

**THE PLACE OF DIGITAL LITERACY IN RESUSCITATING NIGERIAN
EDUCATION TOWARDS VOCATIONAL, ENTREPRENEURIAL AND
PROFESSIONAL TRANSFORMATION**

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Ijeoma Genevieve Ani Kelechi
Department of Science Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University,
Awka, Nigeria.
ijeomakc@gmail.com

Abstract

Education for national development and transformation has become fundamental in the process of nation building across different societies. In Nigeria, the education sector is largely faced with multiple problems that have undermined it from pre-colonial to contemporary times. This study used qualitative data that were collected from secondary literature and Bandura's theory of social learning to develop the content of the study. The study found that the professional workplace in the Nigerian setting have become fundamentally undermined by the multiple effects of the challenges faced in the Nigerian education. The study therefore explained how digital literacy could be applied to vocational and entrepreneurial education in other to attained transformations in the professional workplace.

Keywords: digital literacy, education, professionalism & Nigeria

Introduction

The Nigerian environment traditionally witnessed different levels of informal education before the incursion of the white men. When the white men landed Nigeria in their quest to colonise the country, with their superior firearm, they intimidated and suppressed the different Nigerian peoples with their gunboat diplomacy. That quickly created room for them to coarsen the leadership of these independent societies in Nigeria into signing treaties of protectionism leading to the rise of Nigerian protectorates and colonies. Consequently, the missionaries that came earlier than the colonial

administrators had earlier introduced catechetical education that was meant to keep the mind of the Nigerian people perpetually caged to the bible and religious slavery in order to favour the white men and their idea of Christianity. Nevertheless, the then catechetical schools were not largely accepted by the people and those colonial schools produced warrant chiefs and others that helped to deepen Christianity and colonial administration of the Nigeria. Today, catechesis is growing in church-owned schools (Okpaleke, 2019). However, at independence, Nigerians began to clamor for a new form of education that will lead to the skill empowerment

of the masses and not just the mere certification of the citizenry to work for the colonial government.

Unfortunately, the culture of certification from Nigerian schools without properly inculcating the requisite skills and vocational crafts gradually grew in the post-independence years across (Akanbi & Jekakayinfa, 2019) Nigerian societies. Every Nigerian began to see the acquisition of university degree as the perfect way to go in order to ensure sustainable good life for the future. Truthfully, and at that time of the oil boom era in the Nigerian state, the fact that there were few Nigerians with adequate university certificates created massive employment opportunities. These opportunities allowed the certified graduate to make a career choice that gave the greatest advantage and had the best of prospects for him. By extension, the period witnessed the rise of a working-class group, whose certificates created opportunities for them to get two to three classy jobs at the same time with charming and wonderful conditions of work. Hence, the craze for university certificates by the early educated Nigerian intellectual elite started. Both the rich and poor families began to send their children to acquire the highly revered university certificates in the bid to eke out the best of life for the future.

Unfortunately, by the turn of the century, the value of the certificates from Nigerian universities became largely depreciated in value due to the number of those possessing it and the

economic crisis that is growing in the country. There were millions of Nigerians that have gone to acquire tertiary education and they had all manners of advanced certificates aimed at preparing them to take professional positions in different areas. Unfortunately, there were and currently no commensurate jobs to employ these millions of graduate Nigerians and the crisis of unemployment have actually taken over the country. The matter was made worse considering the fact that many of the university or tertiary degrees were awarded without adequate vocational or skill development. This vocational skill whether formal or informal has over the years, shown the ability and opportunity to transform peoples' lives, especially when it is backed with creativity and hard work.

The point of departure in this paper remains that the Nigerian education is in 'coma' and needs to be urgently resuscitated. This resuscitation will need both the transformation of formal and informal vocational and technical education culture of the people. For instance, the informal Igbo vocational and entrepreneurial economy that grew from non-formal education have produced more millionaires and by extension those that have practically built developmental structures than the economic or developmental outputs produced by the same number of graduates from the formal education sector. Hence, it becomes imperative that there should be strong interrogation on how to advance vocation and entrepreneurial education

using the contemporary culture of digitalization of the work place. Digital literacy has come to stay in the contemporary world hence the need for both the formal and informal learners to key into it in the quest to transform and perfect their career or professional output. The knowledge and use of digital literacy is therefore a tool that can transform all existing professions and career of men on earth.

Aim and Structure of the Study

This study therefore focuses on the place of digital literacy in the promotion of vocational and entrepreneurial education that would go a long way in transforming professionals in both the formal and the informal sectors of the Nigerian creative workplace. The study is divided into number of sections. The first section is the introduction, which gives the background of the study. The second section is the aim and the structure of the article. This is followed by the conceptual clarification of the ideas of vocational and entrepreneurial education. That explanation is subsequently followed by the methodology and the theoretical framework of the study. That section gave way for a discussion on the challenges facing the current Nigerian education sector and findings on factors undermining professionalism in Nigeria before the section where digital literacy was strongly recommended and finally, the conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarification

Vocational education, here is a form of

education that encourages the learner to develop his or her abilities as well as skills within the confines of a given craft (Adefunke & Olaitan, 2020). It is a form of education that focuses on the development of a defined skill. It helps the learner or apprentice to engage in guided learning as well as experimentation in a given craft aimed at sound mastering of the craft. Within the period of guided experimentation, during vocational training and education; the learner also used in this study to cover for the apprentice, will engage in some trials and errors that will create room for mistakes and corrections by the master/ mistress/ instructor or teacher. Thus, as the learner continues the learning process, he or she grows the capacity to engage in a defined vocational craft which will create room for non-guided trials and experimentation on the act of doing a particular craft. When this craft is properly developed, and the learner becomes independent, he or she may likely go into the production of goods or services for targeted customers and consumers, who will in return pay for their knowledge of the craft.

When the craft begins to expand, the need for entrepreneurial culture comes in as a necessary requirement for the management of the human resources that the creative vocational knowledge generates. This then leads to the necessity of entrepreneurial education, especially at the informal sector of the Nigerian economy. Entrepreneurship education is a form of training designed to develop entrepreneurship skills and success that is connected

with entrepreneurial transformation. This is the form of education that could be either formal or informal but makes the entrepreneur an expert manager of the factors of production available at his or her disposition. The entrepreneur has this passion to manage capital (money), land, human resources, etc in order to create wealth and not just limited to interest on investment. He or she engages in entrepreneurial education within a specific field in order to study the nitty gritty of amassing wealth through the proper combination of skills, talents and other available factors of production.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted a qualitative research approach. Data were randomly collected from existing secondary research materials covering journals and book chapters. These data were thematically sort and used for the descriptive interpretation of the study.

The study is anchored on Bandura's theory of social learning. The theory is centred on reflections from the learner, observed behaviours and modelling (Bandura, 1977). The theory therefore advances the place of attention, retention, reproduction and motivation as fundamental in the dynamics of learning (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). This factor explains the place of personal behaviour in performing an existing task (Wasam & Aslam, 2021).

The paper maintains that from vocational to entrepreneurial

education, the learner needs a lot of social learning through consistent observations. The observation of the teacher and instructor as well as guide is fundamental for the learner to pick necessary skills, especially in vocational education. Furthermore, the place of attention and retention will lead to the act of practicing specific skills or experimentation in skill acquisition. This is also needed in digital literacy and professionalism. The entrepreneur in reality survives mostly by ensuring that the workers around him or her are highly motivated to deliver effectively and efficiently within specified time frame.

Discussing the Challenges Facing Nigerian Education Sector

The reality of the contemporary education dynamics in Nigeria is nothing to write home about. There is a very low level of government funding in the education sector (UNESCO). This is because the Nigerian government is still underfunding the education sector. The money allocated for the education sector is far lesser than the UNESCO benchmark that 26% of national budget, hence creating room for gross underfunding of the sector at all levels (Dada, 2022). Secondly, the little fund that has been allocated for the education sector face the challenge of institutional embezzlement. The idea of institutional embezzlement manifests in Nigeria in the form of executing contracts in relations to building the school or university structures that is non-existent or that is built with sub-standard materials

thereby creating room for easy collapse. Again, it also covers the complete embezzlement of the money meant for the education structures by the elite within the political and education constituency where the educational institution is meant to be built.

There is also the problem of lack of necessary and qualified manpower to work in the Nigerian education sector (Birabil & Ogeh, & 2020). It should be noted that the Nigerian education sector is a huge industry that can employ millions or billions of unemployed Nigerians from the basic education sector to the tertiary sector. However, the challenge remains that the Government at all levels in the Nigerian system lack the moral and political will to employ people into the education sector. The Nigerian ruling elite behaves as if they derive joy in watching the education sector collapse or dilapidate, including the schools they attended in the past from primary to tertiary level. While this could easily be understood from the point of intellectual disempowerment in order to create a dependent society, one will not be completely wrong to argue that the Nigerian politicians neglect the education sector at all levels in order to create an army of political thugs, who will always sing yes-songs to their actions and inactions.

Furthermore, the transformation of the education sector by extension will likely transform the culture of voter education, which will in turn create the opportunity for credible elections and

that will retire many of the Nigerian politicians, who find their way to power through the manipulation of electoral violence as well as the manipulation of the machinery of the state like the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) and the state electoral commissions. Thus, the above could be an ideological posture taken by many of the political actors in Nigeria to keep education at the lowest level where there will be complete lack of government funding for infrastructure and human capital that is necessary for the transformation of that sector.

Similarly, the private education sector in Nigeria produces paradoxical realities and results. There are very few standardized educational institutions that are managed by the private actors. They have the equipment and the manpower and they charge exorbitantly that the children of the poor cannot easily find their way to such schools both at the basic and tertiary levels. It is the collection of these few good schools that are managed by committed private actors that millions of Nigerians stake their neck to have their children therein, irrespective of the heavy burden of cost implication in a largely consumer-economy like Nigeria. However, the majority of the private educational establishments lack both the qualified manpower as well as the necessary learning materials and resources. Some of these private universities in Nigeria were floated without sustainable structures, class rooms, libraries nor staff to produce the necessary

intellectual economy.

Ironically, many of the private universities depend on the teaching staff from the government or public universities for make-shift accreditation appointment that last for hours. The secondary and primary schools is the worst hit by this lack of sound human resources as they employ any available unqualified persons to teach learners, while promoting specialized brands that will create a make-believe consciousness on the part of the parents and sponsors or guardians. The worst is that many of these schools are run purely on the basis of extreme capitalism hence, there is no plan to pay the employees well. The employees are given the minimal token that will tie them to progressively keep coming to school.

Unfortunately, Nigerians are terribly crazy for academic certificates and qualifications. This is a reality due to the poor culture of certifying skilled and vocational workers and national madness for certificates as fundamental requirements for employment. The implication is that people go to the education sector from primary to the university level with the wrong believe that the certificate they will acquire will be the near-end of their existential problems. But in reality, the value of the certificate cannot be complete without the personal efforts of the owner of the certificate through positive attitude to advance the worth of the certificate. This explains why many first-class graduates in Nigerian university across

different fields remain at home languishing due to unemployment, while others are found frustrated and doing unimaginable levels of menial jobs, thereby putting to question where lies the same creative ability that landed them to first class honours?

There are other problems with the Nigerian education system ranging from strikes by workers which takes a dangerous dimension at state and federal university levels. Many universities lack basic access to energy, laboratories, libraries, offices and water resources, which makes it difficult for functional scholarship to take place (Okorosaye, 2019). The price of accommodation across Nigerian government universities and the quality of household resources within the campuses remains below basic standard. The laboratories across most Nigerian universities lack the basic equipment needed for scientific research (Birabil & Ogeh, 2020). The problem of controlling the undergraduates of private universities excessively limits their quest for existential independence.

Findings on Factors Undermining Professionalism in Nigeria

The fundamental problem undermining professionalism in the Nigerian setting is the problem of low motivation due to poor wages for vocational and entrepreneurship career. This motivation manifest mainly in the form of wages (Joseph, Anikelechi, & Phemelo 2019). The Nigerian workers need all the sustainable payment and allowances

that would enlarge their morale. Unfortunately, the morale of Nigerian worker is generally low due to poor wages. And that cries for attention by both the private and public sector.

There is also the argument of job satisfaction versus economic empowerment, which remains a continuous debate in the Nigerian work place. This is because the Nigerian worker desire more wealth at the long run to survive the hard economic realities than the temporary passion for job satisfaction, which brings the best out of the worker in the professional environment. Again, the issue of management style by the leadership of every professional establishment calls to mind the need for sustainable managerial abilities that can sustain professionalism in the work place. Unfortunately, there is the radicalization of the work place leadership in Nigeria towards authoritarianism and exploitation in line with the popular culture of the Nigerian state political leadership. Some leaders of professional establishment behave as if they do not care about their subordinates because the Nigerian political elite do not care about those under their watch, thereby extending the same leadership negligence to other leaders in professional organizations and places.

There is need to note that the biggest problem with professional output in Nigeria is the challenge of attitude. Many of the workers in Nigerian environment do not exhibit the necessary passionate attitude for

efficiency and sustainable outputs. The attitude that is popular in Nigeria is that one has graduated or grown to the level of working and hence goes out to look for any available job. He or she accepts the vocational, entrepreneurial or professional job but immediately the majority resumes, they begin to complain of poor remuneration and poor working conditions, thereby putting minimal energy towards the creative actualization of the cooperate goals of the establishment.

Terrorism and insecurity are also big threats undermining professionalism in the Nigerian state. The education sector in Northern Nigeria has been undermined by terrorism (Anikelechi, Ojakorotu & Ani, 2018) while the Southern part of Nigeria remains under the threat of kidnapping and other forms of armed crisis. From Borno State to Yobe and Bauchi states of North eastern Nigeria, the learners both in the formal and informal education sectors were prevented from going to school for days, weeks and months because of both the onslaught of the Boko Haram sect as well as the counter-terror activities of the Nigerian government, especially in 2019. That experience has strong negative implication for the education sector. Unfortunately, the lack of digitalization of the learning process prevented the learners from receiving their teaching very remotely using digital platforms.

Discussing the place of Digital Literacy

The period of covid 19 revealed the

low practice of digital literacy in the Nigerian state. People were working from home in many parts of the world but it was largely difficult in Nigeria due to the low level of digital infrastructure in Nigerian professional sector. The education sector was badly affected by the covid 19 experience (Anyika, Anikelechi, & Thobejane 2021; Ani, Chapanyi, Ihuoma & Ani, 2022). The illiterate of tomorrow will not be a man or woman who cannot read or write, he or she will be the man or woman that has poor knowledge or zero knowledge of digital literacy and artificial intelligence. It is widely known that mass literacy is fundamental for nation building in any country. However, the place of digital literacy in societal transformation cannot be over emphasized. The idea of digital literacy puts ICT on the center stage. Digital literacy created a new form of literacy that is not driven by books but replaced with different forms of screens. It is a form of literacy driven by multimedia technological interaction (Allen 2016).

The place of digital divide in influencing the status of workers, professionals, entrepreneurs etc. have continued to grow from what is known as the digital world. The digital world harbours extensive knowledge production, transference of skills etc to human society. Digitalization provides technological structures and create near-life conditions like the chat rooms. Teachers use digitalization to reach learners beyond defined geographies. It serves as a strong motivation to teachers (Hobbs,

&Tuzel, 2015). It also creates digital networks that transforms all human initiatives (Aydogen 2014).

The place of digital literacy is fundamental for the survival in the professional environment, especially as it relates to vocational and entrepreneurial education. The attitude towards digital literacy is necessary in the quest to adopt it and include it in the people's work ethics. There is a general believe that digital literacy is difficult to acquire. This attitude and posture are very popular amongst many Nigerians in the informal vocational and entrepreneurial sector. Even in the formal professional sector, there are still many people that have phobia for digital literacy. This is because they do keep themselves glued to the traditional working tenets of the vocational and entrepreneurial workplace. Unfortunately, the professional vocational and entrepreneurial workplace in many parts of the globe is increasingly following the digital path to transformation. This quest for digitalization has become the norm for professional transformation. It creates boundless opportunities across the length and breadth of all professions. This is because digitalization kills immediate geographical boundaries and create boundless opportunities for all professions.

Every profession currently has strong online visibility. This visibility creates a new world of opportunities, where people advertise and expands the horizons of their activities. It creates

room for sourcing of grants and aids which naturally empowers vocations and entrepreneurship across the globe. There are many grants for vocational and entrepreneurial empowerment, which non-digital Nigerian professionals cannot access let alone applying for them. The truth remains that foreign grants promote vocational, entrepreneurial and professional ability and working environments in an extraordinary way.

Conclusion

This study has traced the origin of formal education in Nigeria to the catechetical education and colonial education that promoted dependency. It maintained that the post-independence Nigerian society did not work towards the sustainable

educational transformation of the country rather there remained a mad-race for certification, which continued to undermine the Nigerian professional output and nation building process. It created the rise of millions of graduates who do not think critically on how to carve a niche in their real world due to the fake value for their university certificates. This could be perceived as the most serious challenge undermining the culture of professionalism, irrespective of the career. Consequently, the study maintained that digitalization is fundamental for the transformation of the level of efficiency and output level in both the formal and informal professional sector of the Nigerian state.

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