



**MOTIVATIONAL ADDRESS
BY VERONICA DE KLERK - WAD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DURING THE OPENING OF A SUMMER SCHOOL FOR ACCOUNTING TEACHERS
SPONSORED BY ERNST AND YOUNG
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**Dear Facilitators of the Summer School for Accounting teachers;
Accounting teachers from various Secondary schools; and
Ladies & Gentlemen:**

Good morning!

At the onset, I wish to express my sincere appreciation towards Ernst & Young, the auditors' firm which I regard with high esteem, and for which I worked for 11 years, many years ago, for the kind invitation to address you as Accounting teachers, with some words of motivation.

At the same time, I wish to commend Ernst & Young for such a splendid idea to facilitate a Summer School for Accounting Teachers, at which you can widely interact with fellow accounting teachers and also with seasoned experts in order to change misplaced perceptions about a less popular school subject, namely Accounting.

Hopefully this exercise will eventually resonate with parents as well, to encourage their children to set their vision on an Accounting career.

It is always better to go full circle and involve all stakeholders who contribute to future decisions by our youth.

However, to get closer to dealing with the request to me, I firstly wish to address you as teachers as such, and therefore, I wish to make a few remarks which are applicable to the profession in general:

It goes without saying that all teachers are moulders of a future generation and the Mother of all Careers!

It is therefore imperative that only the best students should be selected for the teaching profession and not like sometimes nowadays when those who could not make the grade for other professions decide, as a last resort, to qualify as teachers (present company excluded of course).

The failure of our education system to attract and retain true and dedicated pedagogues, can be directly linked to poor performance of learners and students at school and tertiary institutions, and subsequently in their careers.

Thus, it is so sad that inappropriate people in terms of their sense of calling; their attitude towards the profession and towards young people; their inability to transfer subject matter clearly and in a captivating manner; and in terms of the example they set through their personal life; are often reasons why brilliant young people do not aspire to be involved in the teaching profession at all.

Other factors of an external nature that hamper the profession include:

1. Poor remuneration and benefits for teachers.

2. Unreasonable expectations from teachers, for example, to be burdened with lots of administrative work which leaves little time for their subjects;
3. Unpleasant working circumstances and conditions.
4. Lack of parental support for teachers.
5. Lack of discipline among learners.
6. Poor perception of the status of teachers.

And so we can go on and on!

Ladies & Gentlemen - No nation which fails to put all mechanisms in place to rule out mediocrity in educational standards and which bows to pressure for considerations outside education, can even hope to produce learners and students who can take their country to higher levels.

Having said that, I wish to caution, that under-performance of learners and students should never be condoned for the sake of good results, and their marks should never be adjusted to appease the nation, since it is a self-fooling exercise.

The performance of learners and students should be a yardstick which indicates the measure of health of our education system and should be a wake-up call for introspection and action if results are unfavourable.

A good education system with dedicated teachers sells across national borders and should be a source of national pride.

Ladies & Gentlemen, I have mentioned a number of thoughts without going into any detail which impact on teachers and education in general, irrespective of you

being a History, Language or accounting teacher. Such factors have a bearing on the profession as such, and when they impact negatively on your work, they should be addressed in order to make you willing horses for the wagon of the teaching profession.

I now wish to come to your subject area and will try to give you some hope to cling to, when times look dark and gloomy, and when you too are merely clinging to your work for lack of anything else, and not because you still enjoy it.

As teachers of accounting, you know that all numeral or number subjects have a notorious reputation of being “difficult and boring” as perceived by many.

Some learners, even without trying, but merely based on hearsay, decide that they do not have the aptitude for numbers and therefore, shy away from Maths, Accounting and the like.

The accounting teacher therefore, has to face very serious prejudice among learners towards the accounting subject, which only you, as the accounting teacher can break down, with some assistance from the school.

Your task is thus enormous, to swing around the perception of **“numbers are boring”** to **“numbers are cool”**, and to establish the belief that numbers are for the gifted and the intelligent!

This concept relies on the psychology that every child wants to be seen as bright and gifted, and wants to give his or her parents something to improve their esteem in the eyes of the neighbours. The natural science subjects, for example, Physics or Chemistry are prime examples of subjects which simply, just with their name, conjure up visions of great difficulty which require tons of brains to master.

Such subjects have status which rubs off on those learners who enrol for them.

Your challenge as Accounting teachers, is to elevate your subject and with it, your own status, being endowed with so much grey matter to be teaching the subject – an accomplishment which few are able to perform.

The point of departure should be the fact that Accountants count among the highest paid professions in Western countries.

Tax requirements compel practically every business to make use of the services of an Accountant - not only to ward off the threat of excessive tax bills, but to advise the discerning businessman about the growth potential of his business, as well as the intricacies of the tax laws; and on a host of other sound business principles.

One of the great plus points of the Accounting teacher is his or her employability in the Private Sector, although I am saying it with hesitation. This allows Accounting teachers to earn additional income by taking on accounting jobs of SME's or small business people.

Such extra-mural activities would hopefully not be undertaken to the detriment of your school work and preparation for your teaching in your classes.

It should be a source of great inspiration to you, that you are teaching a subject in its modern and sophisticated version, but which dates back to Babylonian times, hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, and long before the development of paper when accountability of citizens to pay taxes to the State became an accepted way of life.

In those days clay, stone and wooden tablets were used to record payment for services in churches and to the State. You are therefore not involved in an after-thought of modern times.

It should furthermore be a source of inspiration to you that your subject has such a high degree of relevance and applicability in practically all facets of daily life where the use of assets and money in particular, is involved to enhance human activity.

From its simplest form of little Johnny accounting to his mother who sent him to the shop with money to buy small items for her, to tracing the use of Government assets by its officials, Accounting remains an indispensable discipline in any form or facet of organised modern day society.

I am sure that whereas defrauders of this world, curse the day that their criminal activities can be traced through proper accounting, the Anti-Corruption Commission on the other hand sings the praises of a reputable accounting discipline in our society which can bring to book all those who try to take short-cuts to accrue ill-gotten wealth from Government sources.

...And we have seen a few prominent cases of how the accounting profession unearthed corruption in this country. For example,

- the disappearance of N\$100 Million from the Off-shore Investment fund, of which only about N\$33 million were recovered;
- the disappearance of N\$30 Million from Social Security Commission, a case which still has to be concluded;
- the disappearance of N\$3 Million from the Namibia Defence Force, for weapons purchased from a bogus weapon's manufacturer; and

- the disappearance of N\$600 Million from the GIPF, etc. All these cases were brought to light because of the work of razor-sharp accounting disciplines.

It must really be a source of much satisfaction that all the major known financial swindles in the world were discovered through the meticulous hawk's eyes of those involved in the accounting services of the companies, or Governments in which such scams took place.

Never forget, dear friends, that all those responsible for the exposure of the world's biggest corruption scams, were once learners in accounting classes. Whether they now bear the imposing title of Financial Analyst, or Chartered Accountant, they all had to go through your hands.

You, as Accounting teachers, can rightly claim credit for the sharp and well honed analytical minds and the systematic and methodical approach to deriving at crucial advice for company directors regarding the future of large corporate institutions, which Accountants and Auditors are required to provide.

Needless to say - without a thorough ground work being laid, to nurture a love for accuracy and admiration for the miraculous invention of numbers; to stimulate the enquiring mind and to fire up enthusiasm for your subject, fewer and fewer learners will pursue the career.

Learners are usually at ease to follow the route of least resistance, irrespective of how beneficial an alternative direction of study may be in future.

In view of the great shortage of Accounting teachers, Chartered Accountants, Financial Analysts etc, All serving Accounting teachers should, through inspiring and contagious teaching, but also through direct exhortation, convince their class of Accounting learners to pursue an Accounting career.

The profound influence of enthusiastic and dedicated teachers on their learners and their future career choices, can never be denied.

The long and intensive training which lies ahead of Accounting learners in your class to become Chartered Accountants or Financial Analysts for careers in Public Accounting, or at the Stock Exchange, for example, should be put to learners as a tough, but highly rewarding challenge for which only the sharpest minds will be good enough.

The best in learners can be brought to the fore by the challenge that, if others before you could do it successfully, you can surely do it too, or else admit to being beaten. There is no doubt that children are born with a strong competing spirit which prods them to excel if the right climate within which to predominate, is created by the teacher for example.

This inherent characteristic of children can be activated to become a self-propelling force which continuously spurs the individual on to greater and greater heights to be attained in the world of Accounting.

It remains the challenge of teachers, not only to provide sufficient factual information to learners to pass the grade examination, but to switch on the imagination and desire of learners to discover what lies beyond the immediate horizon.

In so doing, they become life long students and discoverers of new knowledge which adds to the inheritance of understanding for new generations. ...And it all started with you, the dedicated and motivated subject teachers, who successfully passed on their enthusiasm for his subject to their learners.

I sincerely hope that you, as Accounting teachers, will succeed in passing such motivation and urge to discover what lies beyond the horizon, on to your learners.

...And only in that way will our nation go beyond the ordinary! Only in that way will we be able to shift our bench marks to greater heights.

Dear Accounting teachers: My message for you would be to be strong and courageous in everything you do in the classroom. Be forthright and determined to fulfil the great task before you.

I have often expressed my respect and admiration for the teaching profession. I will never be convinced otherwise.

Never ever forget that all teachers are moulders of a future generation and the Mother of all Careers!

So, allow the power of a positive self-esteem to permeate your entire being – your entire soul!

Teachers should put every effort into allowing the power of a positive self-esteem to achieve the things which they never thought themselves capable of achieving before.

But this all starts with a change of heart. It starts with your firm conviction to bring about a positive change in the lives of your learners..... forever!

It cannot be denied that the world we have created, is a product of our thinking and the world cannot be changed without changing our thinking!

...And to the female teachers, allow me to say the following to you as I am ending with Martin Luther's famous words, when he said centuries ago, (and I quote): **"...the world can never function without women, even if men could bear children...."** (unquote)

...And I agree whole-heartedly with the wife of a former American President, Nancy Reagan, when she very aptly put it - and I quote: **"A woman is like a tea bag. When she lands in hot water, her strength is revealed...."** (unquote)

Dear accounting teachers: I wish you great success in all your endeavours to teach, motivate and inspire your learners for the Accounting profession and for the sake of great achievements in future.

May God bless you, the noble educators of the nation! May He give you the inner strength and unwavering faith to believe in yourselves, as Accounting teachers.

May He guide you on the road to self-discovery, and may you enjoy that wonderful, and most inspiring journey!

THANK YOU!