

Towards Invigorating Talents for Careers in Media Industry: An Insight for Kenyan Schools

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Abstract

This paper is based on literature review related to talent screening. The most popular mediaprofessions include TV anchorage, news writing and reporting, animation and graphic designing. All the same, the artistic dimension of media also embraces other aspects to include musicians, thespians, dancers, choreographers, and photographers. These careers are principally creative, artistic and talent oriented. Talent is useful if only discovered and nurtured to realization at an early age. Globally, nations are appreciating the importance of creative and visual performances such as drama and film, their specific nature and uniqueness as creative experiences in their own right. Some learners strongly express special abilities both non-verbal and oratory communicative capabilities at an early age. In Kenya, effort made by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST) to implement the Policy on Co-Curricular Activities (2003). However, this will not happen in a vacuum. Appropriate and purposive effort needs to be put in place toward developing this creativity.

Key words: Careers, screening, creativity

Background

Gardner (1983) in the Theory of Multiple Intelligence advances that apart from logical and

mathematical abilities, human beings possess other kinds of intelligence that are crucial in life. They include visual or spatial, bodily or kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. The theory posits that these intelligences provide the foundations for the visual arts such as drama, and through these Art-forms, most students will develop abilities such as communication, self-expression and independence. According to the proceedings of UNESCO (2009) Consultative Conference on Creativity Education, governments across the globe are looking up to institutions to educate the creative individuals needed for the 21st century knowledge economies that will keep nations competitive in the global market. In times of economic downturns and recessions, a focus on the arts in education is timely and rewarding. This is in tandem with Kenyan National Goals of Education and Training articulated by Ominde Commission and other subsequent Reports on Education and including the Vision 2030. In 2011, The Task Force on

Re-alignment of the Education Sector to the Constitution (2010) was constituted and mandated to review and align the education, training and research sector in accordance with the new Constitution. The taskforce observed that, there is need to diversify education approach by embracing change leading to a new paradigm shift from teaching students for exams and certification, to development of artistic skills and independence. The Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK) Policy also requires media houses to observe the requirement of transmission of at least 60% local content. Towards achieving this end, the government has initiated youth talents academies and institutions such as the Kenya film school based at Moi International Centre Kasarani. Due to this conceivable opportunity, the potential of media and art careers cannot be underrated.

Careers in media, visual performances and entertainment are increasingly becoming lucrative. Authors have acknowledged the relevance of performing arts as a lucrative career leading to economic empowerment. Mugubi (2011) observes that in the past, in Kenya, drama was only regarded as a pastime and not as a professional enterprise that one would undertake for lifelong engagement. Today, some of the best paid media persons in Kenya now are

committed thespians who derive their fame from dramatic arts. The UNESCO (2006) Report in the world conference in Arts Education-Seoul Agenda indicated that, enhancing of creative Arts Education is the road map to global development. UNESCO Report (2010) also emphasizes on commitment to ensure to assure quality of creative activities and programs from conception to delivery practices in order to contribute to resolving global social and cultural and economic challenges.

Techniques for Screening for giftedness and Special Communicative Abilities:

Kerr (1985) notes that, it is crucial to act upon early emergence of intense interest or passion by noticing some unusually strong talent or enthusiasm. Developing these talents provide opportunities to learners to explore, develop, express and experiment with concepts.

This practice is evident in certain parts the world. For instance, in the Department of Education and Training in New South Wales, identification of such students is a three-stage process: nomination, screening and monitoring. Screening is applied to identify learners who demonstrate potential for excelling in dramatic arts. Further, as well, some instruments for assessing giftedness may include: student's

interest inventories and checklists, rubrics, observation guides, and performance exhibitions and score sheets (Adopted from, *Teaching Students who are Gifted and Talented*, 2013). Testing for creativity is started by nomination. Nomination triggers the screening and identification process where a student may nominate themselves by use of individual portfolio rating scale, or may be nominated by an educator or peer. Learners can interpret their own experiences, stories and drama activities through making and creating art, either on their own or in the company of others; using a variety of media, materials and processes. Appropriate support is important because learners experience the work of artists and appreciate the visual world through watching or mentorship and respond to art.

In the State of Ohio in United States of America, schools are strongly encouraged to make special efforts to carry out nominations of students from populations that are identified as gifted (Ohio Department of Education-ODE, 2009). The learners identified as having exceptional abilities are then accorded relevant support in order to develop the creative talents in them. Kenyan Schools ought to adopt effective screening mechanisms for in order to identify

students who demonstrate creative flair and exceptional abilities in dramatic arts.

A rubric of guidelines can be used for identifying a learner whose abilities in dramatic arts. Such a learner is identified as one who: a) Readily shifts into the role of characters, animals or objects; b) Communicates feelings by means of facial expression, gestures and bodily movements; c) Uses voice expressively to convey or enhance meaning; d) Easily tells a story or gives a vivid account of some experience and; e) Regularly seeks opportunity to perform (Adopted from ODE, 2009). Such abilities are highlighted in *Teaching Students who are Gifted and Talented* (2013). A gifted student demonstrates the following observable qualities: a) works well with others; b) contributes suggestions and participates as a partner; c) invents dramatic situations; d) creates effective and innovative improvisations; e) characters are clear, well-developed and believable; f) performs with energy, intensity, focus and commitment; g) shows superior technique; h) effectively communicates meaning through use of voice, expression and gesture; i) gives a superior performance when compared with peers.

Screening techniques are crucial in identifying of learners who exhibit potential in visual or

performing arts superior to that of children of similar age. Alberta Special Education Branch in, *Gifted and Talented Students; A Resource Guide for Teachers Educational Services Division*, (2007) recommends that, a learner with special abilities in dramatic arts can be identified by specific traits. Kenyan schools need to monitor student in order to assess their development of creative talents. Such learners that mainly seem to volunteer to participate in classroom skits and plays tells stories or renders accounts of experiences, uses appropriate gestures and formal expressions to communicate feelings and thoughts, handles body with ease and poise, holds the attention of a group when speaking, creates original plays or plays from stories. Such a student's traits are possibly an expression of giftedness. These are important qualities that drama instructors in Kenyan schools need to notice and nurture for the development of creative abilities demonstrated.

Facilitating support Systems for Creativity

- **Resources:** Once the giftedness of learners is established through screening, the subjects may need to enhance relevant support system. Everybody can be an artist except that the talent is never given room to grow (Kiama *et al* 2007). The author hence advocates for opportunities to be created and support

provided for individuals to develop their artistic abilities. In U.S.A, the state of Ohio adopts Computers and Interactive Multimedia use in Classrooms. It is believed that interactive multimedia has a high potential in enhancing instruction in schools, more than other electronic media ever introduced in the past. An empirical study by the National Research Council of the National Academies (NRC, 2003) indicated that technology has a substantial influence on learners' achievements. Educational developers have created educational resources that integrate digital software and hardware such as video, animation, 3-D objects, sound, images, and texts with improved levels of learning interactivity. Kenyan schools may need to enhance prudent utilization of resources materials and facilities towards supporting creativity of their learners

- **Parental support and Endorsement:** Parental endorsement of dramatic arts has a profound influence on children participation. Experts agree that schools could be more effective in their communications with parents to encourage their participation in their children's education at home environments. According the report by People for Education in Toronto (2011), it is right to conclude that, in fact, focusing on parents' participation in the

affairs of their children at home may begin to help address the current achievement gap. Big gains in terms of achievement could be realized by programs that provide parents with information, among other things, the school co-curricular activities. Collaboration with the teacher may help parents in coordinating their children's activities both at home and at school. Opportunity for practice is a crucial factor in development of students' creativity talent. The views are affirmed by Garvis (2010) who reported that perceptions of the arts as having a low status within schools as compared to that of subjects related to literacy and numeracy in particular, due to emphasis on national examination testing in these areas. Therefore, leading to teachers feeling pressure to focus more on subjects dealing on the emphasized key learning areas of curriculum, hence teaching of dramatic arts is being pushed to the side. The author points out those teachers receive little support in visual arts areas because performing arts are not recognised as part of the core subjects in the curriculum. Parental moral and financial support is a crucial factor that needs consideration while seeking to address dramatic arts support for creativity talent development among students. A study carried out in United States of America by Alter *et al* (2009) indicated that family support emerged as

a factor in participants' interviews. According to these individuals their families were influential in both positive and negative ways in developing interests and skills in learners.

Most instruction materials not provided by schools require parental financial support. According to Mapp and Hong (2010) most schools may not afford some equipment's required for proper practice. Parents in some cases are involved in purchasing of resources such as costumes, computers, Televisions, Radios, cameras paints and brushes among others. The authors emphasize on the crucial role played by parents in advancement of school programs; as they suggest that, when schools engage families, the learners make greater gains. When schools adopt partnerships with families that respond to their concerns and honour their contributions, the schools are successful in maintain connections that are aimed at enhancing student achievement. In 2002, *The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement Annual Synthesis* noted that there is need to develop or adopt program to engage parents in working with their children to develop specific skills. Parents provide advice as learners use the materials provided, assess learners progress and steer them to the next

steps and providing materials to practice at home.

Parental involvement is encouraged when the schools embrace a philosophy of partnership and be willing to share roles with families and ensuring that parents, school staff, and community members understand that the responsibility for learners' educational development is a collaborative enterprise, (Mapp & Hong 2010).

The influence of supportive parents on learners' future careers cannot be underrated. Dauber *et al*, (1993) in a research survey on parental attitudes and practices conducted in inner-city elementary and middle schools, found that the extent of parental involvement is directly linked children's achievements. The study found out that parents who indicated that they are more involved tended to have children who performed better than others in school. Learner's perceptions and aspirations arising from moral support from home environment is said to have a profound impact on their education. *The People for Education Report (2011)* noted that, parents influence their children's success through high expectations, talking to their children about school, and generally, working to impart a positive attitude about learning and strong work habits. These activities, along with enjoyable activities such

as reading , and watching television together and talking about their experiences, have more of an impact on students' chances for success than school-like activities that parents often feel they need to undertake, such as helping with school assignments. These findings are confirmed by a survey by conducted Department for Children School and Family (DCSF) in the United Kingdom, which reported that the attitude and aspirations of parent and of child as well predicts later educational achievements. International evidence suggests that parents with high aspirations are also more involved in their children's education. It emerged that now parents participate in a wider range of activities together with their children including doing school projects together (83%) and reading together (79%). Research data from the National Child Development Study (NCDS) in U.S.A was used to explore the effect of parents' involvement on achievement. An analysis of the NCDS data found that parental involvement in their child's education as early as age 7 independently predicted educational attainment at age 20 in both sons and daughters. This would only indicate that parental involvement is profound in influencing decision of their children and what they become. Parental support is important in achieving optimal goals as Nye, *et al* (2006) noted; there

is thirty years of research showing that parents' involvement in their children's education has extensive impact on children's developmental goals. But how parents are involved matters and the involvement makes the biggest difference to students' chances for success in school. This is an opportunity that can be utilized by schools to empower parents to assist the learners to develop interest in dramatic arts and invigorate dramatic arts.

In Kenya, it has not been determined the extent to which schools are encouraging parental involvement in supporting special gifts of their children. There is need, therefore, to establish the schools encourage parents to support the learners' gifts both morally and financially towards developing their creativity. There is need for parental encouragement in support of artistic gifts in order to invigorate the talent development of the learners.

- **Career Guidance and Mentorship:**

Literature reviewed suggests that screening for abilities coupled with supportive career guidance, mentorship and monitoring are pertinent and transformative in the instruction of visual arts. This is in agreement with scaffolding notion proposed by Lev Vygotsky where assisting a learner by a more knowledgeable person bring great impact in acquisition of knowledge. Lui (2012) notes

instruction focused within each student's ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) is not too difficult or too easy, but is only challenging the learner to develop new skills by building on the one already been established. Students are more receptive to learning within their ZPD for it represents the next logical step in their progress in skill development. It is believed that without reliable information on learners' progress by evolving ZPDs, it is not easy to identify the learner who is ready for more challenging tasks and who needs additional support and assistance to constantly evolve. This can be achieved through constant mentorship and guidance. However, the status of career guidance and mentorship in creative arts careers in Kenya is an area where information is inadequate. Sindabi and Wanyama (1996), note that there is still a vacuum in the status of career guidance in Kenyan schools. Hence, there is general lack of information on dramatic arts for students to develop interest or make informed choice to pursue theatre arts in tertiary institutions for lifelong engagement.

- **Conclusion**

Creative talents lead to job creation that can be a way forward toward achieving a paradigm shift from job-seeking to job creation. The digital migration and media convergence environment has created virtual communication

platforms leading to increased opportunities for creative talents both in the traditional and modern electronic-virtual media. However, there is general insufficiency of empirical studies establishing how the screening for special abilities and giftedness, if any, is being done for learners in Kenyan schools. This area therefore needs an in depth investigation.

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