

## **The Communication Skills Course: What Skills and for Which Future?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Communication Skills course is offered to all first year students in Kenyan universities with the aim of preparing learners to adjust to and cope with their undergraduate studies. At its inception in 1990, it was designed to equip new undergraduate students with language skills such as listening, speaking, reading in addition to library and study skills. Close to three decades later, universities are teaching the same skills without regard to debates about 21<sup>st</sup> skills in the domains of creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration, and Information, Media and Technology. Current conversations indicate that these skills will inculcate, in the learners, the ability to respond flexibly to complex problems, communicate effectively, manage information, work in teams and produce new knowledge in their course of university education. It is also argued that graduates with these skills will be competent, creative, and innovative to take up emerging jobs some of which did not exist ten years ago! The aim of this paper is to review the communication skills course syllabus, examine how it is implemented in the classroom and eventually how it is assessed. The outcome of this analysis will lead to proposals on how the course can be aligned to the core subjects and 21<sup>st</sup> century themes; learning and Innovation skills; information, media and technology skills; life and career skills; and 21<sup>st</sup> century education support systems.