

delivery and general contribution to the secretarial profession," he recalls with nostalgia.

While looking back he wears the smile of a winner, becoming a top secretary was not as easy. Upon completing his secondary education at Bukhalalire Secondary School in Busia County in 1998, Mr Namuju's parents could not afford college education. Unlike many, he did not resign to fate. Instead, he joined the National Youth Service (NYS).

"NYS was a soft-landing for me because studies are fully sponsored by the government," he says.

Besides the rigorous and almost torturous training in the fields, NYS was offering several courses in business, administration and secretarial studies.

"I wanted to pursue accounting, but my company commander, with whom I was close, convinced me to go for secretarial studies. I followed his advice and I do not regret that decision," he says.

After three years at the college, Mr Namuju sat for Kenya National Examinations Council's exam and graduated with a diploma in secretarial studies.

"I appreciated that I was being taught to be all-round. Besides secretarial, we were learning administration, customer care, entrepreneurship and a bit of business studies," he says.

Mr Namuju has a good grasp of his profession and on top of his diploma; he has other secretarial certifications including a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration. This wide-ranging knowledge saw him land a teaching job upon graduation.

He left class to work as a personal assistant to the MD of an IT company at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi, before joining the Civil Service in 2008.

"I am one blessed guy, and I thank God, I have never been jobless... Being a male candidate, my interview was an easy one because members of the panel were keen to know what a male secretary



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brings to the service." His first posting was as a Personal Secretary III, which is an equivalent of Shorthand Typist II, in the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, where he served until July 2013 when he was transferred to the DP's office.

Mr Namuju works close to the seat of power, literally. His boss manages all the staff at Deputy President William Ruto's office.

"It is a very busy office and I am always on my toes. My boss works directly with His Excellency Hon William Ruto and that trickles down to me, as the Chief of Staff's personal secretary," he explains. His typical day starts as early as 6am, and can run late into the night.

"I am up and down attending meetings, travelling or preparing vital documents at the office. I love my job. Sometimes I stay till late in the night but my wife and children understand perfectly what I do," adds the proud husband of one and father of three.

Being an all-rounder, Mr Namuju was in the team appointed to review the scheme of service for secretaries in the Civil Service. The taskforce delivered its report to the Public Service Commission which has since been approved.

Mr Namuju also ably plays his role as the National Secretary of KENASA, an organization that brings together secretaries from the Civil Service,

parastatals and the private sector.

He has been a member since the association's inception in 2008 and has served the association in various positions.

Notably, he served as the ministerial representative of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology from 2009 to 2012. He was then elected National Vice Secretary during the association's Annual General Meeting in 2012.

He was seconded to serve as the acting National Secretary in 2013 after the then National Secretary resigned. In 2014, he vied for the seat out of what he terms as "members' pressure" and clinched it.

"I have always articulated issues regarding the secretarial profession. This indeed encouraged most of my professional colleagues to grant me the opportunity of leadership in almost every forum," he says.

According to the official, the secretarial profession in Kenya faces many challenges.

"One, secretaries are yet to be recognized as important staff in an organization. There is this rather unfortunate stereotype that a secretary is some uneducated front office man or woman whose work is to receive and release documents," he says.

"What they do not know is that we are fully trained and qualified professionals.

Secretaries can build or destroy an organization's reputation. It is due to these negative assumptions about secretaries that those seeking higher education are hesitant to choose secretarial studies as a course," he adds.

Structures and chances of career growth for secretaries are also non-existent in most organizations, he says.

KENASA, Namuju says, is battling to resolve these challenges.

"We have created a forum for the members to interact and deliberate on issues affecting the secretarial profession with regard to standards, ethics and professionalism.

We are also working on a strategic plan in consultation with the Association for Professional Societies of East Africa that will culminate in KENASA being recognized as a professional body through an act of Parliament. Through this Act, we'll create clear guidelines that will be used to benchmark secretaries' training, employment, remuneration and career growth," he explains.

According to Mr Namuju, having KENASA as a professional body will go a long way in dealing with issues affecting secretaries as well as give them an identity.

"I am looking forward to a point when KENASA will become a key stakeholder in regulation of the secretarial professional examinations," he says.

The word secretary, Mr Namuju mourns, is also being used to refer to many other workers in the Civil Service—including Cabinet secretary, Principal secretary among others—and wants clarity on what defines a secretary.

As a man at the helm of a female-dominated association, Mr Namuju faces many challenges but remains dedicated to his calling.

"It calls for sobriety, resilience, patience and sacrifice. But so far, I have been up to the task. The challenges we face are not mine alone, so we deal with them collectively as a national office," he says. He urges KENASA to help more men join this profession through training.

"I hold the opinion that even if it means pursuing affirmative action, then the association should explore that avenue," he says.

He has one message to secretaries who are yet to join KENASA:

"I wish to humbly advise them to join this noble association. Not being part of this secretaries' journey means they continue to miss out on the latest emerging issues regarding the profession. Also, once the Act of parliament is in place membership to KENASA will be mandatory."