

21ST CENTURY TEACHERS: UNLEARNING YESTERDAY AND EMBRACING FUTURE PEDAGOGY**BY**

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Abstract

This paper examined previous technologies used for teaching activities prior to the 21st century with a views to identify roles and challenges of teachers in the 21st century. It suggested a developmental scheme to allow students and teachers in any classroom to find a starting point and advance along dimensions identified. In a fully developed knowledge building environment, the ways people and ideas interact are critical to the integration of deep understanding, knowledge creation, and practical action. It further emphasized the need to move toward high-end knowledge environments, examined pedagogy of education and what is expected of the 21st century teachers and how modern technologies can help integrate and enhance different approaches, how formative assessments can be used to increase the pace of innovation, and how quality assurance could be influenced by 21st century teachers.

Keywords: *21st Century Teachers, Unlearning Yesterday and Future Pedagogy*

Introduction

The pursuit of education in the 21st century made it clear that those who were opportune to pass through the four corners of the classroom now placed high values on education. This is evident in the people of diverse skilled and non-skilled occupations struggling hard to ensure that their children have effective and quality education that ensures meaningful contributions to the development of the society. The clamoring for qualitative education was borne out of the fact that education has been considered the only avenue to a successful transition from undeveloped to a developed nation.

It is obvious that education inculcates much to learners beyond the prescribed academic curriculum and encourages the development of social behaviours that are beneficial to the society. Education promotes the culture of productivity by enabling individuals to discover the creative potentials in them and apply same to the improvement of the existing skills and techniques of performing specific tasks, thereby increasing the efficiency of their personal societal efforts

(Obasanjo 2012).

Education plays a crucial role in the development of a nation. As a major investment in human capital development, it enhances productivity and growth at both micro and macro levels. This explains why maintaining its quality must attract high level of commitment from all stakeholders involved in the progressive development of education as its sustainability will contribute meaningfully not only to national development but will also assist in proffering genuine and workable solutions to various challenges in the country.

According to Amaele (2011), education develops in individuals those values which make for good citizenship, such as honesty, selflessness, tolerance, dedication, hardwork and personal integrity, all of which provide the avenue from which good leadership potential is groomed. Indeed, the importance of education to the growth and development of every society can never be over-emphasized. Whether it is non-formal, formal or informal, education plays very important roles on how individuals and society are developed. This makes quality education very vital to a sustainable national development (UN System Task Team, 2015).

Kofi Annan, addressing the World Bank conference in 1997, asserted that “Knowledge is power; information is liberating; education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.” This premise is right. The most successful persons and the most flourishing civilizations in history are more often than not those who place an uncompromising premium on brainpower. Quality education is a key enabler for sustainable growth and development. In Nigeria, educational performance is abysmally low in terms of quality and quantity. Poor performance with regards to quantity is illustrated by the fact that there were more than 10.5 million out-of-school children in 2018, which is the highest globally (UNICEF, 2018). The situation is even more worrying in terms of quality. Nigeria continues on the path of quantity education rather than quality education. Sustainable development could only be achieved through quality education (Adekunle, 2018).

In achieving quality education, attention must be shifted to the teachers who are one of the major stakeholders in the sector. In the sincerity of all views, it is obvious that teachers are the pillar and builder of education in every part of the world where education is practiced. According to Ukeje, (1988) in Wanekezi, Okoli and Mezieobi, (2011), education unlocks the door to modernization and sustainable development but it is the teacher that holds the key to the door. Thus, the teacher has the responsibility of translating educational policies into practice and programmes into action.

It is clear from the foregoing that the role of the teacher in sustainable development cannot be quantified, especially in training personnel in various areas of the workforce. Education therefore is what teachers make of it. The teacher as an educator is one of the important factors in achieving educational goals. The learning process, in general, always applies the aspects of pedagogy and content. It is therefore important to shift focus from the teachers of eighteen and

nineteenth century to the teachers of the 21st century.

The 19th century pedagogy with teaching styles and classroom management techniques sees teachers as a representative of the white men missionaries who were trained through western education to inculcate knowledge to the learners in the form a in a regimented and stereotype manner. The teacher was seen as a figure standing in front of learners transferring knowledge to them without their active participation in the classroom process. This teaching approach in eighteen and nineteenth century was teacher-centred where teachers are the main authority figure and the students are viewed as "empty vessels" whose primary role is to passively receive information (via lectures and direct instruction) with an end goal of testing and assessment. In addition, the 19th century teaching pedagogy also witness student desks lined up in rows with the teacher at the front of the room. It is not uncommon that many schools still employ “top-down one size fits all” teaching methods where learning is based on how many hours kids spend in class rather than what skills and insights they acquire (Bohny, 2018; Bostock, Lisi-Neumann, & Collucci, 2016).

In order to unlearn yesterday, we need to go from a teacher-centric environment to a student centered one that is personalized and hands-on. In the 20th century, it is obvious that students need higher level reasoning and research skills, not “borer and exterminate.” Traditional teaching and learning is changing to keep up with the rapid developments and changes with digital technologies and ever expanding online learning environments. Students today are faced with a differentiated set of skills, attitudes and actions that they will need in order for them to be prepared for, be successful in and meet the challenges of a digital economy ([21st Century Learning, 2009](#) in Bec Spink-Knowledge Networks & Digital Innovation, 2021).

The 21st Century Learning

The term “21st century learning” has been used to refer to abilities students must master, such as problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, and digital literacy. Some refer to it as the ability to collaborate, communicate, and demonstrate skills that will ultimately help students navigate their way in the future. The idea of what 21st century learning is, is open to interpretation and controversy. It is often emphasized that teachers need to use teaching strategies to equip students with the characteristics and skills that will help them live in this ever-changing technological world.

Teaching in the 21st Century

Teaching in the 21st Century is changing due to the realization that the teacher-centred approach has fallen behind the modern world, become outdated and ineffectual. We are over a decade into a Century which has brought forth an information age with limitless resources and instant access to information. Collaboration has turned global, with people all over the world communicating, sharing ideas and solving common issues through and with technology. The issue has become how to teach rather than what. Education in the 21st Century calls for personalizing learning so that every learner, regardless of learning style, race, culture, creed or gender, may

develop to their full potential and promote “life-long learning” (Collins, 2009) for both teacher and learner alike. It also brings to light the importance of redefining the roles of both teacher and learner.

Characteristics of the 21st Century Teachers

1. Teaching Strategies to Be Able to Teach to All Learners

Being a 21st century educator means the ability to be able to teach and reach all learners. That means the ability to differentiate learning so that all students are able to learn using their own unique style and/or by their ability or readiness level. In today's classrooms, educators have learned that students learn best when they are taught to their own unique style and ability. Howard Gardner (1983) said it best when he introduced the world to the multiple intelligence theory. He said that everyone falls into one or more of these eight intelligences which are: Linguistic intelligence (“word smart”), Logical-mathematical intelligence (“number/reasoning smart”), Spatial intelligence (“picture smart”), Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence (“body smart”), Musical intelligence (“music smart”), Interpersonal intelligence (“people smart”), Intrapersonal intelligence (“self-smart”) and Naturalist intelligence (“nature smart”). An effective 21st century educator must have the ability to teach and reach to each characteristic and skill of every student in the classroom.

2. Be a Master of Technology in the Classroom

The ability to not only learn about the new educational gadgets that will help students learn better and faster, but to also have the ability to know how to use and implement the gadget within the classroom is an essential skill of a 21st century educator. In the education of 21st century, of course, the teachers should be able to use technology to help them in the learning process. Technology is also one of the processes to make people being educated in the digital era (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2014). Technology in the classroom is moving at a rapid pace and the 21st century teacher moves right along with it. Classroom technology; whether it's for lessons, assignments, or grading, can help students learn better and faster, and help make a teacher's time more effective. A 21st century teacher does not need to have a class set of tablets in every child's hand, or the latest Smart-board. But they can have a nice balance of educational tools in their classroom. An effective educator will have the know-how and the wherewithal of how to efficiently implement and incorporate technology into the classroom in a way that will be productive for all students. An effective teacher knows what technology in the classroom can truly help transform their students' education. They know what the best tools are, and how and when to use them.

3. Be Able to Foster Student Relationships

In a digital world where students can count the number of friends that they have by the likes they get on Facebook and Instagram, it is essential now more than ever for educators to be able to foster healthy relationships among their students. An effective teacher will have the ability to facilitate interpersonal relationships within the classroom so that students will have a sense of community and be able to communicate with their peers on a higher level than just social media.

4. Be Forward Thinking

A 21st century educator is able to anticipate the future and plan for it. They are able to push their students to ensure that they will be able to navigate their way through this ever-changing technological world. They have the ability to prepare students for the unknown based on current trends and technology (Janelle Cox, 2019).

5. Be Able to Embrace Change

The ability to embrace change is an essential characteristic of a 21st century teacher. With the rapid changes in technology and the way that students learn, educators must be able to embrace change and adapt to it, not only in technology but in education as well. Technology changes daily, as do new teaching strategies, testing techniques, and the way we are able to learn and communicate with others. An effective teacher living the 21st century has the ability to adapt to anything and everything as well as embrace it.

6. Knows How to Collaborate

An effective 21st century educator must be able to collaborate and work well in a team. Working with others is an important 21st century skill. Over the past few years, being able to collaborate effectively in the workplace has grown quite rapidly. Learning is deemed to be more effective when you can share your ideas and knowledge with others. Sharing your expertise and experience, communicating and learning with others can increase quality teaching.

7. Be Adaptive

A 21st century teacher is able to adapt to whatever comes their way. Teaching is a career that has pretty much stayed the same over the past few decades. The tools have changed over the years (Smart boards have replaced chalkboards, tablets have replaced textbooks) but the practice has not. The 21st century teacher is able to look at their practice and adapt based on the needs of their students. They must be able to adapt their teaching style to include different modes of learning, adapt when a lesson fails, and adapt to new technology. They must be able to adapt to the curriculum and the requirements and be able to use their imagination to teach in creative ways.

8. Is a Lifelong Learner

The 21st century teacher is a lifelong learner. They don't just expect their students to be lifelong learners, but they too stay current and on top of what's new in education. Even though they may still use the same lesson plan from years before, they know how to change it to keep up-to-date with what is current. A great teacher will not only embrace technology, but be willing to learn more about it.

9. Advocates for their Profession

It is a critical time in education and how teachers are being perceived. Presently, the teaching profession is being met with a close eye now more than ever before. Instead of sitting back, 21st century teachers takes a stand for themselves and advocates for their profession. They pay close attention to the important issues and talk about them with their community. They keep parents and students informed on what is going on in education and address issues head on.

Embracing Future Pedagogy: Expected Ethics of a 21st Century Teachers

Quality Awareness And Self-Evaluation

Improvement in the quality of education depend on teachers' ability to reflect on their own teaching, critically examine the methods used and looking for alternative ways of teaching. To create an increased “quality awareness” among teachers and help teachers to improve their teaching methodology and skills may be of crucial importance to improve quality in education. One major way of doing this is to systematically evaluate teaching and its results. Evaluation is a general term used to describe any activity where the quality of provision is the subject of systematic study. In order to make evaluation a tool which teachers can use to improve the quality of education there is a need to find and highlight alternative methods for evaluation which allow for the consideration of the complexity of the school environment and which give teachers a possibility to be part of the process. One concept that is often used is school-based evaluation, meaning a process by which teachers discuss their own school as a group of professionals in such a way as to improve the quality of education.

Effective use of Media

Effective teacher in the 21st century needs to be able to engage and interact with a wide variety of information from an ever increasing range of sources. Wesch (2009) suggests that the media environment educators are currently faced with can become vastly disruptive to traditional teaching methods. Teachers today need to become lifelong learners in an information society where information flows freely, is instant and infinite (Wesch, 2009). For this to occur, teachers and students alike need to develop strategies for engaging with, working with and constructing new knowledge, or as Wesch (2009) describes, moving from being just knowledgeable to knowledgeable.

❖ Dynamic Skills and Competency

Teachers need to be equipped with ever-increasing skills and competencies to manage this hyper-connected, knowledge environment in order to best prepare students for the 21st Century, a world where the only constant they know is change. Redecker et al (2011) describes generic, transversal and cross-cutting skills to be the most important in enabling both students and teachers the flexibility and pro-activeness needed to respond to these fast paced changes.

Fostering Critical Thinking

Today, teachers are constantly challenged to develop their own thinking and practice to prepare students for active and successful participation in a knowledge society, by developing students who are effective knowledge workers and competent citizens for the future (Skilbeck& Connell, 2004). It is because of this that the need for teachers themselves to become modern, productive knowledge workers is crucial for education in 21st century learning environments.

❖ Be Innovative

In order to continue innovation, a teacher must continue to learn. Moving beyond traditional

assumptions of learning as an individual process, 21st century teaching and learning environments are changing the way educators (and students) learn (Nussbaum-Beach & Hall, 2011). In considering the changing scope of today's learning environments; social learning methodologies should be embraced. Teachers need to develop dynamic learning mindsets and embrace learning that is social, collaborative and self-directed (Coleman and Lenox, 2010).

In order to teach creative and innovative thinking, teachers must have the skills to think differently themselves. They need creative spaces and tools and a range of frameworks that help to develop their own criteria of achieving quality and success (Heick, 2014).

Embrace Entrepreneurship Teaching

The need for teachers to become productive, modern knowledge workers in 21st century teaching and learning environments is essential. The essential set of 21st century entrepreneurship skills may include capabilities for analytical problem solving, innovation and creativity, self-direction and initiative, flexibility and adaptability, critical thinking, and communication and collaboration skills (Boyles, 2012). Teachers are expected to focus more on entrepreneurship education which gives an individual an opportunity to become self-reliant and thus contribute to the economic development of the nation. There is a need to develop an environment that enables innovation in teacher education by overcoming negative notions of 'entrepreneurship' and recognizing social entrepreneurship. This is supported by concrete and tangibly defined learning outcomes for entrepreneurial teaching with developed and quality assured assessment methods for entrepreneurship education pedagogy informed by student feedback.

Moving with Changes

The twenty-first century demands not only that we learn new forms of social engagement, it also require that we *unlearn* habits that have been useful in the past but may no longer be valuable to the future. Teachers have 'un-learned' the role of *Sage-on-the-stage* as the dominant model of teaching, and the shift to *Guide-on-the-side* has served an important function in changing the focus of pedagogy from the teacher to the learner. However, *Guide-on-the-side* is no longer sufficient for our times. It is important to re-position teacher and student as co-directors and co-editors of their social world (Donaldson, 2011).

Looking into the Future

The 21st century teachers look forward to the future. They are aware of the ever-changing trends in technology and are in tune of what the future may bring to education. A good 21st century teacher is aware of the career opportunities that will be in the coming years for their students, and are always advocating towards forward thinking and planning to ensure all students will not be left behind.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Pedagogy of one century differs from other centuries. It is a clear fact that the 21st century teachers embrace the innovation of technologies into the teaching of curriculum as there have been

many changes in the development of national and world education. The most observable phenomenon now is the embracement of digitalization of the education system. Having the ability to embrace technology in the 21st century will no doubt make teachers effective in the use of modern teaching strategies to teach learners, foster real learning and promote innovation in education for better development of students' ability for sustainable future. It is therefore recommended that educators should organise effective training for the teachers in order to meet up the changes in technologies. Teachers should be supported by providing relevant technological tools for the development of the teachers in order to improve their teaching methods with technology thereby helping our learners to learn better in the 21st century.

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