

THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN PROMOTING APPROPRIATE SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS IN NIGERIA FOR CAREERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Sesugh Simeon Jem

*Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies,
University of Agriculture, Makurdi,
Benue State.*

And

Terngu Eunice Moze

*Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies,
University of Agriculture, Makurdi,
Benue State.*

Abstract

This paper examines issues of skill needs of students for 21st century careers, the practices and responses to these needs by the educational system and the role of educational system in ensuring the provision of relevant skills for careers in the 21st century in the context of plethora of global changes including changes in the work place. The paper relies on search of secondary data sources to draw its content. It concludes that contemporary changes in different areas of society including the economy have resulted to the emergence of different careers. These careers require individuals with relevant skills to work in them. Education as a catalyst of change has to respond to help individuals to acquire critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration and creative skills needed for careers in the 21st century. Educational administrators as agents of change have been slow in responding to these demands. It is imperative however that they rise up to perform their roles in ensuring that students are given functional skills they need to succeed in careers and living in contemporary society. Based on the above, the paper recommends among other things that educational administrators should abandon traditional approaches towards transforming the educational system and embrace more progressive and democratic approaches that enhance collective accountability.

Key words: Contemporary changes, educational administration, Skills, careers, 21st century

There are a lot of contemporary changes in the world that have affected the contributions of individuals to society. Changes in social, political, economic and other realms have affected national economies and have correspondingly triggered changes in the job and business areas. This has also reshaped workplaces and the nature of work. Different skills are now needed to help individuals fit into the current global environment and especially in the world of work where technological advancements, explosion in knowledge, increased information, innovations and creativity have made an impact.

The developments in the 21st century have propelled diverse changes to an extent that even in the economy of nation's emphasis is gradually shifting from manufacturing to the services. America Association of Colleges of Teacher Educators (AACTE, 2010), states that, more than 80% of jobs now are in the service sector where high growth, high wage and highly skilled occupations exist. This suggests that new ways of organising work places and how businesses are conducted in organisations are necessary. Kay (2011) points out that, these new demands have driven organisations towards flatter structures and more flexible arrangements; with characteristics of decentralised decision making, increased information sharing, use of task teams, organisational networking, and keeping of just in time inventories.

The emerging developments have implications on the educational system. It has to respond by preparing programmes that equip individuals with 21st century skills such as self direction, creativity, critical thinking and innovation to succeed in careers in contemporary times. Schleinder (2015) decries the absence of essential skills among students for meaningful contribution in today's world of work and to society. A large proportion of students now leave school without the basic knowledge and skills to participate effectively in an increasingly changing global economy. These developments have evoked similar concerns among educationists in Nigeria. Moja (2010), for instance raised concerns on the low performance of products of the educational system in Nigeria in recent times. The lack of appropriate skills by students in Nigeria has limiting effects on career choices of the students. It confines them to the low skill worker spectrum, with low paying jobs. The educational system as an important vehicle of social change and particularly its administration has to respond to these challenges.

As a key to individual progress and national development, education has the role of preparing students to live and work in a collaborative world where people share ideas, perspectives and values; a world where trust building and sustained collaboration bridges the gaps in space and time using technology. Education must serve as a vehicle to assist individuals to acquire the skills for competitive performance at non routine, creative tasks in this century. The provision of education that guarantees knowledge and skills for active participation in present day society is therefore pertinent.

Creating an educational system that is responsive to the skill needs of students to fit them into 21st century careers cannot be achieved without effective educational

administration. This is because educational administration is at the centre of school reforms. It sets goals, and develops programmes, provides resources, support and professional development as well as necessary collaborations with teachers to make the educational system to achieve its progressive goals. This paper, in view of the crucial position of educational administration in educational reform discusses the role of educational administration in preparing students for careers in the 21st century. The paper employs secondary data sources to address issues of skill requirements of students for careers in contemporary times, responses to these needs and practices of the educational system so far in addressing the skill needs as well as the role of educational administration in preparing students for careers in the 21st century.

Concept Clarification

The following key concepts are clarified to aid smooth understanding of the paper.

Concept of Educational Administration

Educational administration is described as the process of integrating appropriate human and material resources that are made available and made effective for achieving the purpose of a programme of an educational institution (Olatunde, 2015). The term as explained by Ochai (2015) embodies all processes such as planning, organising, directing, coordinating, controlling and evaluating the performance of the educational system in terms of its goals. This means that, careful planning of programmes and activities, organising of activities with the cooperation of teachers, students and parents, motivating them, coordinating their activities, directing them, exercising control over them as well as evaluating progresses made, providing feedbacks and making modifications where necessary are embodiments of educational administration. Rotherham and Willingham (2009) in addition to the above emphasized that effective educational administration requires keen attention to curriculum, teacher quality and assessment.

Meaning of Career

The word career refers to an individuals' progress through life, learning and work. Career is also frequently understood to relate to the working aspects of an individual's life. The term career is used to describe an occupation or a profession that usually involves special training or formal education, and is considered to be a person's lifework (Hooley, 2012). In this paper a career is considered as a sequence of related jobs usually pursued within a single industry or sector e.g. "a career in education or a career in the building industry. The rapid changes in contemporary times have widened the range of career choices and potential professions. Widespread education has helped and would continue to prepare people for these and emerging careers.

Definition of Skill

The term skill according to Howland (2013) is the ability to carry out a task with pre-determined results often within a given amount of time, energy or both. Skills can often be divided into domain-general and domain-specific skills. For example, in the domain of work, some general skills would include time management, team work and leadership, self motivation and others, whereas domain-specific skills would be useful only for a certain job. Skill usually requires certain environmental stimuli and situations to assess the level of skill being shown and used.

People need a broad range of skills in order to contribute to a modern economy. A study conducted by the United States Department of Labour (2015) shows that technology has influenced a lot of changes in the workplace. These changes demand for the acquisition of diverse skills by workers. The study identifies 16 basic skills that employees must have to be able to cope with the work demands of contemporary times. It is the responsibility of educational administrators to ensure the impartation of these skills to learners.

Skills Required by Students for Careers in Contemporary Times

Students in these times of knowledge explosion, escalating market pressures, accelerating pace of change, increased use of technology and global competition need 21st century skills to enter careers and to live effectively in society. AACTE (2010) categorized the 21st century skills necessary for work environment today into Learning and innovative skills; information, media and technology skills; life and career skills.

According to partnerships for 21st century skills (2010) individuals with survival skills who can think critically, solve problems, communicate, collaborate, find good information quickly and use technology effectively have tendencies to succeed in careers and have quality living in this century. Kay (2011) identified critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity as important skill sets required by individuals to successfully enter work or become self employed. Tirado (2006) observes that skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, information literacy and global awareness are not new because they were found in Plato's "The Republic" as far back as 3rd century. What is new is that global changes greatly need them for successful endeavours. This is why educational administrators have to embark on reforms to teach these skills to all students.

Challenges of Fusing Educational Content and Skills for Careers in the 21st Century

Education budgets keep increasing while student achievements decrease day by day and society remains unsatisfied with quality of educational products. The question is whether administrative structures to provide support that will bring development in the educational system are deficient. This question has premises in the failure of practices to implement changes in education. According to Tirado (2006) educational

administrators find it difficult to implement desired changes that will build needed skills into learners because old structures that have failed to produce results are tightly held unto.

There are a lot of models, theories research findings, excellent books and a number of institutional offerings in educational administration but in practice administrators prefer doing things their own way. Bernier (2012) adds that, changes in society demand a new paradigm in education but responses remain traditional. Teachers are invited to teacher growth and professional development programmes that train on instructional methods that have been practiced in the classroom for decades. This deprives students of high skill they need for careers in the 21st century. Both teachers and students do not receive the direction needed for participation in a functional education system that prepares for challenges that face us. The challenges of this century call for system thinking that emphasizes collegiality and collective autonomy. Even with the best of budgets, technology and facilities nothing much will be achieved because what the contemporary times need is capable leadership with a clear vision and focus to drive the system to achieve results. Educational administrators must understand what to do to be successful.

Educational Administration and the Preparation of Students for Careers in the 21st Century

The prevailing changes in society demand changes in the role of education administration in Nigeria. Under the present circumstances, educational administrators have the prime task to provide the vision and partnerships necessary to cope with this change. As central gatekeepers of processes and outcomes, in partnership with teachers on effective practices and as conveyors of best practices and catalysts of learning educational administrators have crucial roles to play in preparing students for careers in the 21st century. Tirado (2006) highlights that educational administrators have to ensure that, the educational programme offered students is complete- a fusion of content and skills; improve professional development of staff, ensure better curriculum and better ways of assessment.

The 21st century business model require educational administrators to articulate clear vision, mission and values; clearly define roles and responsibilities, communicate standards philosophy, create an environment of innovation and creativity; value and reward people; promote professional development, as well as promote cooperation and team work. Educational administrators have to facilitate the teaching of skills that enable students to participate, achieve and compete in the contemporary and future global environment. To support 21st century knowledge and skills for enhanced student competencies AACTE (2010) emphasize that educational administrators have several roles to play.

They are required to create active learning communities where coaching, mentoring, knowledge sharing and technology teaching are emphasized; align

technology with content and pedagogy and develop abilities for their use; align instruction with standards; balance instruction with project teaching methods; use diverse assessment methods; create flexible and adaptive environment that support different methods of teaching and learning and create education support systems that promote continuous learning.

Conclusion

Contemporary changes in various areas of society including the economy have resulted to the emergence of different careers. These careers require individuals with relevant skills to work in them. Education as a catalyst of change has to respond to help individuals to acquire critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration and creative skills needed for careers in the 21st century. Educational administrators as agents of change have been slow in responding to these demands. It is imperative however that they rise up to perform their roles in ensuring that students are given functional skills they need to succeed in careers and living in contemporary society.

Recommendations

Based on the above, it is recommended that educational administrators should abandon traditional approaches towards transforming the educational system and embrace more progressive and democratic approaches that enhance collective accountability.

They should design appropriate curriculum, instructional models and assessments and create conducive learning environments; they should also engage in partnerships that promote continuous learning.

References

- AACTE. (2010). 21st century knowledge and skills in educators preparation. Retrieved 10/11/2016 from www.p21.org
- Breiner, A. (2012). The challenges facing education entering the 21st century. *Sustainability Education and Transformational Change*, 5.
- Hooley, T. (2012). How the internet changed careers. Framing the relationship between career development and on-line technologies. *Journal of National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 29 (3).
- Howland, T. L. (2013). Facts 101: Key facts contents. Technologies Inc.

- Kay, R. (2011). The seven steps to becoming a 21st century school. Retrieved 10/11/2016 from www.edutopia.org.
- Moja, T. (2000). *Nigeria education sector analysis: An analytical synthesis of performance and main issues*. New York: World Bank.
- Ochai, G. (2013). *Fundamentals of educational management*. Makurdi: Success World Publications.
- Olatunde, O.H. (2015). Basic concepts in educational administration and management. In J. I. Agbe & Odeh R.C. (eds.). *Introduction to educational administration and planning*. Makurdi: Impart Communications.
- Partnerships for 21st Century Skills. (2010). P.21 framework for learning to make educators bring people to be effective citizens and workers in the 21st century. Author.
- Rotherham, A.J. & Willingham, D. (2009). 21st century skills. The challenges ahead. *Leadership*, 67 (1).
- Schlneider, A. (2015). Schools for the 21st century learners; strong leaders, confident teachers, innovative approaches. Retrieved 10/11/2016 from <https://dx.doi.org/00.1787/9789264231191-2n>.
- Tirado, R. (2006). Educational administration in the 21st century. Challenges, ideas and issues. Paper presented at the annual national conference of National Association of Educational Administrators, Kentucky, August, 3.
- US Department of Labour (2015). Retraining 50 million Americans in the electronically mediated solution. Retrieved 10/11/2016 from <https://wdr.doleta.gov>.