Building A Future-Ready Workforce:
Re-Evaluating our Educational System

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Abstract:- **Society and businesses have passed the point of no return. Future workplaces will combine online and offline tools with human employees. But the Nigerian education system has long remained a means of training people to become good citizens, take up white-collar jobs, and successfully climb the corporate ladder. This essay shares some possible ways to re-evaluate the Nigerian education system as a tool for preparing people for future work. It uses qualitative content analysis, which pulls information from articles and journals both online and in print. In the future world of work, humans and machines will collaborate in tandem. So, increasing the tempo of technical education is a sure way to expose people to all facets of the steaming digital and physical transformation. Giving non-academic organizations run by students a front-row seat will help us develop the last few human traits we have, which will be in high demand in the future. The academic curriculum can be updated by checking it against the skills demanded by organizations. Individuals should consider themselves a collection of talents rather than a specific job title.**

Keywords:- Building, Future Workplace, Re-Evaluation, Educational System.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is a safe bet to assume that work experience has advanced by five to ten years in a single year. Companies shut down overnight, reorganizing their operations with dire consequences. Companies and divisions within IT pondered the problem of how to enable and maximize remote work. By many estimations, the sudden disruption of business processes by the novel COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed our views of the workplace. Times are changing. The transformation affects our work, posing significant organizational, talent, and human resource (HR) challenges. If predictions come true, a turnaround in the distribution of work around humans and machines may cause the loss of 85 million jobs, forcing 50% of workers to acquire new skills (Whiting, 2020). Change is happening faster than ever before. The description of talent has changed significantly over the past decade. What does all this mean for the workforce and the educational system? An attempt to answer this question leaves this essay with the aim of suggesting possible ingredients that could spice up the Nigerian educational system concerning getting people ready for the future workplace.

➤ *What is the Future Workplace?*

However, the mountains of literature have left us curious about how work will change in the future. While a few expect machines to take over, some expect a more relaxed and engaging environment that encourages employee growth and work-life balance. Others expect a combination of the two. This essay agrees with the hybrid school of thought, defining the future workplace as a combination of human, physical, and digital transformation. Think of a world where your neighbor is a robot, and your boss is tracking you. That is the future workplace. It is not a cubicle. It's also not the temporary office created during the pandemic out of a guest room. The future workplace will be skill-based! Work virtually at anytime and anywhere with your chosen tools. A lovely sight to behold is the framework given by ISG. It presents a summary of all the features of the future workplace in one holistic diagram, as shown below:

Fig 1 Features of the Future Workplace
Source:- Anthony, D. (2022). What Does the Workplace of the Future Look Like? *ISG*.
https://isg-one.com/articles/what-does-the-workplace-of-the-future-look-like

- *Digital Transformation*

Like the myth of the grain and the chess game, where each box on the board results in a doubling of the wager by one grain to two, then to four, the advancement of digital technologies is already scaling on the second half of the technological chess board. Digital transformation is about integrating technology into all the different areas of work to transform how goods and services are delivered (Lucci, 2021). Recent developments in information technology (IT), like artificial intelligence, automation, human augmentation, and the human cloud, will sound a death knell for most job titles as we know them. Imagine Quill, a tool developed by US company Narrative Science that examines data and professionally prepares reports. Or how about Amelia, a public-sector robot for the United Kingdom that will handle cumbersome approvals? (Fox & O'Connor, 2015). Software solutions that include video conferencing faxing, emailing, calling, and any other way an organization communicates will be a big part of the future workplace (Cheremond, 2019).

- *Human Transformation*

Like it or not, the human cloud is a reality of life. People no longer desire to work in offices from 9am to 5pm. They like more flexible jobs in terms of working hours and place. Companies are turning away from hiring people to fill various positions and instead engaging professionals based on the abilities needed to finish a particular project. As a result, a day when dozens of books claiming to provide the key to ascending the ranks will be as out of date as a cleaning manual from the 20th century is quickly approaching. This describes what Fox and O'Connor (2015) call the "we working" attitude, creating small, adaptable teams in response to changing workloads, shortening deadlines, and intensive information sharing. This has already begun with Amazon's "two pizza rule" – a rule where work is done with small teams to be fed with two pizzas (Hern, 2018). The future indeed promises a workplace where people from various cultures, backgrounds, and values will be made to work together for a common goal.

- *Physical Transformation*

The time when businesses used big spaces to build major database facilities is over; when the home and the workplace were separate worlds; and Our lives were split into different time points by the ancient industrial clock. Today, cloud computing is removing the dependence on buildings and equipment. It helps businesses to maintain their data while also protecting it. Similarly, digital technology makes it impossible to tell the difference between the workweek and the weekend. It has changed from a predetermined schedule to allow people to work whenever and wherever they like. Websites that connect businesses with freelancers are increasing, and if predictions come true, one of Amazon's Mechanical Turk or Upwork platforms will have employed about 540 workers by 2025 (Williams, n. d). In addition, intelligent facilities like avatars, language software, and conversational interfaces will be used by workers, with nearly no content or meaning loss, to communicate across boundaries, nationalities, and cultures. Individuals will be reviewing one other on competency, trust, and ethical behavior in this type of system, when individuals may not physically meet one another. This has consequences for the workforce.

➢ *What do these Mean for the Workforce?*

With humans working side by side with machines, agility will become an entry ticket to the future workplace. The ability to think, understand and draw conclusions quickly would be in high demand. Although computers can process information that would otherwise be too cumbersome for humans, a human would still need to decide, taking into account the decision's potential broader effects on other business areas.

The capacity to view change as a means to advance and drive innovation rather than as a restriction will also be a vital skill throughout the 4th industrial revolution. The future workforce will be one that can keep up with the changing nature of work, the demands of employers, and the types of skills employees need to succeed.

Unarguably, a machine can never fully replace a person's capacity for interpersonal connection. So, individuals with high emotional intelligence will still have a slot in the future workplace. Self-awareness, self-control, self-expression, and empathy for others are all aspects of emotional intelligence. Similarly, robots cannot match humans in terms of creativity, leaving yet another room for creative people. Creativity will be the key to ultimately benefiting from new products, new working practices, and new technologies. The future workplace will force people to think differently if they must meet expectations.

In addition, the fourth industrial revolution will prioritize communication skills and understanding between individuals. This means that people should practice excellent communication skills to convey their messages to others by saying the right things and utilizing the appropriate body language and tone of voice. Team spirit would be a necessity.

To round things up, the World Economic Forum compiled a list of 20 occupations, 10 expected to grow in demand. In contrast, the remaining 10 are expected to shrink, as shown below:

Table 1 Job Roles that will be Replaced by Machines by 2025 and their Corresponding New Roles

Jobs in Decreasing Demand	Jobs in Increasing Demand
Administrative and executive secretaries	AI and machine learning specialists
Data Entry Clerks	Big data specialists
Accounting, book - keeping and payroll clerks	Data Analysts and scientists
Material recording and stock keeping clerks	Internet of Things specialists
Assembly and factory workers	Process automation specialists
Business services and administration managers	Software and application developers
Mechanics and machines repairers	Business development professionals
General and operations managers	Information security managers
Client information and customer service workers	Digital transformation specialists and bots
Accountants and auditors	Digital marketing and strategy specialists

➢ *Note:* Table is based on a publication by World Economic Forum. It shows the skills that will be important in the future workplace and the job titles that go with them. World Economic Forum (2020). *The Future of Jobs Report 2020.* https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2020/in-full/infographics-e4e69e4de7

➢ *What Happens to Education? (Possible Recommendations for the Nigerian Education System)*

The difficulty is that, like in many other countries, public education in Nigeria is mostly an aftereffect of the industrial age. The students sit in rows behind desks and are given the same lessons. Studying and repetition made people

literate, polite, and easily replaceable in social, professional, and governmental settings. In today's world, where AI technologies can perform any menial task much more efficiently than humans, that simply won't cut it. The Nigerian education system is sound, but it must be reviewed to be future-ready to educate Nigerian youths for the fourth industrial revolution, as was acknowledged at the 2019 African Edu-tech Conference (Akinpelu, 2019).

Therefore, the befitting solution here is to delve deep into learning abilities that machines cannot imitate, such as problem-solving and ingenuity, agility, creativity, social intelligence, and other higher-order functions, while staying familiar with the devices. To embrace these skills, we must

change how we think about people, from how they were seen during the industrial revolution to how they are unique creators and innovators. Reconceiving education as a way of promoting uniqueness rather than replicating conformity is necessary if we are to preserve some of our remaining distinctly human skills. In light of the foregoing, let's consider the following recommendations:

- *Formalizing Informal Education*

Most of the time, agility and creativity cannot be learned in a controlled environment, as in a classroom setting. That's where clubs and voluntary service organizations come in. The Red Cross Society, Rotary clubs, debate clubs, and public speaking groups are all examples of groups that can be used to improve the education system in Nigeria by making them part of the curriculum full-time. These groups are known for offering innovative and entrepreneurial solutions to identified problems using the tools of brainstorming, needs assessment, focused groups, fieldwork, and practical experimentation. Obviously, these are effective ways to practically cultivate creativity, agility, problem-solving, and even leadership skills. We will have created an army that is well prepared to rule the future if they are included on the dotted lines that must be filled out on the application forms for our universities' entrance exams and if their activities receive active support, promotion, and sponsorship they need. The Nigerian education system should be viewed beyond training people to sit behind a long desk for some routine paperwork. These non-academic organizations and their activities offer informal education that is slowly becoming formal. They should no longer be treated as optional, where they come begging for slots. They should be given equal priority in the system.

- *Technical Education*

Everyone who wants to work in the workplace of the future needs to know a lot about technology. It's a snowball effect: the more data an institution collects, the more analysts and specialists it will need to keep track of, process, and make sense of it. People will also have robots and machines as their working partners. Fundamentally, everyone must be aware of the possible effects of new technologies on their workplace and position. This is what PIAAC (n.d) calls digital literacy. Many others include problem-solving, information exchange, internet privacy and security, and other related computer-related skills. Think about assignments being turned in through online platforms like Moodie - an AI presentation analysis and scoring system; students being required to use specific software to view and finish their test; or engineering students being asked to oversee an automation process from start to finish. Students should be constantly exposed to the digital world by all possible means. Equally important is encouraging students to create and share AI tools or individual collections of applications, tools, and intelligent technologies to push the envelope in terms of high digital competence. A good starting point could be applying an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system in educational institutions. An ERP system makes it easy to share information amongst management, staff, instructors, and

students (MYEDU, 2021). That sounds like good preparation for the unified communication future in particular.

- *The 4Cs*

While STEM subjects prepare students for a more technologically advanced age, schools are increasingly expected to impart the 4Cs (creativity, communication, critical thinking, and collaboration), commonly referred to as 21st-century skills. For example, instead of relying on the seminar and final year project report times, engaging with classmates, strangers, and potential employers in front of a massive audience in that dreadful experience known as public speaking, could be more effective as a regular and mandatory part of the curriculum. Such things can even take place in foreign languages too. The Nigerian education system can be better furnished with courses and topics that promote teamwork and collaboration. Students should often be asked to fill in specific tasks and problem gaps. Group assignments and presentations should change gear on the increasing side. Because we rely on digital technologies, we must digest a large amount of data and select what is helpful, relevant, and trustworthy. That's critical thinking, and it can be built by presenting students with situations that demand a sense of judgment and deep consideration. Students can be asked to give essential analysis reports on practical world issues or fictitious topics regularly. Also, arts training, such as music and drama, could help students stretch themselves to see what they are capable of. The Goddard School (2016) said that the 4Cs help students improve self-control, processing speed, and abstract thinking.

- *Leveraging Organizations as Rubrics*

A rubric is an evaluation instrument that clearly specifies achievement standards for all aspects of any type of student work. What this means in the context of this essay is that the Nigerian education system can be future-oriented by checking it against the skills and talents required by employers and organizations. Unlike the current situation, where organizations and the educational plan are moving in two parallel lines, the system can be better if it is structured to train people based on the demands of the workplace. Accordingly, there could be a regular request from organizations by curriculum setters on what skills they are looking for. Follow-up and monitoring of their activities and service delivery prove effective too. A third component is industrial attachments. Even though this is already happening, it should be sped up by making it bigger and giving it more funding. An energizer success story is a university in Sydney that spent time with CEOs and other business executives, requesting what talents they believed were necessary for their firms to possess to secure the continued success of their businesses. The university, as a direct result of those conversations, developed a highly creative, interdisciplinary degree program to produce graduates with abilities such as high-level critical thinking, prospective risk response planning, and innovation, in addition to many other skills identified in the top ten list compiled by the World Economic Forum (People Scout, n.d). One massive benefit of this exercise is that it keeps the

education system at the same pace as changing skill demands and the evolving workplace. Of course, graduates would be armed to take over the future workplace.

II. CONCLUSION

Perhaps sooner than we anticipated, the workplace of the future has arrived. Most of the abilities we consider necessary for today's profession may be obsolete in as little as five years. Due to the rapid development of new technologies, many of us will soon work alongside artificial intelligence and robots. How, therefore, can we ensure that we continue to progress? Investments and reforms to Nigeria's unsuitable educational system are needed to close the country's current skills gap. With a focus on much more demand-driven and technical training and a more considerable emphasis on 21st-century skills, Nigeria has to adopt a vision of continuous learning and capacity building across the educational system.

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