

## **DEMOCRATIZING THE NEXT EDUCATION TO NAVIGATE TURBULENCE, BRIDGE THE KNOWLEDGE DIVIDE, AND CREATE AN EQUITABLE WORLD**

“A time of turbulence is a dangerous time but its greatest danger is a temptation to deny reality”- Peter Drucker

A year before the last pandemic, [an astrologer named Jessica Adams, went public with her prediction that a virus would disrupt the world. She even went further to flag a key date-January 10, 2020, which turned out to be the day the first confirmed victim of COVID-19 died in Wuhan, China.](#) Since she wasn't a key global decision-maker, many discarded her prediction as a hoax save for her over three million followers who took heed. What followed months later was a disaster that led to a global lockdown and the death of millions.

### **Identifying challenges**

Although I am not a psychic, I would love to stand on the shoulders of Peter Drucker to predict the next sources of turbulence.

[According to a study published in the Journal Nature, intensified climate change is expected to increase the future risk of violent armed conflicts within countries.](#) This will make the traditional education system redundant and stimulate the hyperactive displacement of teachers and learners globally.

Another source of turbulence will be Artificial Intelligence. [In the future, the rich will have unhindered access to technology powered by artificial intelligence and teachers to help them use it while poor kids in slums may have access just to technology devoid of AI.](#)

The population explosion too has been causing tensions lately. The farmer-herdsmen crisis in Nigeria and other parts of the world has led to the death of education facilitators and the destruction of educational facilities. If this continues unabated, the academic calendar of our educational institutions will be distorted.

In addition, [climate change is making access to resources difficult. UNICEF once reported that women and girls spend an estimated 200 million hours daily collecting water.](#) This colossal loss of time is capable of disrupting the academic progress of the female gender.

Due to increased insecurity and economic hardship, many are embracing kidnapping to earn a living. Teachers and learners in Sub-Saharan Africa have continuously been kidnapped from schools for ransom. This is making many shun the adage that says, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”-Nelson Mandela

### **Leadership for tomorrow**

Peter Drucker once said, “Listening for the signal that it is time to change is an essential skill for self-development”. To this end, leaders in the future will need to be open-minded to recognize their limitations, embrace developments, and learn continuously to overcome new challenges.

In the chaos that will accompany technology, leaders will need to be innovative and visionary to navigate through the challenges of the evolving technological landscape.

This will lead to an exponential demand for morally proactive leaders with a touch of accurate decision-making.

Due to the multiple challenges that will be caused by climate change, migration, and insecurity, versatile problem-solving leaders willing to build partnerships will be highly sought after. Through these skills, they will be able to join forces with other leaders to leverage each other's expertise and stay ahead of the disruption curve.

Since the disruption would not be a one-time event, leaders will need to be equipped with adaptive skills that will help them tune their survival antenna to the frequencies of relevance.

### **Limitations of the current educational system**

After taking a survey recently, I noticed that over 60% of my peers who graduated from the University in 2018 are yet to be gainfully employed, 6 years after our graduation. Why is it so? Before we address this question, let's take a backward leap to understand if traditional education puts enough emphasis on our development to navigate the challenges of life.

When the traditional educational system, rooted in an industrial-era model was designed, it was for the sole purpose of meeting the workforce needs of the era. With the world moving to the information age, the system is becoming obsolete.

One day while in the University, a lecturer walked into the class with an old lesson material, which I perceived, would have served over 15 generations of learners. This lack of curriculum update coupled with the limited number of skilled teachers with a passion to impart knowledge has continued to compromise the standard of traditional education for decades.

Although millions of Nigerians graduate yearly from learning institutions, [Nigeria's unemployment rate according to the World Bank rose from 6.4% in 2010 to 33.3% in 2020.](#) This was because of the lack of skill-based and creative education with the capacity to equip learners with innovative mind-sets, creative thinking capacities, and adaptive skills.

In many countries across the world, the current population explosion is stretching the educational system and widening the teacher-to-learner ratio. After graduating from the University, I witnessed this when the Nigerian government posted me under the NYSC scheme, to teach over 300 learners Computer and Agricultural studies in Northern Nigeria. This stressed me and made learning ineffective.

As a student, I noticed that the current educational system instilled exam fears in the hearts of learners. This makes many have apathy towards learning and engage in malpractices for the sake of getting grades. For others, it erodes their confidence after transitioning to the work environment.

Learners often follow the same pattern and learning style regardless of their interests and needs. This makes it impossible for learners to have personalized learning experiences.

The current education system needs to equip learners with practical entrepreneurship knowledge and capital raising to meet the challenges after graduation.

## **Evolving models**

In light of the continuous global shifts, technology needs to be slowly introduced into the traditional educational model to prevent it from becoming a driver of inequality.

There is also a need for regular comprehensive training to equip teachers and learners with the capacity for adaptation. This will assist them in handling future disruptions seamlessly and create a conducive atmosphere where learning thrives.

The focus of our education needs to shift from the garbage-in garbage-out system to a flexible system that promotes creativity, talent unearthing, innovation, and problem-solving.

According to the ACHAs pool, 40% of American students had at least one significant depressive episode during a research<sup>2</sup>. This may be because most learning institutions have tight schedules that subject learners to continuous sequences of study capable of affecting mental health. Institutions need to avoid overloading learners and educators to reduce incidences of mental stress.

## **Self-directed learning**

In 2012, when over 1.5 million secondary school students scrambled to sit for the JAMB examination, I burnt my midnight candle to cross the cut-off mark. As fate had it, I passed and was invited to an aptitude test. I recall the stress applicants passed through before sitting for the exam.

During my first 4 years as an undergraduate, I always stood for about six hours daily receiving lectures due to the non-availability of spacious lecture halls, overpopulated classes, and poor lecturer-to-student ratio (about 1:1000).

Towards my fifth year, I was assigned to a project supervisor tasked with the responsibility of guiding me through my research project. He was so kind to me to the extent that he gave me a free hand to choose a topic and work on the plant I desired. I brainstormed extensively and came up with the idea of researching bitter melon (a fruit with proven health benefits). However, I was discouraged from continuing with it due to the non-availability of planting materials and instead, opted for cowpea.

Each project student was expected to apply for a portion of land from the school. This initially was a herculean task considering the hundreds of students jostling for land portions. After being assigned a sizeable portion, I cleared the land manually and engaged the services of some young boys to make some ridges. Since my project, had to do with seeds; I conducted a lab experiment and fieldwork.

After data collection, I was faced with the herculean task of analysing my work using a statistical package. This was an obstacle at first but after engaging in some videos, notes, and guidelines, I learned how to analyse using the Minitab 16 software. Through this personalized learning, I extended the Knowledge of analysis to my peers and went further to analyse the data of disadvantaged learners.



Picture of my Cowpea project farm

One of my genetics professors who always bragged about how difficult it was for a learner to get an A grade in his course got the shock of his life when I surpassed his expectations. Since his assertion was true due to the non-exposure of learners to practical sessions, I took up the challenge to personalize my learning through regular visits to the library where I spent hours consulting resources to fill pockets of gaps in my education. There were times I deliberately consulted YouTube and other educational resources on the internet to have robust knowledge. This effort paid off when I got an A grade in genetics which contributed to me graduating as the best student in my department.

### **Implications of personalized education on formal educational institutions**

Personalized education can increase the engagement of learners by allowing them to engage in activities relevant to their interests thereby, improving retention capacity.

Personalized learning also can assist educational institutions in churning out worthy professionals with solutions to societal problems.

Through personalized learning, the over-dependence of learners on educational institutions will be reduced, creating allowance for the accomplishments of other fruitful ventures. It will also help in creating equity, and stimulate jaw-breaking research across formal institutions of learning.

To learn data analysis, statistics, and data management in the past, one needed to enroll in a formal educational institution. With the spread of learning platforms like Udemy and Coursera,

people globally are now learning these skills freely. This substitution will cause formal educational institutions to suffer from boycotts.

### **Future of learning and teaching**

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”-Nelson Mandela

“Most of the courses we study in Nigerian schools need an update of curriculum and scrapping of others. Of what use is learning typewriting in 2024 and making it a core course”. While scrolling through my Facebook newsfeed one afternoon, I came across this post from a friend of mine. As I meditated upon the post, the need for the preservation of regular educational curriculum updates dawned on me.

If opportune to design the next education, I will leverage collaborative learning tools for learners to work together on projects and assignments despite geographical differences. This will help in preparing learners to engage their teamwork skills in the work environment.

The element of culture-based education needs to be preserved since it provides perspectives, methodologies, principles, frameworks, assessments, and evaluations capable of perpetuating sustainability, peace, and climate change mitigation.

According to a prediction by the [Institute for Economics and Peace \(IEP\), over 1.2 billion people are under threat of being displaced by 2050 due to natural disasters and climate change.](#) How prepared is the current education system to accommodate the displaced that may accompany this prediction? The Fulani tribe in West Africa who are mostly nomads in nature have been finding it difficult to be educated due to the limitation of the traditional system of education. With about 6000 teachers tasked to educate the over 12 million population of these nomadic people, there is a need to think outside the box. To this end, I will incorporate mobile learning into the next educational system to accommodate and give access to millions of migrants globally in need of quality education.

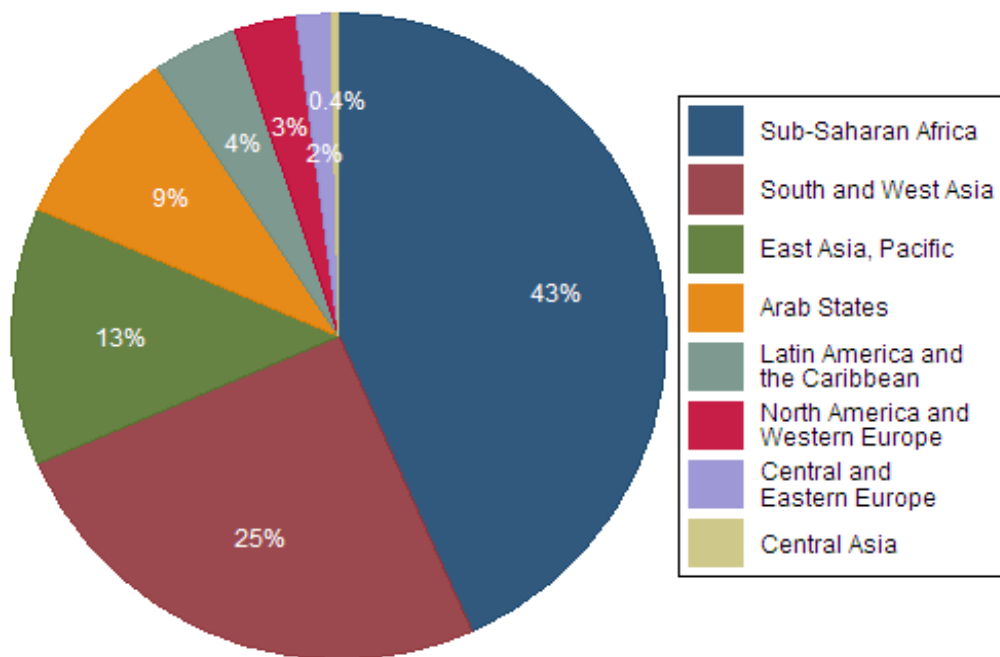
“School failed me and I failed the school: It bored me. The teachers behaved like Feldwebel (sergeants). I wanted to learn what I wanted to know, but they wanted me to learn for the exam. What I hated most was the competitive system there, and especially sports. Because of this, I wasn’t worth anything, and several times they suggested I leave. This was a Catholic school in Munich. I felt that my thirst for knowledge was being strangled by my teachers; grades were their only measurement. How can a teacher understand youth with such a system?...from the age of twelve, I began to suspect authority and distrust teachers. I learned mostly at home, first from my uncle and then from a student who came to eat with us once a week. He would give me books on physics and astronomy. The more I read, the more puzzled I was by the order of the human mind”-Albert Einstein. What would have happened if Einstein had not gone through the self-discovery route? He may have been lost in the wilderness of the educational system without fulfilling his purpose on earth. The erroneous assumption that one method of training must be used for every learner before knowledge is passed needs to disappear from the educational system in the future. This is in agreement with the words of Peter Drucker, which states that, “schools everywhere are organized on the assumption that there is only one right way to learn and it is the same way for everybody”. Since every student learns differently, incorporating personalized learning can help in improving student engagement for better learning outcomes.

Artificial intelligence should be preserved in the framework of the next education to create intelligent tutoring systems capable of providing personalized feedback and support to learners. This will also help in freeing up time for both learners and teachers to engage in meaningful interactions.

In the past, there were large cases of fraud and falsification of credentials in the education sector due to a lack of technology. As a designer of the next education, I will incorporate block chain technology to create secure and tamper-proof records of learners' performances and certificates.

## Bridging the divide

**Chart showing the regional distribution of children out of school, 2007** [Source](#)



Friedrich Huebler, huebler.blogspot.com, November 2010

One of the greatest predictions for the future is the growth of online learning. With the advancement of technology, many people are beginning to take advantage of online learning because of its accessibility and availability. For instance, [a young girl from Nigeria named Miracle Kparezua wouldn't have gotten a University education were it not for the intervention of online learning. She had suffered from cerebral palsy, which delayed her education and made her unable to neither talk nor walk for the first seven years of her life. After several failed attempts to gain admission into the traditional University, she opted for NOUN \(an open distance learning university that makes learning accessible, flexible, and available to everyone everywhere\).](#) In the future, online learning should be designed to be more interactive, immersive, and engaging. They should also engage multiple approaches that fit the specific needs of learners to bridge the educational inequality divide.

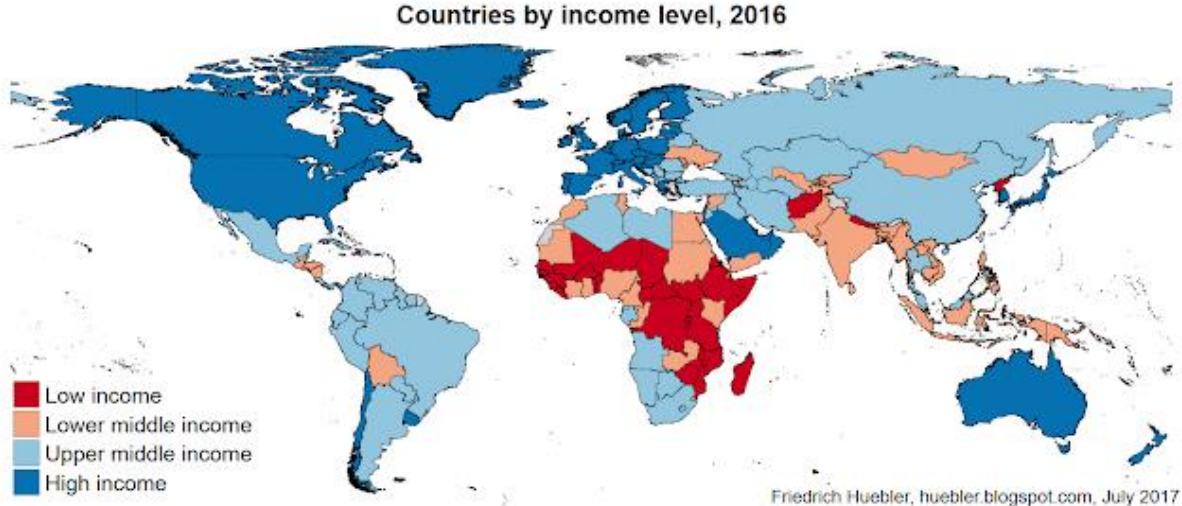


Picture of a floating school in Makoko, Lagos Nigeria [Image source](#)

Due to geographical disadvantage, people in riverine areas find it difficult to be educated. Following the footsteps of Kunle Adeyemi who designed a floating school on 256 blue plastic barrels in a shantytown is an innovative way to control pollution while making education accessible.

In Northern Nigeria, the negative activities of bandits and Boko-haram (an Islamic sect that prohibits Western education) are already creating cultural educational apathy in the region. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2024 for instance, [gunmen attacked LEA primary and secondary school Kuriga in Kaduna state and abducted about 137 learners](#). With these incidents becoming a norm, there is a need for the provision of adequate security for teachers and learners to guarantee their safety and restore the love for education. Teachers too should be given security training that will help them to secure the lives of vulnerable children in crisis-prone regions. Sensitization of these extremists needs to be promoted to de-radicalize them. Traditional and religious leaders globally should be encouraged to implement policies that will make education of the girl child compulsory.

As the world transitions to the use of clean energy, the abundance of renewable energies in developing and underdeveloped countries with high rates of illiteracy should be leveraged, using solar power personalized learning gadgets capable of transforming the lives of the disadvantaged populace.



Data source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#)

Due to the high cost of education and the current economic downturn, many globally will find it difficult to fund their education in the future. Many Nigerian leaders currently on stage wouldn't have acquired education without the [free primary education of 1955](#). To this end, there is a need for governments globally to make education free from the primary to tertiary level. This will help guarantee the upward social mobility of the disadvantaged and alleviate poverty.

A coordinated effort across national boundaries is needed so that technology for learning can be built by an international community of contributors with knowledge of a wide range of local needs.

With more teacher shortages envisaged in the future, competitive salaries and professional development should be adopted to attract talent and prevent teachers' migration to other professions.

Finally, according to Peter Drucker, "culture eats strategy for breakfast. It does not matter how smart you or your plan is, if the culture of the company does not allow new ideas to thrive, you might have your ladder on the wrong wall". In light of this revelation, the next education needs to be culture-sensitive, have flexible learning paths, embrace continuous teacher training in the light of change, and promote inclusivity across all levels of society.

## **Conclusion**

Always remember that, "Knowledge is different from all other resources. It makes itself constantly obsolete so that today's advanced knowledge is tomorrow's ignorance. And the knowledge that matters is subject to rapid and abrupt shifts"-Peter Drucker

## **Resources:**

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