

Reforming Earlychildhood Education for the 21st Century World of Work

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Abstract: *It has never been more important to invest in building a set of essential skills in our children and young ones - the ability to creatively solve problems, to manage themselves, to communicate effectively, or to work well with others than now when economy is in distress and comatose .The demand for these skills from employers of labour is well documented. It is against this background that this paper proposes reforming education for the 21st century world of work before our children can be exposed to those skills needed to possess before they can compete with their counterparts around the world.*

Keywords: 21st Century, Knowledge Economy, Reforms, Building Skills, Principles, Early childhood Education

Introduction

At the end of every century and the beginning of a new one, there is always a great expectation in the minds of so many people - artisans, engineers, educators, electorates and even those at the helms of affairs at different seats of power, for positive changes, at least .Without any iota of exaggeration, it is only a functional and quality Early childhood education that can guarantee chances of survival and right attitude at adulthood, towards the future world of work.

Reforming Early Childhood Education In the 21st century is a sure bet towards making life better for the beneficiaries because of its benefits to human kind (future leaders).

No doubt, over the recent decades, our understanding of teaching and learning and the conditions under which it is facilitated have significantly changed. These changes therefore occur in both education and learning endeavour at a break neck speed that profoundly affect fundamental variations in the way teachers, caregivers and school administrators reason, learners behave, the way educators relate to learners and the way school and society relate to one another.

Suffice to say that, in most contemporary theories, the roles of the instructor and learners within the classroom have been captured and redefined while development in technologies that can be used to enhance and support learning is now in the increase .So rather than concentrating on school and curriculum design, there is a lot about teaching and learning at early childhood education level which this paper thrusts on.

Reforming Early Childhood Education in the Modern World

Smartphones, social networks, and globalization are just a few examples of the significant technological and social advancements that are occurring quickly in the 21st century. These advancements call for adaptability, resilience to deal with risk and uncertainty, and the capacity to assume social responsibility for the environment in which we live.

The right skills must be acquired if the curriculum is to meet the demands of kids in this century. In the classroom, frontal teaching and the notion that the teacher possesses knowledge that the student needs to learn passively are no longer tenable. In order for children to be inventive leaders and entrepreneurs in the future, we need to give them a space where they may be creative, curious, independent, compassionate, and sensitive. The six fundamental competencies that prominently surface in every educational summit and discussion in the twenty-first century are as follows:

- **Communication and Collaboration:** In the current world, effective communication and teamwork skills are crucial. Children who learn how to collaborate, work as a team, and communicate with others are better able to form relationships and fit into their community and society. Children must be able to communicate in order to express themselves, comprehend others, and participate in social interactions.

- **Caring and empathy:** In order to generate well-being in a society, caring and empathy are essential traits. Empathy is the capacity to comprehend another's emotions, particularly their sorrow, and to take on their perspective. Taking responsibility for the group, the community in which we live, as well as for the development of personal social abilities.

- **Creativity:** Early childhood education now includes creativity as a required component, especially given how children learn and live in the 21st century, which depends on creativity to succeed. It's crucial to build critical thinking abilities that are based on creativity in today's environment.

- **Curiosity:** Children are innately curious. Curiosity is what motivates young children to explore the world, take in their environment, and learn everything they can. Building an educational system that fosters and protects children's inherent curiosity instinct and inspires them to learn and grow is crucial.

- **Coping with change:** In today's world, having the ability to adapt to change and be resilient is crucial. We must cultivate in youngsters the capacity to maintain emotional stability in the face of complex and unpredictable circumstances since change is a constant.

- **Coordination and Physical skills:** Children in their early years are hard at work honing their coordination and gross and fine motor skills. Running, jumping, hopping, turning, skipping, tossing, balancing, and dancing are examples of activities that require the utilization of major bodily movements known as gross motor abilities. Fine motor abilities, which include writing, cutting, piecing together, and tying, call on little movements of the body. During early childhood, both gross and fine motor abilities develop and are honed.



Source (Houghton and Sheeben 2017)

The Importance of Developing 21st Century Skills in Young Children

Early childhood is the perfect time to support your child's growth and development of 21st century skills. Her 4 Cs of 21st Century Skills as described in David (2017) are Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Creativity and Communication. Preschool is where children begin to master the listed skills, and by designing classrooms with this knowledge, we create an inspiring learning environment in which children can thrive.

These 21st century skills can be grouped into three categories:

- Learning Skills: Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Collaboration and Communication
- Literacy Skills: Information Literacy, Media Literacy, Technology Literacy
- Life Skills: Flexibility, Initiative, People Skills, Productivity and Leadership Skills Classroom;

- i. Integrate age-appropriate technology with educational content, using media sources to explore children's interests and extend learning.
- ii. Provide opportunities for children to make choices and move freely in the classroom
- iii. Support global citizenship by selecting materials and activities that reflect all cultures and families within the community.
- iv. Introduce and use different types of literacy
- v. Deliberately create opportunities for children to develop social skills and cooperation
- vi. Celebrate and encourage creative thinking and problem-solving in children
- vii. Teach Demonstrate flexibility by allowing schedules and routines to be adjusted
- viii. Always encourage various forms of written and verbal communication.

Conclusion

Without mincing words, the need for innovations and various educational reforms in our modern world (The 21st century) is not contestable if we should be counted amongst community of modern reformers. The local, state, federal and concerned stakeholders in the business of education especially at Early Childhood level should continue to finance researches on problem areas in the education sector. The pre service teachers in our tertiary institutions should be made to publish their research findings on early childhood education found worthy of government and public knowledge.

Perhaps the most obvious consequence of the rapid change the world is experiencing today is the emergence of a knowledge-based economy. According to the World Bank, this phenomenon refers to an economy based primarily on the application of ideas rather than physical activity. It is the application of technology rather than the conversion of raw materials or the exploitation of cheap labour, in which knowledge is more effectively created, acquired and used by individuals, businesses, organizations and communities to facilitate economic and social development transfer, and used economy. For clarity, here are seven main characteristics of the knowledge economy:

- Unlike tangible goods, information is non-competitive and cannot be destroyed by consumption, and its consumption value can be enjoyed over and over
- Codification tends to reduce the dispersion of knowledge
- Learning is gaining more and more people's attention and organization.
- Learning includes both teaching and learning - doing, learning - using, learning - interacting
- Initiative, creativity, problem-solving and openness to change will become increasingly important skills
- Flexible organization will become the norm. They avoid over-socialization and isolation by integrating 'thinking' and 'doing' and emphasizing professional responsibility for multiple human skills such as conceptual, interpersonal and communication skills. . (Houghton and Seven, 2000)

Education therefore has been a life - long process, it is now imperative that changing circumstances demand changing educational reforms .If a society requires brawn power, education would be challenged to educate for brown power right from the early childhood and if a country requires to be technologically driven and inclined, it therefore means such a country' educational system should be challenged right from its preschool, to educate its citizens for that type of education.

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