

ADDRESSING EDUCATIONAL EXIGENCIES FOR NATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH: RECOURSE TO GRAPHIC DESIGN

Tebu Ovie

*Department of Fine and Applied Arts,
Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku.*

This paper is designed to identify aching national educational issues that need urgent attention – exigencies that manifest as challenges that slow down economic growth and development. One of the identified educational challenges is lack of proper positioning of the educational system towards the training of sophisticated manpower that is capable of meeting the challenges of the modern technologically vibrant world. The study involves the review and interpretation of a variety of sourced literary contents. The paper sums up that addressing the educational exigencies should involve restructuring of the educational system, research development, use of Graphic Design products for enhancing instructional delivery, among others. In conclusion, the paper posits that addressing the exigencies should invariably result in a rise in the standard of education in Nigeria in the short run, and in the long run, result in massive economic development and industrialization. One of the recommendations is that higher institutions of learning should be provided state-of-the-art equipment as standard educational models.

Learning is fundamental to man, and the field of education deserves its place of significance in the context of human endeavours. Therefore, the subject of education has been studied and defined by several authors. Education was defined as “a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges, to improve knowledge and develop skills... the subject of study that deals with how to teach”, (Hornby, 2001). The above definition alludes to the fact that education is not restricted to acquisition of knowledge and skills in formal institutions – schools and colleges. More explicitly, education can be defined as a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, and, or research, (Odiba, 2012, in Ogbu, 2016). Ogbu (2016) went on to state that education may also include informal

transmission of information from one human being to another. Also, education can be regarded as the process and result of the acquisition of systematized knowledge and skills, (Okojie, 2007, in Ogbu, 2016).

Values of Education

Uduk (2016) observed that education is a pathfinder, the fountain, foundation, significant and strategic tool for development. Offor (2016) offered that the general consensus among educationists and development practitioners is that no nation can develop beyond the level of her education, and that education is the bedrock of every societal development and nation building. This position was corroborated by Ogbiji (2013) who observed that education is the bedrock of any nation, and “more importantly, functional education is what Nigeria needs...” to be “numbered among the developed economies of the world by the year 2020”. Functional education is education that is practical and useful to the beneficiaries and the society at large, Ogbiji (2013). Furthermore, it was stated that education unlocks the door to modernization, (Ukeje, 1995, in Offor, 2016). Also, it was observed that education helps people to work better, create opportunities for sustainable and viable economic growth now and into the future, encourages transparency, good governance, stability and helps fight against graft and corruption, (Orah, 2013). Human capital is primarily accumulated through education and training insofar as these two categories of capacity building efforts are the most important means of upgrading human intellect and skills(Onwuka, 2012, in Orah, 2013).

Educational Exigencies in Building of a National Economy

According to Orah (2016), the impact of investment in education is profound, it results in raising income, improving health, ameliorating climate change and reducing poverty. There are a variety of national developmental requirements that are education based which, in the context of this work are termed exigencies. They are multi-faceted and interlinked.

In an article titled Problems and Prospects of Education in Nigeria, Adetola (2016) identified some educational challenges, namely poor parenting/guidance, financial constraint, and poor preparation of students for examination that result in examination malpractice. On the issue of poor parenting/guidance, he (Adetola, 2016) observed that many parents are now involved in encouraging the young ones (students) to participate in examination malpractices by means of financing activities in and around the examination venues to effect malpractices, in order to increase the chances of their children securing admission into higher institutions. Some of the students even progress in this act in tertiary institutions, and this results in the production of “half-baked

graduates,”(Adetola, 2016). In his view, these are graduates who cannot properly express themselves - graduates who can neither write correct sentences nor argue constructively.

Regarding financial constraints, Adetola (2016) opined that the gross underfunding of the educational sector in the country generally, and neglect of the maintenance of physical facilities have contributed to the problems confronting the educational system. He added that a visit to government owned institutions (tertiary institutions) would reveal deplorable state of facilities, starting from dilapidated buildings, to inadequate furniture, and unconducive learning environment.

Also, he (Adetola, 2016) stated that examination malpractice is as a result of poor preparation, and poor preparation is associated with laziness, and lack of self-confidence. Furthermore, he alleged that teachers in secondary schools promote examination malpractice by encouraging students to contribute money (cooperation fees) in order to secure assistance during examinations because they, the teachers are left with no other alternatives considering the fact that they are “aware of the inadequate preparation of their students as well as the facilities to properly prepare them” before examinations.

In the Nigerian context, it was observed, “Nigeria’s education system is beset with lots of problems,(Orah, 2013), and “the Nigerian education sector is not positioned to facilitate the growth of the economy because it is not geared towards the training of sophisticated manpower capable of meeting the challenges of the modern technologically vibrant world (Onwuka, 2012, in Orah, 2013).

Writing on implications of educational exigencies of the 21st century on teacher education programs in East Africa, Kajoro, Chirure, and Simiyu (2013) opined that perhaps, the most striking exigency of the 21st century is information and communication technology (ICT). They (Kajoro, Chirure, and Simiyu, 2013) observed that ICT is expanding rapidly in this century and according to UNESCO (2002), teacher education institutions have either to assume a leadership role in the transformation of education or be left behind in the swirl of rapid technological change. The trio of authors further observed that Inoue and Bell (2006) contend that web based learning, e-learning, technology-mediated learning and technology enhanced learning are a reality of today's educational systems. According to Ramanujam (2007) the World Wide Web involves hundreds of millions of people and over a billion Web pages. He (Ramanujam, 2007) added that as a medium, it is extraordinarily flexible, with interactive formats, and is also a personal medium, allowing one-on-one conversations, support groups, virtual communities and individualized access to information. ICTs have the ability to transform the nature of education, where and how learning takes place, and the roles of

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students and teachers in the learning process (JanssensBevernage, Cormille&Mwaniki, 2006; Thorsen, 2006 in Ramanujam, 2007). This is especially necessary because the 21st century learner is technology savvy. The implication for teachers is that they should be knowledgeable to offer guidance to their learners, as well as explore those aspects of technology that will enhance their content delivery.

According to Okonjo (2017), as monitored in 2009, the best Nigerian university ranked forty-fourth (44th) in Africa and five thousand, eight hundred and thirty-fourth (5,834th) in the world, but currently occupies a more respectable position where the best Nigerian university ranks twentieth (20th) in Africa, and one thousand eight hundred and forty second (1,842nd) in the world. Okonjo (2017) itemized various problems that have prevented optimal performance in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, including

- ❖ The absence of seasoned teachers, who, in conjunction with student-teachers from the university and university-type institutions, can upgrade the capabilities and work experience of the secondary and primary schools;
- ❖ The dearth of appropriate workshops, seminars, conferences, short courses and other forms of academic and skill training, which, if delivered on a sustained basis, can lead to the improvement of the performance of teachers, and subsequently, that of students;
- ❖ The inability that now characterizes the tertiary sub-sector of education, to see, recognize and accept that knowledge creation is of paramount importance in the process of development.

Addressing the Exigencies

It has been suggested that in Nigeria, the way forward involves restructuring of the educational system. In relation to this, Adetola (2016) drew attention to a remark by the former president of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan that the policy underpinning the education system in Nigeria needed to be reviewed to suit the transformation agenda of the government. In other words, one approach to addressing the educational exigencies is by restructuring of the educational system. Furthermore, Adetola (2016) observed that there is need for research development, denoting the need for individuals and organisations to urgently and adequately finance academic research programmes, inventions (positive inventions), and ensure mass production of the invented products as a way of discouraging students from indulging in any form of academic irregularities. Obviously, the above alludes to the development of the psychomotor domain, with emphasis on skills acquisition, for invention of utility oriented products, such that students who are practically oriented can develop themselves, or be developed in this

direction, rather can get or feeling suffocated by much theory work that they may find difficult to cope with.

Graphic design, an integral aspect of Fine and Applied Arts (Visual Arts) is useful for addressing educational exigencies and for boosting national development. Learning, for instance, of complex, or apparently complex concepts and systems can be simplified through the wonderful world of 2 dimensional and 3 dimensional animation. Animations are created by graphic designers. Anything that can be imagined can be created by the artist and given virtual life through animation. Learning through animation can be interesting, thus grabbing the attention of learners.

Video editing and production, an aspect of graphic design work possesses tremendous potential for education, as educational videos facilitate learning. A wide variety of educational video tutorials are available online. They can be downloaded and played from time to time by a learner. Also, graphic design is useful for website design, as well as book illustration through which students across the world glean useful information.

There exist a wide variety of graphic design products that facilitate educational learning. However, with the exception of the print medium, most of the other afore mentioned graphic design products are either foreign and quite unavailable for instructional delivery in Nigerian institutions, or not tailored for the Nigerian curriculums. Hence, in order to address the issue of examination malpractice, for instance, meaningful and interesting academic learning should be facilitated with adequate equipment and suitably tailored graphic media products including video tutorials, animations, well-illustrated books, and online resources. When students are well prepared for examinations, the issue of examination malpractice should be a thing of the past.

Kajoro, Chirure and Simiyu (2013) proposed that teacher education programs need to focus on practical application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), as teachers need new understandings of the pedagogies appropriate to the 21st century (Forde, McMahon, McPhee, Patrick, 2006 in Kajoro, Chirure, and Simiyu, 2013). As Collin & Jung, cited in Jung (2005), teachers are likely to integrate ICT in their teaching if they experienced ICT skills as learners (Kajoro, Chirure and Simiyu, 2013). In Tanzania, the national ICT policy on education gives prominence to the use of ICT as a pedagogical tool for teaching and learning, and for professional development of teachers (Wamakote, Ang'ondi & Onguko, 2010 in Kajoro, Chirure, and Simiyu, 2013). The authors contend that there needs to be a "shift from learning about ICTs to learning with and through ICT" (SEED, 2005 in Kajoro, Chirure, and Simiyu, 2013). This shift is expected to produce ICT literate teachers and a versatile, adaptable teaching workforce

that is consistent with the human capital theory of education (Hawkins, 2002; Wamakote, Ang'ondi, & Onguko, 2010 in Kajoro, Chirure, and Simiyu, 2013). Inoue and Bell (2006 in Kajoro, Chirure, and Simiyu, 2013) contend that ICT will facilitate the move from passive learning to active learning, which is the current thinking by advocates for learner autonomy and life-long learning.

Recourse to Visual Arts

From the foregoing, suggestions for addressing the educational exigencies include review and restructuring of the educational system, and research development through adequate financing, which should snowball into meaningful inventions for mass production. Also, teacher education programs need to focus on practical application of Information and Communication Technology (I.C.T.), a shift from learning about I.C.T. to learning with and through I.C.T. thereby encouraging active learning, learner autonomy and life-long learning.

A review of the education policy of a nation should emphasize the development of creativity, “thinking outside the box”, and should make adequate provisions for hands-on-exploratory work and the development of manipulative skills as well as aesthetics, as applied to media of expression. The above are essential for meaningful economic growth. The Visual Arts train the individual’s power of imagination and expression of ideas in Visual form. That is, new imagined ideas are given a physical embodiment through the power of expression of the artist or designer– this is creativity. Creativity is applied in diverse fields. Technology evolves from creativity. In other words, creativity breeds technology. Creativity, which may manifest in artistic visual conformations guide the production of the embodiment and aesthetics for technological products, and technology is vital in the development of national economy.

Visual Arts training encourages high quality self-expression in visual form, as against sticking to a given imported stereotype or design mould. This makes Visual Arts, or selected topics in Visual Arts relevant for the professional training of trainees or students in non-Visual Arts programmes, and at lower levels of educational pursuit. For instance, programmers or software engineers invariably have a lot to do with the display of the content of their programmes in the form of graphic interface. This relates to Graphic Design, an aspect of Visual Arts. Engineers produce designs that bear imprints of three-dimensionality and this is applicable to the three-dimensional (3D) artist whose work is termed to be in-the-round, or even, the 3-D animator who produces models in the round by making use of 3-D software.

In addition, through the Graphic Design component of Visual Arts, educational, scientific, technological, and economic pieces of information are effectively communicated to target audience. This comprises text and images (illustrations and

photographs). According to Sabol (2011)“the Visual Arts have been used to educate, persuade, commemorate, and solve problem. In fact, daily we are dependent upon the visual arts to make sense of the world in which we live”. He (Sabol, 2011) added that in our contemporary society, the visual arts and dependence upon visual imagery is essential in communicating and understanding information we need to live our lives, and advocated that in order to fully understand visual imagery and its meaning, it is essential that all people receive an arts infused education as such an education enables people to become informed citizens, critical thinkers, creative problem solvers and productive members of society.

• **A Need To Promote Creativity**

According to Tebu (2010) creativity means bringing into reality an event, product or thing. He (Tebu, 2010) observed that creativity is central, but not limited to Visual Arts.

Creative thinking is the springboard for the development of creative solutions, and the Visual Arts promote creative thinking and imagination. If visionary writers and scientists combine dexterity in the use of the hands to produce functional and aesthetic forms, their creative imaginations, thus given visual comprehensible embodiments, technology will be accelerated.

According to Adobe (2012), between October 17-19, 2017,Edelman Berland conducted a ten-minute online survey among a sample of 1000 Americans of ages 25+, who are college-educated, and full time (salaried) employees. The study revealed that

- 57% of college educated professionals believe creativity is a learned skill that can be learned in their career
- 65% believe it is a personality trait that is innate.
- 88% agree creativity should be built into education curriculums
- 72% agree they were more focused on subject matter than creative thinking in school.
- 85% agree creative thinking is critical for problem solving in their career but nearly one-third (32%) do not feel comfortable thinking creatively at work.

Concerning the study, Adobe (2012) further reveals that each respondent was asked what his/her favourite teacher or professor did in school to encourage creativity, and below are some of the responses:

- I had a science teacher that told us on the first day of school that curiosity is the beginning of science, and that she said, “if you don’t ask questions or wonder why... or why not... you will never make new discoveries.”

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- We approached the texts and course material from new perspectives, engaged our senses and presented information and understanding of course concepts through mixed media rather than just papers or exams.
- My favourite college professor didn't just lecture about science... I was forced to see his lessons as not only static information on a page but dynamic interactions that were constantly in motion.

The above reveal the need for creativity.

Conclusion

This paper has drawn attention to national issues that require urgent attention(exigencies) in the educational sector. A quick response to the effect of addressing the exigencies should invariably result in a rise in the standard of Nigerian education in the short run, and in the long run, result in massive economic development and industrialization.

Recommendations

1. Government should pay particular attention to Nigerian education by implementing national educational policy and developmental initiatives through well outlined procedural steps and sustained efforts.
2. Higher institutions of learning should be provided state-of-the-art equipment/facilities as standard educational models, and the teaching staff should be re-trained in specified areas that target identified development needs.
3. Trained staff within and across a number of disciplines, industrial design (graphic design) in collaboration with science / technology for instance, should be challenged towards meeting specified short term, middle term and long term education related goals that should spur national development targets. In this case, adequate resources should be provided, extent of success should be measurable, and innovation, ingenuity, or creative success rewarded.
4. Syllabi and curriculums of Nigerian educational institutions at all levels should be regularly reviewed and implemented.

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