phone, it was a very good smart phone and they were willing to part with their money and pay Apple. But if you build a technology or you build an application and nobody is willing to pay you for it, then it means your application is not responding to a need and it is not adding value to people’s lives and therefore they cannot get money out of their pockets to pay you.

So that is one of the biggest challenges you would face as a young person. This means you have to identify the problems very well and ask, when I solve this problem the way I solve it, am I going to get paid for it? Are people going to accept to pay for it? Would you pay for the same?

My view of the very near future is that anybody in school is very advantaged. When I was at school, I wanted to do architecture because I had never seen a computer. Eventually I chose to study computer science but one thing I knew was that even if I did not become an architect, being a computer scientist, I would probably find it very easy to do designs on computers because everything was going to be computer-aided.
The greatest opportunity that you young people have is that there is more technology around you and therefore you can leap frog. These are the opportunities for young people, so when you see a computer or a phone, get curious and try to find out what it is and try to think what you can do with it to solve everyday problems. Most of the solutions that are created in Kenya are solving problems in the region; that means we have access to the African market.

I hope to see very many young people believing in themselves and actually going out there to create solutions that create value, make lives easy, make businesses efficient and make government better at serving people. That is the technology that everybody is looking for.
Changing Africa’s Future Through Innovation

When you innovate you are part of the transformation of the society to become what you want. I know many of you have great ambitions to change this society. The change in this society is already espoused in our Vision 2030.

The theme of the Vision is to have a prosperous and competitive Kenya. The prosperity has been defined at an average income of $3000 per a person per annum yet right now we are still at $800. In eighteen years, most of you will be in their early thirties and will be expected to drive Kenya at that level of income. Kenya on its own will not reach there. It requires each one of you to do well in your studies and being creative and innovative to drive it to the next level.

The society does not just need those who get ‘A’s and rest at that. It requires those who will come up with new products and design services that will make a difference for our people. For us to drive Kenya to the level of income of $3000, remember the other countries are not stopping. They are also constantly progressing.

The country that gave us the inspiration for Vision 2030 was Singapore. Singapore is half the size of Nairobi while Kenya is 582000 km². How therefore can a country half the size of Nairobi be an inspiration to a country that is 582000 km²? There was a generation of Singaporeans who made a difference. That generation has now handed over to another one.

Our per capita income is $800 while in Singapore it is $50000; the fourth highest per capita income in the world. How does such a tiny nation half the size of Nairobi have a per capita income of $50000? When they lacked where to build houses, they went high rise. When they missed where to build an airport, they reclaimed the sea. When they ran out of road network, they built roads under the sea. That is innovation. That level of innovation is what transforms the society.

We are challenging you as young people, “what are you going to do for Kenya in your generation?” Look at the example that the Kenyan population is 42 million and growing at one million per year. The young people who are being born will require jobs when you will be the leaders of Kenya. If we don’t create those opportunities for ourselves, then we are sitting on a time bomb.

Look at the bigger picture
My message to you as young people is that creativity and innovation transforms the society. When we transform our society, it allows us to attract investment, create jobs for our people, create new products for our people, attract investors to our country to invest...
and spend their income here. The challenge therefore is that Kenya is in your hands. Don’t think that you are too young to change Kenya. This country is our hope and we have to spend our brain power to change it and then we will say that we were able to transform Kenya to be prosperous, competitive country whose people enjoy a high quality of life. If we do that then the future generations will judge us very kindly. The challenge to you today is be as innovative and as creative as you can.

Look at one of the most creative companies, Apple. The statistics that were produced last year show that the revenue of just one product, the iPhone was USD 22 billion. Microsoft which was very innovative from the 1970s only got a total profit of $7 billion. You can see that one company just innovated and came up with one product and it is able to make much more profit than the companies that were very innovative in the yester years. It shows that we can make a great difference by just becoming innovative. Kenya sits very well as one of the pioneers of Africa with the most educated black people in the world in proportionate terms. Why can’t we lead the world as the innovators for Africa?

Be innovative and let us transform our society. Let us be the premier Sub-Saharan country in Africa and the leading country of black people to change the world.
Innovation for Change

What is innovation? A new idea or method that is an invention—something that has never been done before. To innovate is to effect a change, to do something in a new way. We would like to move away from business as usual into new things, a paradigm shift.

Innovative change is about identifying a challenge. Smart people identify challenges—you don’t call them problems, these are challenges.

How do we overcome that challenge? It involves creativity. Think outside the box. You must be creative, you must be curious. How did this professor get his professorship at that age? How did Equity Bank CEO Dr James Mwangi win the Ernst & Young World Entrepreneur of the Year Award? How did he start with twenty million, now he is running billions?

Change applies to every sphere of life

Poor leadership that is coupled with corruption that sometimes you cannot think beyond your tribesman or woman or your village is a major challenge. This is something we want to finish.

Climate change is another challenge with global warming adversely affecting the environment while population is increasing. When we got independence in 1963, Kenya had about sixteen percent of forest cover, we are now striving to go back to at least ten percent. And the late eminent scholar and Nobel Laureate, Wangari Maathai was championing this agenda.

Food insecurity is a big and major challenge for us. How do we go about solving it? This is where science, technology and innovation come in. This is where Biotechnology comes in, that you can produce from less to more and coming up with a variety of crops that can withstand drought. Eighty percent of this country is classified as arid and semi-arid whereby you need to have water. You also need to fertilize the land, but with the genetically modified organisms, developed using Biotechnology, we are able to produce a variety of maize, wheat, sorghum, millet that can do with no or less rainfall.

We can use nuclear technology, not just for power but on isotopes to identify ground water sources that you can tap. It is about using our brains and God has created us with the brains.

There is need for bursaries and scholarships to needy students—like what Equity Group Foundation is doing as well as other challenges in Technical and Vocational training. It is very unfortunate that sometimes we look at technical and vocational training as a place for failures. No! We want to strengthen these institutions and have policies that will appreciate people who have got technical training; the technologists, the technicians and others.

The use of ICT to increase access: We are expanding universities, university colleges, but we need to go beyond the four walls and that is why we want to take advantage of undersea cables. We must have each and every school and if possible every child having a computer. The Rwandese have done it.

We need to create more and more distance learning modules. We need to have more of the likes of the m-lab and iLab. May be we need to have county labs. Each and every county needs to have a lab where young people can walk in, express their curiosity, creativity and come up with ideas.

Centres of excellence: We require centres of excellence at all levels; primary schools, secondary schools, middle level colleges and universities; centers of excellence that are going to produce leaders not for tomorrow but for today and beyond. Centres of excellence that are going to look at these science and technology fields—biotech, space science, nanotechnology, nuclear, material science and create scientific advances around them.

Job creation, entrepreneurship and job seekers: We need entrepreneurs; people who are job creators and not job seekers. We all proudly say agriculture is the backbone of this country and indeed it is. Farming is not very lucrative to the young people yet agriculture is the mainstream to the country’s economy with a GDP of about 25%, yet agriculture is just an optional subject in school. I have seen people who have taken agriculture seriously, today they are milk exporters, today they are livestock breeders, today they are flower exporters. This is all agriculture. Within agriculture, you
If we can embrace innovation, we can change the status we are in. The youth must be empowered to exploit their full potential in contributing to poverty eradication, sustainable development at an early age through creativity, curiosity and innovation. The world is not about to slow down because Kenya is behind. We must leapfrog to catch up. We must emulate countries like India, China, Brazil, Russia and South Africa who want to be the top five countries in the world.

You must be the change you wish to see in the world, not just in Kenya. We must conquer beyond borders, we must represent this country in the region of East African Community and globally as well.

Change your heart, change your attitude and change your perception.
Technology Evolution

I work for IBM, International Business Machine, which is headquartered in the United States of America, but has operations in 170 countries. I run operations from our head offices in Nairobi, for the countries in East Africa.

IBM has 450,000 people and makes in excess of 100 billion US dollars a year, so it’s a big company. It started off a small company 100 years ago, and it’s a company that made weighing scales for meat and meat slicing machines.

The company then moved into making typewriters. We were in the business of making typewriters and we came up with very innovative products and discoveries that made the typewriter more efficient. But technology was changing, so we got out of that business.

I grew up in Kenya but I had the opportunity to go to the US to do my Masters degree and I got the chance to join IBM in 1985. At that time, IBM was one of the biggest technology companies. The company had gone through very many changes and we were making big, faster computers using technology that we thought could never end. We were making huge profits.

Be open to change

Somewhere along the way, there were other small companies that were starting up; the internet was just about to start up. IBM invented a personal computer; the first personal computer was called the IBM PC. In fact we decided we wouldn’t even get the patents for it. And then there was a young person called Bill Gates who came to IBM and advised that the PC would function better if it ran on an operating system.

But the company wasn’t interested. What happened? Microsoft (which Gates went on to found) is a much bigger company than many companies. But at the time, the thinking was that the technology was irrelevant.

I was in the mainframe division in 1992 when the IBM Corporation finally realized that losing about 50 billion dollars per year on obsolete technology was not a good thing. The company was about to break down; they fired the CEO and they brought in somebody else to break the company into small units and sell them to other companies. But instead, he restructured the company, got rid of the businesses that were not making money; those that were still stuck on old technology, but kept the core together and IBM became a completely new company.

We make computers and software. We are also in the computer technology consulting business, something we could never have done even 20 years ago. So even big, international companies like IBM have been forced to change, and continue to change, and what it all takes is near-death experience like the one we had to realize the importance of always keeping your eyes open.

And this applies to each one of us as individuals, no matter where you are; in Form One, or Form Four, in college, or as a professional, or a CEO, it is to always keep your eyes open. Look at the trends, see what is happening around you, engage with other people, around the world, around the community, look at what the demands are for your customers, friends or community.
The innovation that will come from places like Kenya will be recognized by big industries, by big companies such as ours. We have announced that IBM will open a research and development lab here in Nairobi; it’s the first in Africa, because of the innovations coming from Kenya.

When I was in high school, I always wanted to be an innovator. Invention in my opinion is limited to a few people; out of the 6 billion people in the world, there are maybe a thousand inventors. But there are many more innovators.

Each one of you can desire to be an innovator just by looking within yourself, around you, applying yourself, applying your skills, applying what you learn in school, from the community, to make a change for yourself and for those around you.

The impact of technology on society is so significant. Facebook took three years to move from zero to the hundreds of millions of people who use it. We are seeing similar trends here in Africa. It’s based on youth who have an important part to play. The fact that across Africa, the number of young people—people under the age of 18—is a much bigger percentage of the total population than it is in the Western world is significant.

That completely changes the dynamics and the balance of innovative power; not financial power yet. It means that the youth will change the society.

“Each one of you can desire to be an innovator just by looking within yourself.”

Anthony Mwai - Regional General Manager, IBM East Africa
Innovation is not something you learn in class, and it’s not something that you just stumble upon; it’s about having that vision and then asking yourself, “how am I going to make that vision come alive?”

A lot of times in that vision you are going to make mistakes, and a lot of the time they may even fall on your face, but then it’s having that voice inside you that says I am going to keep at it, and I am going to do this.

You always have to have this vision in your mind that says I think this is the way that users are going to want to use technology. I always like to give examples on some of the technological trends whose start we were involved in and then watch how they turned out to be. About seven years ago, we were among the first people that got involved in Simu ya Jamii. People didn’t believe that every Kenyan would own a mobile phone like happens now. We used to have these phones that we put at the corners of every street and you’d line up and make a call for twenty seconds for seven shillings. Now can you imagine what would happen if I was still trying to run that business as my core business today. One of the things that you have to realize is that, that particular time it made sense but at the same time you have to say, a year down the line I need to have innovated and moved on to the next thing. When the government liberalized internet service providers, we were among the first Internet service providers.

When we got into the Internet business in 2005, an Internet device would cost you Ksh 320,000 and then we charged you something like Ksh 90,000 a month just to use that service and we put a huge satellite dish on top of your roof. Once again, if I had stayed in that business how far would I have gone?

So we always have to keep thinking, how are we going to innovate? The next thing we went into was selling scratch cards. Selling scratch cards was a very good business at a particular time, and we would have hundreds of people around the country selling those particular scratch cards. But we were only eighteen companies doing it, there are now over 600 companies doing it.

So right now our company is involved in mobile applications. There are a lot of other people doing mobile applications, so how do we stay ahead of that? The next thing was to see how mobile applications are going to work with mobile money and then begin to look at that. But even then that is not enough.

Sixty per cent of my business is in rural areas, but I am based in Hurlingham and I use a computer and I am in mobile applications, what does that have to do with rural farming? We are using mobile applications in the rural setting and then linking that to the sale of tea and coffee in rural areas, and it all came from Kenyans are using the mobile device.

The key was always looking at the trend and the pain. I suggest you listen to this again I do not see the logic of pain If I can link the trend and the pain, then I can provide a service that people will actually use.

It’s continuous thinking, continuous testing and also to some extent, failure. I had to close the Simu ya Jamii company, but you don’t lose your streak of innovation by failing a few times. We usually say, that what worked for when it worked, that moment died, I stood up, I looked at the next big thing, and I did it again. It’s the question of continuity, and the spirit and heart to keep on going.
We are now reaching a point where we can be offering products and services to our customers and we shall never meet them, we shall never know them. But they depend on us and we depend on them.

**Bright future**

Right now, in small-holder farming, we have close to 360,000 rural farmers. In the coffee sector, we have about 20,000 farmers and these are people who do not have a high level of education but they do understand deals that they do; they understand how to trade. You bring the virtual component and the mobile component and say, you see how you have been doing this every day, let us now show you another better way of doing this and then training them along that line.

We competed in the Nokia Growth Economy Challenge two years ago, and it has had a huge impact for us, both as individuals and as a company. It was a global challenge, with one winner from around the world. We competed against companies from 54 countries, we won and got a million dollars.

I think that one of the things that will happen in the future is that we will be looking at 10 billion customers. Because we will be very well positioned to look at the rest of Africa and provide real solutions and nobody from out there will be able to compete better than us. Customers in North Africa, West Africa or South Africa will be looking to Kenya and most specifically Nairobi.

“You don’t lose your streak of innovation by failing a few times”

John Waibochi - Founder
CEO of Virtual City Group

You don’t lose your streak of innovation by failing a few times.
I will talk to you about opportunities in the arts and entertainment industry. In arts we’ve got the literary arts which include literature; we’ve got performing arts such as music, dance, magic, theatre, opera and film. We’ve got the visual arts which are painting and sculpture and in it we also have gastronomy.

Alfredo Kevallos, an award winning New York producer and song writer says that the music industry is very unstable. The bad thing is that the current business model is very expensive to implement. I know many of you are really fond of music and thinking of music as an industry, as a business is very, very tricky. When you are doing music as a business, you are not sure whether the music will sell or whether you’ll even get airplay on the radio. The good thing about the music industry is that small players are now taking part. Before people used to have to go to big studios to record and it would be very expensive. These days with a computer and a good keyboard, in your own room, you can produce your own music.

And we no longer have to rely on radio, TV, tours or record sales to generate revenue. We can generate income through the sale of MP3 downloads. These days you just go on to your computer and you can download music at a very very small fee compared to visiting a music store to buy music. And there is also advertising and merchandising. You don’t have to take your song to the radio or television stations to be paid. There is YouTube where you can upload your own music free of charge and it will be viewed by millions. Within a very short time, you can have hundreds of thousands hits and there are a number of artists who have become famous just by putting their music on YouTube.

In the performing arts, we’ve got theatre, we have film, we have dance, and many of these need to be supported. In Kenya and in Nairobi in particular, we have a very small theatre-going audience. In other countries, it is very prestigious for somebody to put on a play at the national theatre because it is the highest place to put on a play.
The thing that is growing in the entertainment industry is television, especially on stations with a lot of local content. When it comes to music, I have quite a number of people, especially students, coming to tell me that they are interested in music and in theatre. What I tell them is that education must come first, because you need a good education. Right now on the Forbes’ top ten, Jennifer Lopez is number one. She has recently overtaken Oprah Winfrey as the most important artist. But it is not only because of her acting and singing, she has gone into business. She was the judge in Idols Season II where she was paid $20m. She also has endorsements, has a clothing line and she also got a fragrance. So the entertainment business is very large and it is still growing.
TOP: Students entertain congress audience with a dance routine.
BELOW: A student moves a vote of thanks, as the congress concludes.
TOP: Students participate in a 100m race during weekend break.

BELOW: A dance troupe entertains the audience on the last Sunday of the congress.
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Preparing for a Global Future of ICT

Aligning Yourself With a Tech Future

I want you to imagine with me how life will be in 15 years. I want you to imagine waking up in the morning and going to school and ask yourself what home will you be living in. What kind of education will you get; what type of instruments will be used in class?

What kind of roads will Kenya have? What kind of shops will Kenya have? Then step back and think about fifteen years ago; these gadgets you see being used today – iPhones, iPads etc could never have been present. Most people didn’t have colour TV.

Fifteen years from now, almost all textbooks will be on the phone. Fifteen years from now most of your banking will be done from your phone. Twenty years from now, many people will not go to an office but will work from home.

This shows the kind of responsibility we have. Life is like a relay, everybody has a button to pass on. We only have a short time to make a difference in the country.

The role of the ICT Board is to make technology available to all Kenyans wherever they may be, in whatever form they may want it in and at an affordable and accessible manner. And also to use technology to make the government more efficient.

Let me give you an example of what efficiency is. Today if you lose your Identity Card, it might take you a couple of weeks before you get a new ID. When the work we are doing is completed, if you lose your ID, it should not take you more than a day to replace it.

A lot of people don’t have access to the Internet, so what we have done is to set up internet access centres across the country which allow you to walk in and have access to the Internet at an affordable price. And these Internet access centres are owned by business people in these communities who use community knowledge to create services which are relevant.

For example in Malindi, the Internet is being used by those people around the communities to study foreign languages so that they can be useful to the tourism industry. When you go to Kisumu, you will find people using the Internet to learn more about fish farming. When you go to Central, you find people using the Internet to learn about coffee. So the Internet as a source of information is very important.

We have realized that young people are the source of innovation. And so we have been around this country, to several cities listening to ideas by high school students and university students on how you can start companies while still in university or high school using the internet. We have been amazed by what we have found.

Young people are the ones who will develop the companies of tomorrow. And the companies of tomorrow will utilize knowledge more than they utilize any other physical input. What you need is an idea that will change the community.

Many of you will work in companies in future that will require you to have knowledge in technology and we are going to house universities within these businesses to provide labour to these companies.

When we talk about innovation, today’s generation is very lucky compared to us many years ago. The new generation is used to getting information in real time because of the internet and the way the media has become today. Now you are completely updated with FM stations and the internet.
Those who are most successful are those who imagine the future and are hungry to get the information that is required today to build that future.

**ICT defining the future**

Kenya has a lot of talent in terms of IT training and Kenyans tend to do very well in IT both here and internationally. This is because the training here is quite good. But there are two ways to develop talent in a country. One of them is what you learn in school and one of them is what you learn by virtue of experience.

As companies like Equity Bank and others become more aggressive in terms of their goals, they become demanding in terms of skills and some of those skills at this stage are not here. But what is good about this is that by demanding those skills, universities and other institutions are ramping up the skills that are required. Companies will always drive universities to change their curriculum in order to develop skills which are not available in the country.

That’s what growth is all about.

Kenya’s innovation will be quite exciting. Look at what has happened in the last five years, if it is anything to go by, we are in for a good time and I think that what we need to do is carry more people with us, especially the young people.

Kenya’s innovation will be built around a lot of solutions being invented to solve problems that we are not able to solve today. We will see innovation in, say, health care and it is possible that in five, ten years from today most people will be getting information on health on their phones.
The Place of Science & Technology In Development

The importance of science and technology in national development cannot be over emphasized. When we look at the developed nations like the USA, Germany and France, they have become world powers because of science and technological innovations.

Role of technology
Satellite and radio communication have changed the entertainment industry all over. Today, we are using the computer in teaching. For the first time, the Kenya Institute of Education has developed digital content so that students can learn on their own. We now have educational CDs available. Lectures and lessons can be uploaded on websites, making information more easily accessible. We also have distant education, a virtual university, online degrees. Today you don’t have to go and physically look for a university because through distant education, you are able to learn like any other student. However it requires a disciplined mind to adhere to all the requirements of the online courses.

In health, procedures from scanning to therapy are made easy through the use of technology. Genetic research for example has revealed how hereditary diseases are transferred across generations making it possible to manage these diseases.

What does the Kenya Vision 2030 have to say as far as science and technology is concerned? The Vision aims at transforming Kenya into a middle income country that can provide a high quality life to all its citizens by the year 2030 based on the economic, the social and political pillars.

This blueprint goes ahead to emphasize that these pillars will be achieved through the provision of education and its main emphasis will be technological innovations.

Science, technology and innovation are therefore key in raising productivity and efficiency levels across the three pillars.

Challenges in the technology sector
However, as we emphasize the role of science and technology it’s not without its own challenges. One of its challenges is the fact that although research has been undertaken, the impact at the local level remains very weak as most of the research is externally funded. We have not put enough resources in the research sector.

We also recognize that employment of technically qualified personnel remains very low by international standards. There are many reasons why this happens and at times even those that we produce we end up losing immediately after they graduate; what we call the brain drain.

Insufficient linkages between the various categories of firms—the big firms and the small firms and the weak linkages between industry and academics in terms of the skills that the industry requires; what is it that we offer in our education system to provide those links?

In order to meet some of these challenges of science and technology, we require a system and proactive research approaches to address innovation dynamism, to encourage access, use and equity in the generation of knowledge. We also need to focus on a diversified and competitive manufacturing local production, regional market expansion and global markets.

We need to have a pool of relevant and adequate skills and translate these skills into productive competence.

Finally, we need to strengthen public-private partnerships for technical assistance, capacity building and funding. So you will see, even in our education system, we not only have public schools, but
also private schools in order to realize the public/private partnership in the provision of education.

**Careers in Science and Technology**

The following are some of the best careers that put the students in a competitive edge at the national and international levels as far as technology is concerned:

- Telecommunication
- Electronics and computers
- Manufacturing technologies

The other area is software development technologies to support innovations such as M-pesa and Ushahidi.

The other area we need to focus on is the infrastructure technology for the development of key infrastructure like the Konza Technology City.

Other areas we need to focus on as students is the automobile manufacturing technologies whereby Kenya needs to identify and develop its niche in the automobile global industry.

Then we have the satellite and space technologies to help in providing early warning systems, accurate and timely weather forecast, security, disaster management and resource mapping. So these are areas that you need to start focusing on while still in school. We also have health technologies to facilitate the adoption of appropriate processes and technologies for a healthy and productive population.

However, as we do this, we are not saying that we over-emphasize on the sciences at the expense of the humanities or the arts subjects. Students need to be encouraged to undertake art-based subjects like history, religious education, literature, anthropology for the promotion of ethical and cultural values. As a science student, if you don’t have ethical values you not a complete student. You need to have ethical values. That’s why we emphasize on a disciplined student. Even in our Constitution, Chapter 6 emphasizes the issues of integrity and ethical values.

As a student, you require three things:

1. You must be focused from the very beginning. Set clear goals and ask yourself, “what is it that you want to achieve?”
2. You must be disciplined. A disciplined student is a disciplined mind. Nothing can be achieved without discipline.
3. Commitment. Unless you are committed to what you are focused on to achieve your goals, even if you are given the best teachers in the world, the best books, best facilities in terms of infrastructure, without having the three things I have mentioned, and the right attitude, you will achieve nothing.
When we were in Form One, we went to see our then President Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and later that evening, I saw myself on TV for the first time in my life. The first thing I did was to go and put it off to go call my friend Githinji so that we watch the TV together. But by the time I came back with Githinji, of course, the image had moved.

I was very disappointed and little did I know that the improvement in technology of TV was actually to bring that facility years later. Today when you have a digital TV and such things happen, you can pause, replay and get it afresh.

That is what you call innovation - when you see a problem and you solve the problem. Around the 80’s a young man saw the problems we had in computing - we had to remember every command in order to use the computer. He saw the problem and decided to simplify it and give you a window where you could check what you want to do, click on it and the computer works.

This was Bill Gates. He innovated something that completely changed the world, then other young people out of Stanford University discovered things like Google and many other things.
The lesson I want you to take is that the period to innovate is NOW, for you. Most of the innovations out of Stanford are done by young people between age 18 and 25. Why? Because this is the time before life commitments like careers and marriage. Once you get married for example, you are being asked for money for Ung, for clothes; you can't remember to do anything else. So you have a window period now when you need to begin to look at the problems we have and begin the innovation. This is the time for you the young people.
Innovation means challenging the status quo. The people who are going to be making money in Africa in the next 10, 15, 20 years are going to be the people who think about technology from the handset and then build their products on top of that.

In terms of technology, Kenya has a huge advantage over the rest of the world. We think of things like our mobile phone and how we’re going to use that first and then the computer and the big screen second. There is a reason why Mpesa came from Kenya, because it couldn’t come from any other country and the people who were thinking about this kind of technology were in Kenya.

Kenya as a tech hub

There is a place we built in Nairobi in 2010 called the iHub; the innovation hub. The innovation hub is a space where we have technologists from all over Nairobi, from all over Kenya and they come from all different walks of life. Some of them work in technology companies, some of them are students, some of them are investors and media professionals and some of them are startups. This cross section of community technology allows us to see what is going to be happening next and it provides a critical mass of people who are coming up with the next solutions.

You don’t have to be a certain age to do it. I hope that you will look at technology as an enabler that lowers the barrier for you to be a successful person. The people who are trying to do start up tech companies are the ones who have had some success and access to some type of technology. If you are thinking about investing in technology in the future, there are two things that you need to do:

1. Make sure you’re on the internet, making sure you’re learning from it now so that you’re ready for what’s going to happen in the future.

2. There is a huge expectation from family and friends and your community to payback the success that you have had. The best time though to do something new is when you’re young. So make sure that you do build some time into your own future in the coming years where you try something new, where you can learn and fail at it before you go further and actually have your success.

If you’re smart, you can learn anything, if you can get things done this is a good sign in business. Businesses don’t have time for people who are just lay-abouts. Start-ups don’t survive if their founders are lazy.
When you look at Kenya’s technology terrain, what do we have and what do we need? For us at the iHub, we looked at that and found that what we needed more was a software base so that we could have really good technology companies such as IBM, Google, Safaricom here.

We’re starting to get this critical mass of the software companies out there, but we also need software programmes because we don’t want those guys to start outsourcing, we want the programmes to be developed here. So the iHub represents a place where software developers, web designers can improve their craft, find business and do things like that. There is a lot of software that is created without people thinking of how the user uses it. We’re building what we call the users experience lab.

So what does iHub do? We try to fill in the gaps in the technology space so that we may own Kenya’s technological future, not by other people.

We have this great culture, this great legacy in Kenya, even in the jua kali sector. I think that the software kind of innovation stuff that we do at the iHub and this jua kali sector will merge in the next 5 to 10 years where the hardware is going to be as easy to play with as the software. When that happens, I think we’re going to have new products that not only make an impact here in Kenya but around the world as well.

Kenya has a huge advantage over the rest of the world

Erik Hersman-
Founder, Ushahidi.com
TOP: Students pack the Kenyatta University amphitheatre.
BELOW: Students take notes during the congress.
TOP: Students keenly follow proceedings at the congress.
BELOW: Bernard Kanyot chaperones students as the congress commences.
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Equity Contact Centre
Poverty is not a disease. When I was invited to go to High school, the letter of invitation from the Principal said: Bring a pair of black shoes, and since I wasn’t used to wearing shoes out of the poverty in my family, I packed the shoes and took them to the headmaster on the day of arrival in school. I walked to the school barefoot, opened the sheet metal suitcase and told the Principal ‘here are your shoes, I thought you said you didn’t have a pair of shoes!’. Here I am as the Minister for Education and before that I was the Minister for Constitutional Affairs. So I therefore speak with confidence, I look you in the eye, particularly if you come from a poor background, and tell you that poverty is not a disease; it’s curable, and you can rise from those ashes and develop like the Phoenix.

I want to thank Equity Bank specifically for the role you played towards the (Constitutional) Referendum in 2010 together with other institutions. The Constitution, for the first time in the history of the country defines the child; it defines youth. Article 53 defines a child as a person between ages 0 and 18 and in Article 260, youth is defined as that person between age 18 and age 34.

There are very few countries with the exception of South Africa that have recognized the need to have these definitions and assigns specific rights and functions of a person when they are a child and a person when they are a youth.

**Youth and the economy**

Kenya’s current economic growth rate stands at 4.2%, which is below the expected rate per annum that we had in mind. The youth are crucial in closing the gaps in economic growth through active engagement in matters that touch on them.

Challenges facing the youth include:
1. Lack of a conducive environment for investment and enterprise.
2. Mismatch between education training and labour market demands.

The Ministry has put in place measures to re-orient the education and training curricula to focus on opportunities for employment or enterprise creation as well as equipping vocational training institutions. Serious campaigns such as these should promote leadership among the youth so that they can take charge of their affairs. Leadership qualities must be developed among the youth to fuel innovative solutions.

We should venture into new types of jobs in the fields of information and communication as well as other sciences and technologies. Kenya’s Vision 2030, the country’s blueprint covering the period 2008 to 2030 aims at transforming Kenya into a middle income country providing a high quality life to all its citizens.

The Vision is based on three pillars: the economic, political and social pillars and proposes intensified application of science and technology and innovation to raise productivity and efficiency levels across the three pillars.

The youth are crucial in the achievement of Vision 2030. Although Kenya has achieved success in research, particularly in the medical and agricultural fields, these are based on isolated efforts leading to limited social economic impact. For instance, the impact of the local health sector remains very weak as most of the research is externally funded.

I recommend therefore that as scholars we adopt a systematic approach to address innovation dynamism in all sectors of the economy and encourage competitiveness for better results. We have a pool of relevant ad adequate skills and Equity Bank and other partners are assisting in translating these skills into technologically productive competencies.

The panacea here would be the strengthening of public-private partnerships for technical assistance, capacity building and funding.

**Reforms in education**

I wish to underscore a landmark achievement in the education sector. We have developed amazing draft policies and bills to
address the concerns raised in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and Vision 2030 that places us among the best in the world. These documents have already been approved by the Cabinet for debate by Parliament.

One of the greatest achievements of my Ministry together with the Ministry of Higher Education is the 2012 Policy framework for education and training for 2012. We are no longer talking about secondary and tertiary education; we are saying since life begins at conception, the policy framework for education must begin from age zero, that is early childhood education.

The second one is the Basic Education Bill 2012. This is such fundamental law which is replacing a 1968 Act of Parliament. A law passed barely 5 years after Kenya attained independence. It’s very unfair to be subjecting Kenyans who now have a new Constitution to an education system of 1968. That system is very tired. It generated some very strange habits like holiday tuition and tuition on Saturday and Sunday. When schools are closed, and on Saturdays and Sundays, the Kenyan child should be allowed to be a child to spend time with their parents.

The third one is Science, Technology and Innovation policy of 2012 which has been passed by the Cabinet and is a fundamental document because not everybody is blessed with talent in English and Mathematics so that they can go and study for PhD. I don’t have a PhD and I am Minister for Education.

The fourth one is the Kenya Institute of Curricular Development Bill 2012. We have been living with the Kenya Institute of Education—I am afraid that is a tired institution. We have developed this new law whereby we are changing its title to the Kenya Institute of Curricular Development; the reason is obvious so that they can create curriculum not just for education but also for science, technology and innovation.

The next one is the Kenya National Examinations Council Law. Student have been subjected to a ridiculous laws whereby crooks and fraudsters steal examination papers or examination questions, then sell those papers illegally to parents, and the parents give them to the students. In 2011, nearly 2000 young people ended up getting a ‘Y’ in their certificates. There is nothing more devastating than a Kenyan child to go through primary school, secondary school, and because of the machinations and greed of someone, get a ‘Y’ in the examinations. The child is the one who is punished, the thief and fraudster goes and enjoys his freedom and money. Never again, we are going to send those people to jail so that they don’t contaminate the education of the youth and undermine the integrity of Kenya’s certificate in education.

**Own The Future**

The young people of Kenya are the champions of reform who will carry the burning torch for this nation. Remember to keep aiming at continual improvement, not losing sight of the need to stay on the global map. There is a ready market to be occupied through innovation, competency and competitiveness. If you put your foot down now, you will find a limit, you can’t go below the ground, but if you keep your head up, the sky is the limit.

Reach for the sky, reach for the stars, strive to be among the world’s top scholars now that your financial constrains have been addressed by your sponsors. In conclusion, I expressly thank EGF and MasterCard Foundation for providing secondary school scholarships through the Wings to fly program.
Effective Governance

Twenty years from now, you will look back and realize you had an opportunity to build on the greatness of the situation that you have in your country, in your town, in your villages -- to make it better.

Governance is just a process where decisions are made and implemented, and in cases of poor governance, the decisions are not implemented.

What is your responsibility as a member, or as a citizen, or as part of that organization? What is your role as the future leaders of Kenya and of the region and of the world?

These are the eight characteristics to effective governance:
1. Accountability,
2. Consensus-oriented,
3. Effective,
4. Equitable,
5. Following the rule of law,
6. Participatory and
7. Responsive
8. Transparent.

If you follow these characteristics, you will have a governance structure that is at least working effectively.

My family is from Jamaica, in 1962, when Jamaica gained independence, my father was a university student who was just about to graduate. Jamaica was about to be independent from the British rule and he was not sure about how that was going to affect his life.

He knew he had a degree, he knew he was an engineer, but he had no idea how that was going to affect his life. He had two choices: he could have gone to England – because many people did when Jamaica became independent, or he could go to America. Even though America was having some problems, he knew that they had a system of effective governance.

He knew that they had a system where, if you worked hard, you could do well. If you had a grievance, you could file that grievance and people would listen to it. If you needed to know something about how your government was working for you, you could.

So my father moved to America. And 40 years later, here I am after living in the USA, growing up in the States, and understanding the culture of the United States. This is how being in a society that has effective governance has benefited me, and how it will benefit you as future leaders of Kenya.

Benefits of effective governance
Now let us come back to Kenya, looking at our surroundings, looking at the Government, looking at the school systems, and looking at the towns and villages that you are from. And you want to think: where I am from, are the organizations that I am a part of effectively governed? And how is that going to lead to my life being better?

And you look at prosperity – which is one of the benefits of effective governance. Only a minority of the population usually enjoys prosperity. The majority of the people have a very small piece of the prosperity in their country. This is problematic worldwide, in developing countries and in the developed world.

How does effective governance promote social-economic change?
As a young person or as a student you might ask: “How is this important to me?”

I understand the support for me to go to school or for me to help my family, but how does this governance issue affect me? I would say this helps you because it gets you into a critical area of thinking, that as you get older, and as you start to plan out your career, or how you are going to help the people in your family and your village or ethnic group – you will think about these things.
Whether it is in government, or companies or corporate environments, you have a responsibility to make sure that effective governance is enforced and implemented.

If you have effective governance in your society, this is what you can expect:

- Business environment improves.
- Access to resources improves: more people will have access to resources and the things that make society comfortable.
- Per capita income increases: you will find that the middle class is getting larger, more people are able to go to school, more people are able to afford the basic resources of life, and people can now start thinking about helping their relatives because they have higher disposable income and the ability to save.
- Infant mortality decreases: studies done by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have shown that as governance improves and overall resources improve and medical services improve, which reduce infant mortality.
- Mortality rate decreases: People start to live longer.
- Better healthcare: diseases start to affect people less.
- Higher literacy levels: The more society has effective governance the more you will find people can read, can write; which means that more people start to go to school; which means that more people start to go to university; which means that at the end of the day you will find more people demanding those things, and demanding access to those things in terms of education from their government. And all these things contribute to the growth of industry and the country and when the country prospers, everyone prospers.

Some of the ways that you can transform a society to make governance more effective is to stump out corruption, to get rid of bribery and all the things that are negative in society. And as the benefits of effective governance such as literacy increase and as access to education increases you will find that corruption, bribery and all these other things that are undesirable will decrease.

And the areas where you can make the most change are public sector institutions, banking, public enterprises and working in the civil service. Working in the civil service is one of the greatest things that you can do for your country. I have been a civil servant now for over 20 years. One of the reasons I have done that is because I believe that to make a change in a government or an organization is to be a part of it.

Many people complain and talk about how things are bad, but the only way to really truly change those things is to give back and you give back through service.

“What Africa requires is not a strongman but strong institutions and good governance.” This is a quote by President Barak Obama, and that is something I want to hammer home.

You have to have effective governance and you have to have good institutions if you want to see the change that will make your life better, the lives of friends and family, and ethnic groups, the lives of the people in your city, town and ultimately the people in Kenya.
I am very excited to talk to you about what I believe it takes to become successful. As Africans when we think about success, I believe that we need not measure ourselves only against what we see here today, but to think about being successful globally. I was fortunate at the age of eighteen, after having attended schools in different parts of Africa, to get a scholarship to go to university in the United States. I studied economics and then I moved back to Africa straight after university and started working in a company called McKenzie. McKenzie is a company that advises companies and governments across Africa about business. But at the age of 24, I got tired of advising other companies and wanted to be an entrepreneur and do the things we had been advising companies to do. So I started my first company when I was about twenty-four years old, together with some professors. We raised about two million dollars in funding from investors and today that company employs about 45 people in South Africa, it is in the field of biotechnology. That was my first experience as an entrepreneur. After doing that for a couple of years, I went to Stanford University in the U.S. to do my Masters in Business Administration. While I was in Stanford I was looking back on my life in Africa and reflecting on all the experiences I had living and working in different parts of Africa. My experience had made me see and believe that we have so much potential in Africa. I had an idea that in Africa, we needed to groom a new generation of leaders instead of just hoping that new leaders will emerge. That is what inspired me and some colleagues to start the African Leadership Academy. And that’s what I have been doing for the last nine years. The Academy is a school in South Africa where we identify young people from every country in Africa and every year we select the top one hundred who join the academy where we educate them for two years in a world class manner and then we help them to get into universities all over the world. There is one condition however; our students get scholarships to go to top world universities around the world, but all of them have signed a contract with us that by age of twenty-five they need to return to Africa and stay for at least ten years.

I believe there are four things that you require to become successful. The first thing is that you have to believe that it is your right to be successful. What distinguishes people who succeed and people who don’t succeed is simply their mind set.

Define success

The second thing is that you need to define success in your own terms. Don’t define it the way society tells you but really think about what you think success looks like and have that picture in your mind, and keep working towards it until you get there. The third thing is that success comes through practice. A lot of people who change the world do so not because of how smart they are or how good they look but really through how hard they work.

There is something called the 10,000-hour-rule which says that in order for you to become successful in something, you have to practise doing that thing for about ten thousand hours. I look at myself; I started the African Leadership Academy when I was 27 years old. It was a very big idea. We were going to groom the new leaders for not just one country, but the entire continent of Africa. And we needed to bring young people from 54 countries and raise millions of dollars, we had to raise about USD$ 50 million to get idea the off the ground and give scholarships to 85% of the people who come to the academy. But it all started with a much-- much smaller project when I was 18 years old. My mother had been a teacher in the town that we lived in, in Botswana, and the families in that town approached her and told her, “We would like you to start a school for us because we know you are a good teacher.” At that time my father had just passed away and my mother had four children to look after and ensure they go to university and she said, “I don’t have money to start a school.” But what she agreed to do was to start a small study group, and she started in the church building with five children and two teachers. Then more parents brought their children and
the next thing there were about 25 children. I had finished my high school and I had one year to wait before I could go to university, so my mother put me in charge of the school as the headmaster. It was a very small project and I managed the few other teachers and students for one whole year. It was that small project that gave me the opportunity to practice and nine years later when I was 27 years, and I had the idea of the academy, I leveraged on the experience that I had gained.

And the final thing I believe about success is about the power of networks and relationships. No matter how successful you are as an individual, no matter what your skills are, if you don’t have people who can support you, people who can give you an opportunity whether it is mentoring you, investing in you, giving you financial support, giving you access to an opportunity you cannot succeed. You need to know people who can help you get there. And so you need to build relationships with each other, with your friends in school today, think about all the people you meet and stay in touch with and stick to your word and be known as someone of integrity.

Remember, someone gave you an opportunity to be part of Wings to Fly and this is an example of how leveraging your networks can allow you to also become successful.

Kick point
I believe there are four things that you require to become successful. The first thing is that you have to believe that it is your right to be successful.
TOP: Following a performance by the Nairobi orchestra, a student tries her hand at the violin.
BELOW: Students enjoy a light moment at the congress.
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