

ADDRESSES

ADDRESS AT THE OPENING CEREMONY BY THE HONOURABLE NDUGU NICHOLAS KUHANGA MINISTER FOR NATIONAL EDUCATION

Read by Mr J F Gwagilo, Principal Secretary, Ministry of
National Education

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all at this seminar/workshop on Low-Cost Science Teaching Equipment, the first of its kind to be held in the country. We are told that the Commonwealth Secretariat organized a similar seminar in the Bahamas last year and that this is the second one. Indeed we feel greatly honoured to host this very important seminar/workshop. It has a special significance, firstly, because it includes all the Commonwealth countries in Africa, and secondly because it is on a topic that has recently begun to receive much emphasis in international educational development.

Science education has been the focus of current innovations and experimentation, particularly among Third World countries. We are increasingly becoming aware of the fact that our economic development depends on technological advancement, which further depends on sound scientific and technical education. It is in this light that we in Tanzania lay particular emphasis on science and technical education in our schools, colleges and higher educational institutions. We hope that, through your discussions on the Tanzanian experience and your scheduled educational visits, you will be able to evaluate our situation. It is only through critical observation and sincere contribution in the discussions that we shall be able to improve our science and technical education.

Although the science taught in our schools should not deny our children such sophisticated innovations as landing a man on the moon, or even going to Jupiter, we wish particularly to relate science to rural life. While others aspire to go to the moon we aspire to go to the villages. We believe in the liberation of our people from the shackles of poverty, hunger, and disease. Therefore, our science education should enable our children to find out ways of bettering their living standards and those of their parents.

We all know that educational objectives, however clearly stated, are of little value unless they are assimilated. The quality of teachers, and their ability to select or make, use and manage instructional materials and equipment, are unavoidable factors in success. The actual situation one finds in most developing countries is that the equipment that teachers are trained to use is usually foreign. Many young teachers complain to the inspectors and education authorities about lack of equipment. But the equipment these teachers want is usually expensive, and in many cases is unsuitable to the local situation in which the teacher is placed. This expensive equipment, is imported from developed countries, drains meagre resources, thus raising the education budgets of developing countries to levels beyond resource capabilities.

Now we can appreciate why this seminar is very important; it has come to us at a most opportune time, and its contribution to our educational philosophy of Education for Self-Reliance should not in the least be underestimated.

Your seminar focuses on ways of making each participant realize his hidden potential for designing, making and using low-cost science teaching equipment. This is one of your objectives. In addition, you will be looking into the ways in which the experiences gained by the participants in this seminar/workshop can be transferred to classroom science teachers so as to enable them to design, make and use low-cost science teaching equipment (both software and hardware) using local material and appropriate technology. I am glad to see that you will also be considering the relationship of the local community and the school in the development of effective low-cost teaching equipment. By this I mean the collaboration between the classroom teacher and the local technician in the design and manufacture of low-cost science teaching equipment. Experience shows that involvement of the classroom teacher, the community and the pupils in the construction of classroom equipment builds up the spirit of ownership of the equipment and a sense of responsibility over the maintenance, care and use of it.

As my last remark, may I once again say that this seminar comes at an appropriate time. It is taking place only a few days after the end of a successful Commonwealth Agricultural Seminar held at Arusha in Northern Tanzania where the exchange of experience through exhibits of handy and multi-purpose agricultural equipment stole the show and fascinated not only the participants but also the general public. With the same African countries represented at this seminar there is no reason why similar, if not better, results cannot be expected.

In the past, the African has been criticized for uncritically copying technology and culture from outside the continent. However, I do not believe that an African should feel guilty about copying from fellow Africans because African environments are similar. So let us without shame share our experiences and learn from one another.

On behalf of my Minister, I now declare the seminar/workshop open and wish you success in your deliberations. You are all warmly welcome to Tanzania and particularly to Dar-es-Salaam.