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Transforming Effects of Leadership & Governance in Schools

... Climbing the ladder of excellence in education: how do we begin?

*A Keynote Address, delivered by Dr Bc Akin-Alabi
@ the Launch of the NSF Excellence in Education Development*



INTRODUCTION & CURRENT SCENRIO

Many thanks to the NSF for organising this seminar which gives me so much hope as I strongly believe that in order to rescue the future of our dear country we need to look into self helps and be more proactive and look away from the government. Governments have been coming and going since independence, unfortunately they have not done a lot to put education of our children where it should be. Hence, our future has become bleak, we live in a society where the glorification of corrupt practices have become the standard, our leaders have failed to entrench a culture of achievement through hardwork, honesty, and service to humanities in the young. Thereby making future outlook seems bleak. We need to understand that except by a stroke of luck, the type of leaders in a society is a reflection of the educational system.

Every day our young people read about how one leader or the other embezzled funds from our common wealth or how the fugitive past of some supposed heroes of democracy is uncovered, how corrupt practices and indiscipline is entrenched in our institutions and those in authorities look the other way.

Today I intend to speak from the heart and I hope it would not just end here. I hope this keynote address which I have entitled "Climbing the Ladder of Excellence in Education"; would not end up like the thousands if not millions of speeches delivered by great minds and intellectuals about the state of education and solutions for education development in our dear Nation, Nigeria. I personally, am becoming frustrated by the day, growing weary and tired of all the issues confronting us particularly the education of our children in Nigeria. Our children learn in an environment not fit to put our much loved pets, classrooms look like a scene from the Iraq's war fronts, schools lack furniture,

the roofing sheets are leaking if and where the roof is not completely blown away, thugs and miscreants defecate on the classroom floors, corridors and specialist rooms are riddled with potholes, our schools have no teaching aids, no laboratories, no libraries, no ICT suites, no toilets, staff rooms are bare, no specialist rooms, home economics are taught on black boards, the fate of our young ones, our future is left to rusty teachers who are poorly motivated, badly remunerated and lack any form of incentives. Yet we are all aware of the trends in the developed parts of the world where Robots, Automation & Technology is Taking Over In Large Scale- Putting Many Jobs At Risk? To quote Prof Charles Soludo, recently he said, and I quote" the world is on the 4th Industrial revolution with digital economy and we are struggling with the first stage of Rostow's stages of growth.

Artificial intelligence together with other future technologies such as robotics, synthetic biology, computational science, nanotechnology, quantum computing, 3D and 4D printing,

internet of Things, cognitive science, self-driving vehicles, etc--- will surely produce totally different social and economic configurations than what we know today"

As such new skill sets are being created. Are we ready to unlearn and relearn is the major issue now. A Change for better is non existence, even though we see few improvements in some states but the majority of the pictures are gloomy in nature. Most of the intervention in education lack depths, not well documented hence not sustainable. Our problem is not much of that of unemployment really but that of the fact that majority of our youths are grossly unemployable. With the efforts of the present government in promoting local industries the reality of the situation is that all the new industries in the last five years are dominated by foreigners. We do not have the skills to fill the vacancies and our plush jobs are taken away by expatriates or the few Nigerians that come back from the Diaspora, while the majority of our youths lack opportunities

benefit from this development. The Nigerian population is largely youthful, with over 40% of the Nigerian population between 0-14 years old; 53% between 15-65 years and 4% over 65 years. The options open to our youths are many but negative. These are : prostitution, militancy, 419, internet fraud, armed robbery, thuggery or street hawking etc. Some of them after struggling to get some sort of half baked education seek greener pastures and leave the country in droves. Leaving us with a glooming outlook and if nothing is done about this we all can visualise the doomed end in not too distant future. Our education sector is busy producing half baked products, some of our secondary school leavers cannot spell or write their names not to talk of offer any skills in the work place. The situation is bleak. Quoting my mentor once again Prof. Charles Soludo, he said "Ordinary people who can't explain what has hit them, resort to all sorts of criminal activities to survive..... the easiest way to waste the future is to continue to churn out millions of semi-illiterate,

largely unemployable citizens, most of whom see criminality as the only route to escape the poverty trap or drug as the opium for solace. With an urbanisation rate of over 5%, the conflagration that might ensue when hundreds of millions surge to the cities but can't find jobs, housing, water and food can only be imagined. Soon, the rich won't be able to sleep because the poor, homeless and hungry are awake."

Hmmmm. And that was what we experienced recently when some miscreants used the excuse of the xenophobic attacks in south Africa to loot and attack individuals going about their normal daily routines. If we do not see that this is the picture of things to come. Unfortunately my people we should expect more of these sort of incidents if we continue to fold our arms and do nothing. If we fail to fix the decline in our education sector today, if we fail to train the majority of our youths today to become competent civil citizens of tomorrow then we shall continue to day dream that competent, civil and dynamic leadership will fall from the skies to fix the resulting decline in

CLIMBING THE LADDER OF EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION"

HOW DO WE BEGIN? WE NEED

To achieve SDG 4 sustainable development goal 4 (quality education). And my message to all well meaning Nigerians home and abroad is simple: let's reverse the rot in our educational standards by confronting the underlying issues. First and foremost is the lack of opportunities for our youths. In order to tackle this issue the starting premise is that education which is a human right must be readily accessible to every child in the Nation today.

To deploy our own model of

education intervention just as we are seeing now that the western democracy may not be apt for our peculiar socio cultural set up, to deliberately optimize the potentials of the huge youthful population to be highly productive at home & globally competitive through the provision of cutting edge educational system fit for our purpose in the 21st century, enabled by technology and inculcate Character education, functional and life skills will definitely not be far from the solution.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

The World Commission on Environment & Development WCED (Bruntland Commission) has defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Therefore, sustainable development means thinking of the future.

Climbing the Ladder of Excellence in Education"; how do we as a Nation bridge

CLIMBING THE LADDER OF EXCELLENCE

the huge gaps in our archaic educational system to provide the much needed opportunities for our youths, how do we feed the Nation with the unsophisticated farming methodologies? It is true that we have received help in the past and still getting help but such helps are mainly interventions by Nigerians and friends of Nigerians both home and abroad have been directed at building classroom blocks in our schools (which are; of course desperately needed).

As evidenced from recent developments in the Western world whereby there is a shrinking population of Caucasians and declines in birth rates, these societies would need productive labour and India has positioned herself to provide highly skilled migrants professionals to these countries. If we get our acts together why can't Nigeria strategically position herself to become a hub for producing competent capable human resources? Climbing the Ladder of Excellence in Education"; how do we as a Nation bridge the huge gaps in our archaic educational system to provide the much needed opportunities for our youths, how do we feed the Nation with the unsophisticated farming methodologies?

My message is simple and I have been singing this to all who cares to listen and would not stop till we get attention. We need our own Model Education System Intervention that can be deployed on a National level through individual states. As I would explain in the next part of my address.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

The Solution: Climbing the Ladder of Excellence in Education" where do we begin? Implications for NEED: Nigerian Schools Foundation (NSF) Excellence in Education Development. There are 49 Alumni secondary schools from across Nigeria in

NSF. It is good that the Education Team is trying to raise awareness and encourage schools to think not just about fund raising but also how to support and drive quality, they would also need to come up with an Education Intervention Plan that would include a combinations of the following activities:

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

COLLABORATIONS

TCPD & I



Meeting the challenges

- 1. embark on an aggressive membership drive to increase schools to a minimum of 100 across Nigeria and establish chapters in south and NORTH america, other parts of Europe and the rest of the World**
- 2. Another key focus would be to address the disparity in the education standards across the Nation.**
- 3. Furthermore, why should we not deploy an incentive programme to promote careers in education and learning.
How?**



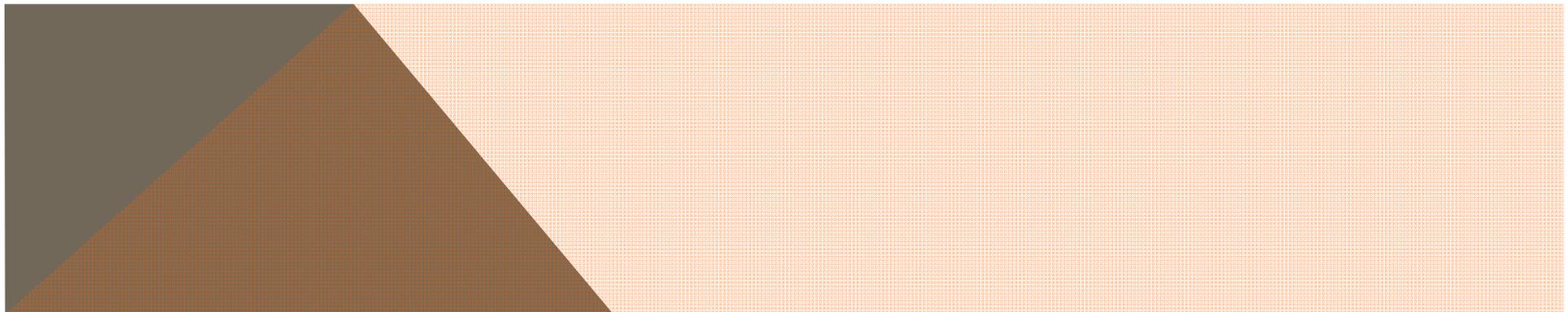
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EDUCATION IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE MECHANISM FOR DEVELOPMENT.

Development is the main instrument for wealth creation. So what is development? Development is the degree to which the freedom of people is enhanced. Development enhances the freedom of people and free people enhance development, it is a virtuous circle. So How do we start this, Education is the most effective mechanism for development.

No country is less likely to go far beyond the threshold of development, unless it ensures that most of its people receives a good basic education.

So what do we mean by Quality Education?, whether at primary or any other level, the standard general definition of quality is fitness of purpose at minimum costs to society. The purpose of education is learning to know, learning to do , learning to be, and learning to live together. It is the creation of competent and civil individuals, a basic prerequisite for sustained development. Developed countries of the world aspire to have a thriving knowledge economies which depend on creativity and ingenuity.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In conclusion distinguished guests, friends of education and Nigerian patriots, there is no gain saying that, we need to consciously develop education as an instrument of socio-economic transformation and start shaking the tables and unleash processes that would lead to our school leaders observing world best practices in education if we really are desirous about removing the bleakness that is before us.

We need to be deliberate, focused and strategic.

Our ministry of education should be supported to become highly effective to mould the future of our youths. While the above might seem daunting, we can start with a pilot programme.

It is my sincere belief that the information, analysis & inferences contained in this address will whet the appetite of the NSF managements, members & other stakeholders to look for opportunities to support excellence in education development



THANK YOU



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