

## **RATIONALIZING ARTISTIC EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Educational standards correlate strongly with national development worldwide. It is doubtful, if the apparent level of Nigeria's educational standards is commensurate with the level of her development. Parametrically, the standard of knowledge-based education determines the differential levels of nations on the development strata. It could be argued that development is a function of quality of education. Of the three popular conceptions of development, that which puts premium on growth of human potentials and capabilities in concert with other social indices of civility termed **Human Capital**, is a direct outcome of proactive education. A recent survey puts Nigerian unemployable graduates at 75%. These lack applicable skills needed in the job market. In other words, certification no longer guarantees meal ticket. By implication such an army of dysfunctional work force cannot contribute positively to Nigeria's development, since to be certified is now to be functional. The emergent questions are:- what type of training does our education offer to persons of school/college age.? Is our educational offering at various tiers capable of supporting meaningful livelihood for recipients in a highly competitive, ever changing hi-tech global community? As experts bemoan the ineffectiveness of education as an agent of socialization they should also worry about its impotency to catalyze needed technological culture. The need therefore, to re-examine extant educational practices and attempt innovative models arises. This is the crux of this discourse which is anchored on the technological and environmental studies.

***Keywords: artistic education; human capital development; functional education; visual literacy; educational policy reform***

### **Introduction**

Ordinarily the purpose of education and educating persons is to get such persons in tune with established life patterns of their communities and to have potentials to advance extant level of civilization in those communities. The community may be as small as a hamlet of five huts or as large as our present global village. What constitutes the standards of education in any such polity correlates strongly with its level of socio-cultural and economic advancement. Following the popular maxim, "act locally but think globally", our local Nigerian educational practice should be borne of local realities but rationalized within the context of the best global practices.

It is still doubtful if the apparent level of Nigeria's artistic education standards is commensurate with the perceived state of development of the nation state. If there is a mismatch between these two, then our educational policy and practice has to be rationalized to catalyze visible socio-cultural, economic and technological development (Al-Said and Dubois (2024). Of the three popular conceptions of development in the literature, that which puts premium on the growth of human potentials and capabilities in concert with other social indices of civility termed **human capital** is the direct function of proactive education in other words education for development.

There is a large population of unemployed school leavers in Nigeria, but more worrisome is the percentage of this population that are unemployable for the reasons of lack of work place skills to trade with. A survey puts the number of University graduates within this group at 75%. This represents an "educated" number of youths who lack applicable skills needed in the job market The truth is that such an army of dysfunctional workforce cannot contribute positively to Nigeria's development since they received a certificate which does not attest to functional competences. This detracts from education aimed at development. Development is worked out and by persons who have been trained. It is not what a group of people do for others (Al-Said and Dubois, 2024)

As experts bemoan the ineffectiveness of education in Nigeria as an agent of socialization (Igborgbor, 2006) they should also worry about its impotency to catalyze needed technological

culture. Vermeulen and Thompson (2026) suggested that there is need therefore, to interrogate our extant educational policies/practices and attempt innovative functional models directed at our socio-economic development arises.

In an attempt to proffer ideas for such an enterprise, I will try to provide answers to two questions raised by the statement of the problem. These questions are: Is our educational offering at various tiers capable of supporting meaningful livelihood for recipients in a highly competitive, ever changing hi-tech global community? Is our educational policy and practice iii quality and distribution capable of catalyzing our development? If our answers are not completely in the affirmative, what do we need to do? Through an exploratory approach, I shall attempt a discussion of these issues from the perspective of the artistic skill education in the environmental studies

### **Educating for What?**

Experts in the history of Education will agree that education in Nigeria has moved from Jowitts (1959) effective organization of African experiences to suit his/her cultural life/environment at the dawn of colonization, through the four objectives of the **National Policy on Higher Education** (1998:22) to the unwritten but much hooted thinking globally and acting locally. This is only a redefinition of the Jowitts model as preparation must always take into account peoples experiences, cultural life and environment. So if the modern policy advocates the preparation of young adults to embrace all that is needed to survive in the global village drawing from their immediate environment, it's a rhetoric of change and continuity. What this suggests is that as educators we iii Nigeria need 1o understand the new environment and culture and their modes of organization. This will enable us decide what is best imparted to students for meaningful adjustment into the new society.

For instance, Vermeulen and Thompson (2026), opined that the community is no longer the traditional hamlet, the village, nation or sub-region. It is now the entire globe made hamlet by the information super highway. Thus the new teacher and student are operating in an enlarged environment; the culture is equally global, hybridized or multi-faceted. This calls for a reinforced educational foundation for today's child against tomorrow's durable development skyscraper.

Presently, it would appear that Nigeria is educating for the sake of obtaining paper certification and not for grooming of human capital. Unfortunately obtaining a certificate is no longer a guarantee for getting employment. This suggests that Nigeria should educate her growing citizens for development-raising human capital.

Elsewhere (Egonwa 2009b) I maintained that:

*Human Capital is about grooming the person who becomes an asset in the production chain of socio-cultural and economic development. It's about raising the army of experts in the various fields of endeavour as a nation to drastically lessen or ultimately eliminate economic dependency o other nations. Simply put human capital is a concern about growth in people of applicable human skills and capabilities to enable them enforce development by and for themselves.*

In making time above assertion, I realized that the easiest way to begin towards its attainment is through the type and quality of education a state offers from the nursery, through the primary, secondary to her higher institutions.

Unfortunately, the curricular, design and the execution of learning and instruction in Nigeria today neglects many universal truths about knowledge acquisition for directed purpose. Time domains and dimensions of knowledge are not considered in the choice of subjects taught and in the manner those preferred subjects are taught(Harris &Awosika, 2025). Specifically, our educational offering in principle and practice does not have adequate foundation for skill acquisition, work culture and value for excellence. It has not become obvious to Nigerians that what anyone can do is largely dependent on the quantum of skills he/she has mastered and can apply iii the work place and a right model of mind (Eze and Mthembu, 2025). Our educationists fail to know most significantly that skills inherent in some school subjects are vital for academic progress in many others. Public schools are still stereotyped in the conception of the subjects they teach without

considering how much these subjects these have been helpful to the child's out of school life in the face of new realities.

In the environmental and technological disciplines, the domains of knowledge namely the affective, cognitive and psychomotor as constructed by educational psychologists are vital and too interrelated to be separated for students in training. The reason is clear. It is not just enough to know and be guided by what is known. It is more important to be able to do what one claims to know. An ancient Chinese adage states it in this way:

What I hear I forget

What I see I remember

What I do I know

Thus the present reliance on verbal instruction only in the delivery of teaching instruction, without audio-visual or samples of objects being discussed to strengthen the facts and exercises to re-enact (doing) what has been taught, leaves students with partial knowledge of whatever is taught. Cognitive and affective skills have the ultimate aim of enforcing creativity with evidence of touchable product or affecting service. In a world ruled by material needs, skills that lead to the materialization of useful products are important. Demonstration materials are crucial to effective teaching in our discipline(Harris &Awosika, 2025).

### **Functional Education is it**

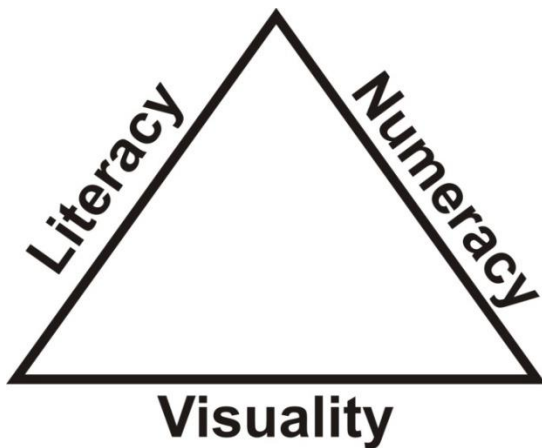
It is obvious that the standard of education in Nigeria is below world average if not worse. Our graduates in professions are required to re-certificate in Europe and America. Back home multinational companies retrain our graduates before they could be functional. Our leaders are sending their children and wards overseas even to neighbouring African countries. All these are proofs that something is wrong with our educational system.

Not too long ago, I made it clear (Egonwa 2009b) that "Socio-economic and cultural indicators worldwide suggests that the needs of the times, is a life style of productive work solidly built on a foundation of appropriate model of mind and right skills".

Human capital development is a project in inculcating right models f mind. Our growing adults should be taught creative, aesthetic and moral values. The first advocates peoples love for sustainable workmanship, and inventiveness; the second deals with sensitivity to the pleasurable, refined and beautiful in art and nature, while the third will nurture the ability to judge between what is good or bad and to make the right choice. Human capital grooming is also concerned with equipping persons with lifelong skills for vocations.

The grammar school type secondary education is grossly inadequate for our developmental needs. It neglected the dignity of labour/productivity. Our present emphasis of the social sciences to the neglect of the environmental and technological disciplines will largely lead to the production of consumer economy (traders) without products to trade. It has begun with more shopping malls in our urban centers than industrial estates (Eze and Mthembu, 2025). When services out number products, you have discomfort, strife, scarcity, stealing, killing and destruction(Harris &Awosika, 2025).

Chen and Martínez (2024) opine that at the secondary level an early specialization in school subjects offered by students is a disservice to mental and creative development. The more students are exposed to as many subjects as possible the belier. The so called Science and Arts class dichotomy of students and simultaneous time-tabling should be done with caution. Students who choose to combine arts and science subjects should be allowed to do so via appropriate time-tabling since creativity is nurtured by the partnership of the logical processes of science and the intuitive system of the arts. Besides professions such as Architecture, Estate Management, Geodeisy, Urban and Regional Planning, Industrial Design, Quantity Surveying require arts and science subjects for entry into Universities.



**Fig 1: OsaEgonwa's Knowledge Tripod**

### **The Basics Nursery and Primary School**

So far the foundation of our educational edifice does not seem to have the right aggregate of elements upon which the inega structure of present day can be sustained. This is true particularly of public schools. The so called basics ought to rest upon the provision of a high ability to read and write - literacy; strong demonstrable knowledge of numbers and symbols - Numeracy and an undeniable ability to see, understand what is seen and make visually intelligible visuals - Visuality. Most educationists underestimate visuality. Today's world is that of visuals as the ratio of the printed image has outweighed that of the printed word. The icons in most gadgets today are more than the numerals and letters on them; from manuals on equipment, through car dashboard, instructions on personal tools, highway codes, computers and handsets e.t.c. Chen and Martínez (2024) asserted that the poor quality goods dumped on Nigerians and poor environmental sanitation are traceable to visual illiteracy of leaders in Nigeria. Suffice to say that most human experiences including scientific classifications and learning generally depend upon visual processes.

In the real sense, what is termed literacy today is the combination of the above components of integrated knowledge, but only some ability to read, write and handle numerals is given some attention in the training of Nigeria's would be literate persons! Visuality is the least attended to, yet it is the bedrock of **understanding**. In my **knowledge Tripod** (Fig. 1) the Visuality Edge is the base upon which the other Edges' rest. This is so because not until one sees the object of his/ her understanding, his/her knowledge of the issue is of no consequence. All a child needs do is to see it, then understanding is secured. Seeing is both mental and physical. What mind experts call lateral thinking is actually seeing imaginatively (de Bono, 1990; Chen and Martínez, 2024)

### **Thinking Skills**

Mental manipulation of ideas for reasoning, solving problems, making decisions and judgments is called thinking. Educational disciplines must now begin to teach thinking skills in our Schools, Colleges and Universities. Successful business moguls and conglomerates have hired Thinkers who are highly paid. Top class Managing Directors have Thinking Rooms where they retire to ponder thorny challenges and visualize new possibilities. There are for instance visual, auditory and kinetic modes of thinking each for the solution of problems in those orders of perception. Eze and Mthembu (2025) revealed that thinking is the manipulation of images on the minds desktop for problem solution. It is an aggressive way of mind ordering which enables one to see beyond the surface of things! This type of seeing enables a reader to read between the lines! Certain school subjects promote this type of potential already in man. Unfortunately, some of these subjects are almost dead in primary schools and are discouraged at the secondary schools by ignorant school heads and ministry officials. History, music, drama and visual arts, promote the humane side of man via the two brain partnership of logical processes of science and the lateral processes of the

humanities/social science, by which quality and productive thinking for high science and technological achievement is possible.

### **Conclusion**

The question of how to prepare our children for survival in a world minimized by information communication technology and defined by high technological goods and services is the centerpiece of education for development. Suggestions have been proffered towards modification of extant policies and practices. Going through the various policies on Higher Education since 1932 when the **Yaba Higher College** was established, to the present day, Nigeria would have fared better, if her policies were implemented to the **letter**. The result is that present development in our higher education is not sufficiently homogeneous to support meaningful livelihood now and beyond.

There is something in every child that must be allowed to take hold of its passion as life pursuit. Training in our courses must be such that applicable skills are implanted and students' latent potentials activated fully at the end of their programmes of study. This new approach appears to me as the right and better step to human development.

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