

Rising from a Certificate to a Masters Degree in Library Services



Library Staff awarded degrees in 2004

My academic and professional journey has enabled me to rise from being a holder of a Library Certificate from the Kenya Polytechnic to one with a Master of Philosophy in Information Sciences from the Moi University.

There is no single source of inspiration that I can think of. A combination of forces and factors has been cheering me on in my academic journey. Among them has been my very strong personal desire to achieve and attain self-actualization.

Before joining UoN

My first encounter with failure and disappointment was when the results for Kenya Advanced Certificate Examinations were announced some twenty-four years ago. I was used to sitting and passing exams and basking in that glory until I "failed" my exams and therefore wasn't what was popularly called 'University material':

I then registered as a private candidate but again I still missed the required mark. The quality of a good certificate became apparent as I was seeking for employment. I landed a job as an untrained teacher and rose through the ranks. In four years time, I had become the Head of English and Literature Department and had started a drama Club. I won the District Inter-Secondary Schools' Trophy and was nominated the Executive Secretary to the District Secondary Schools' Drama Association

Joining UoN

I applied and got a job with the university. The major problem was leaving my teaching profession having just participated and won the District drama festivals, and was scheduled to participate in the Provincials. However I was lured to the University by the hefty salary of Kshs 1,650, and later realized that I would also be drawing a house allowance of Kshs 650. I made up my mind and left teaching.

Normally it's said that the size of our plans will determine the size of our future. Consequently, it is better to be a man of small abilities with big plans than be a man of great abilities with a small plan. Seventeen years ago, I left teaching and joined the UoN and was placed at the bottom. Never used to being at the bottom, I decided that this was not going to be a permanent station., I enquired and learnt that one could leave the station after training at the Kenya Polytechnic but had to wait for two years. I patiently waited for my turn but I suffered omission and had to wait for three years. Finally my chance to train came and I realized I could start from where I was and make a good ending. I learnt of more opportunities if I successfully completed the course. I eyed Moi University, which had a few opportunities for mature entrants. It was a tall order and I was prepared to leave behind negative attitudes towards work since I have realized that ones attitude towards work is largely responsible for ones performance at work.

Kenya Librarians attending an Electronics Resource Workshop





I desperately wanted to succeed and reach the top of my professional ladder and become Dr. Mwangi. I realized that success would come within me. I did not have much going for me except sheer determination that my life-long dream had to be achieved. I was prepared to sacrifice everything to achieve this success. Talk of launching a missile from a canoe!

The big Struggle

Disappointments and setbacks have always been there but through perseverance, hard work and desire to succeed, I have overcome. For seven months as an undergraduate, I did without pay. I had accepted a study leave without pay, which later proved suicidal. This temporary setback came to pass and I have never turned back since they say the harder the battle, the sweeter the victory.

What fires me on?

It's evident that success in any area is like a fire lit within a person, which is not easily extinguished. It is largely 'an inside job'. However, many others have also contributed towards this success. To start with is my wife who has a lot of faith in what I do. This knowledge has enabled me to push on and achieve success. Our children and their upbringing make it also necessary for me to improve myself career-wise. The many friends and colleagues I have made also encourage me to pursue the line I have chosen to its success. My lecturers too have faith in my abilities and constantly urge me on. My enemies too have had their contribution. It's known that nothing moves forward without opposition. Can a bird really fly in a vacuum or a motorboat cruise without the presence of some friction? My employer has also recognized my efforts and therefore the totality of these is what I consider as the booster in my success.

Lastly, to God be the glory for he has responded to all my needs without fail.

Parting shot

If people can believe in themselves, it is amazing what they can accomplish.

1980- Completed A-levels (1982- Employed as a Teacher
(1986- Employed as an untrained library assistant
1991- Promoted to Trained Library Assistant
1997- Promoted to Senior library assistant (2003- Promoted to Librarian (equivalent to a lecturer of the University)

John K. Mwangi

Parklands Library

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