Education and Societal Transformation: The Role of Elites in an Emerging Knowledge Based Economy

By
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Introduction

Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another (Gilbert K. Chesterton). I totally agree with Gilbert.

Through its power of transforming the MIND of the Individual, education can effect social, economic and political transformation of any society and can also be a positive force for building value-driven and peaceful communities in a rapidly changing world.

Education is unarguably vital; but if it is to transform society from stagnation to dynamism and progress, there must be a willingness and determination on the part of those with ample opportunities to help those with little.

Those with ample, happen to be the minority elites while those with little, the majority “masses”.

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Introduction

The importance of education to economic growth, poverty reduction and the total wellbeing of the society can never be overemphasized.

A general consensus now exists in the literature that education is the bedrock of any society and results of recent researches have proven that long held “gut feelings” that human capital formation (the act of transforming raw human resources to a pool of skilled workforce through education and good health) plays a significant role in a country’s economic development.

Better education leads not only to higher individual income but is also a necessary (although not always sufficient) condition for long-term economic growth.
Knowledge-based Economy

Knowledge Economy Vs. Knowledge Based Economy

The **knowledge economy** is a term that refers to an economy of knowledge focused on the production and management of knowledge within existing economic constraints.

**Knowledge-based economy** on the other hand is more frequently used to refer to the use of knowledge to produce economic benefits as well as job creation.

The essential difference is that in a knowledge economy, knowledge is a **product** (an end), while in a knowledge-based economy, knowledge is a **tool** (a means).
Knowledge-based Economy

Today's global economy is one in transition to a "knowledge economy," as an extension of an "information society."


This development has redefined the economic landscape, even questioning earlier growth theories propounded by classical economists of the early 16th century that growth depended on mostly non-human capital accumulation and a pool of natural resources.

A fourth component had been added to earlier stages of development (Agrarian, Industrial, Post Industrial) which is knowledge based economy.
Knowledge-based Economy

Major Drivers of Current Development are:

- Information Technology (largely knowledge-driven)
  - The Computer
  - The Internet
  - Several new media of communications
- Globalisation (largely enabled by the internet revolution)

As a result, goods and services can be developed, bought, sold, and in many cases even delivered over through electronic means.

Many countries without natural resources had taken the challenge and had benefitted significantly from these new world order.
Knowledge-based Economy

Countries with the Highest Remittances in the World

Source: World Fact Book
Countries and states who placed high premium in educating their populace fared well when compared with other countries in the world.

Remittances act as a catalyst for investment, sources for capital, trade, technology transfer and knowledge sharing.

In an emerging knowledge-based economy, education is the source of critical capital necessary for growth.
Gombe State: Where are we?

Statistics indicate that the state is yet to harness the power of its large human resource base due to absolute deficit of care, passion and concern about the role of education, its quantity and quality at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels over the years.

Available statistics reveal that Gombe State has a population of 2,365,040 people (Most recent census by NPC, 2006).

Of this number, 53 per cent are male while 47 per cent are female.

Out of the total, 540,829 (or 22.9 per cent) are children below school going age. The graphical representation of the remaining populace of 1,824,211 people are as follows:
Gombe State: Where are we?

Distribution of Population by Schooling Status

- Never attended school: 53%
- Attended School in the Past: 17%
- Attending Primary: 13%
- Attending JSS: 4%
- Attending SSS: 6%
- Attending tertiary: 7%

Source: National Population Commission
Gombe State: Where are we?

Level of Educational Attainment in Gombe State

- 0.3% Post Graduate Degree
- 1.4% Graduate
- 2.9% NCE/OND
- 40.1% Primary/Sec
- 55.3% Others

This is symbolic of elitist educational system (typical in feudal systems) where only few privileged individuals attended school and is unacceptable for any society that seeks to make progress.

Source: National Population Commission
Gombe State: Where are we?

Profile of Educational System in Gombe State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of candidates who sat for SSCE</th>
<th>Candidates with 5 credits include. Maths and Eng.</th>
<th>% of Candidates who passed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>4,878.00</td>
<td>53.00</td>
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<td>5,827.00</td>
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<td>3.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>7,330.00</td>
<td>106.00</td>
<td>1.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>6,719.00</td>
<td>124.00</td>
<td>1.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>37,297.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>706.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>36,591.00</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Education
Gombe State: Where are we?

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<th>% of Candidates who passed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>8,880</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>3.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>10,792</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>1.86</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>13,548</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>14,609</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>8.06</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>17,059</td>
<td>1,524</td>
<td>8.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>16,434</td>
<td>9,027</td>
<td>54.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>14,996</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>17,155</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>113,473</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,513</strong></td>
<td><strong>100,960</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where are they?

Source: Ministry of Education
Gombe State: Where are we?

Rate of Registered Unemployment in Gombe State
2002-2008

Source: National Bureau of Statistics
Implications: The net effects of these Developments?

- Army of uneducated and unskilled workforce
- High level of and rising unemployment
- Wanton cases of social vices such as theft, drug abuse, hooliganism, etc.
- Emergence of political thuggery and election violence
- Poverty and deprivation
- Diseases
- High dependency ratio (this creates a situation of high consumption and low investment)
- Increased number of glorified Beggars
- Societal decay
- Crisis, Crisis and Crisis
- Societal collapse and eventually,
- ANARCHY
What is Responsible for these Developments?

- Lack of involvement of the current educated elites in civic management:
  - Near absence of civic engagement of the people which is an expected outcome of social development
  - In this context, do the elites in Gombe State sufficiently involve themselves in civic activities or are they becoming more and more self-centered and selfish?
  - Does the present educational system provide enough awareness about the role of education in societal transformation?
  - Do the elites and other stakeholders in the educational sector ponder for a second on the total collapse of quality education in our society today?
  - What positive benefits has the society received due to the presence of the educated ones in our midst?
What is Responsible for these Developments?

- **Civic disengagement of large portion of the population:**
  - Entrenchment of class difference (haves and have-nots) and increased consumerism at the expense of social responsibility to society.
  - The lower classes of people are not given equal opportunities with those from the elitist few.
  - The elites represent 4.6 per cent of the educated population of the State.
  - Which means that 96.4 per cent fall within the poor and uneducated citizen with limited opportunities to improve their economic and social status.
  - If this large category of the populace could be integrated into the mainstream activities at all level, a lot can be achieved.
  - Remember, “there is enough for everyone, but not enough for greed.”
Way Forward

- **Introduction of civic engagement in our society:**
  - Encouragement of voluntary organizations and people movement by elites to create awareness on the importance of education in a dynamic society.
  - Creating platforms for constant interactions between the elites and the youth.
  - Empowering the vulnerable: Youth and Women
    - Paying school fees for those promising kids in your neighborhood who can’t afford it.
    - Supporting tutorial in different Centers for secondary school drop-outs in our community.
  - Assisting those with requisite qualification to secure admission into tertiary institutions
  - Supporting those with requisite qualification to secure job in and outside the state
  - Assisting academically talented to further their education to a higher level in all fields of study.
Way Forward: AIT Foundation as an example of an interventionist organization in education

Our priority at AIT Foundation includes:

- Supporting academically talented but less advantaged group (those most in need) through
  - Undergraduate scholarship
  - Tutorials for drop outs
  - Employment counseling
  - Guidance and counseling
  - Mentoring
  - Coaching

- Our values are service to humanity as enshrined in our generational quote: “He who is born without any contribution to society is a specimen of futility to humanity”
Way Forward: AIT Foundation as an interventionist organization

Our core values are:

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Sincerity
- Hard work
- Team work
- Leadership by example
- Trust
- Togetherness; and
- Commitment to societal transformation
Way Forward: What can we do collectively to better our society

There is need for change in our values:

- **Attitudinal Change**
  - Parents should play the first and possibly the most important role of proper upbringing of their children
  - School Teachers should be honest and sincere in their chosen career
  - Students should create time to coach other individuals in their neighborhood
  - Businessmen should assist with educational investment at both individual and institutional levels
  - Civil servants that are subject matter experts in their chosen disciplines should assist on a part-time basis through tutorials for those most in need.
  - Political class should lead with the fear of God
  - Gombe State University should be strengthened
Way Forward: What can we do collectively to better our society

- Societal Reorientation
  - Identify and associate with good and progressive people at all times;
  - Condemn abuse of trust in totality no matter who is involved;
  - Personalization of public office should be condemned and sanctioned by the society;
  - Discourage decision-making based on party, ethnic and religious lines at all times;
  - Ignore short term gains for long term benefits;
  - Criticize objectively and constructively with facts;
  - Build communities and leaders;
  - Develop voluntary organizations that are complementary not competitive.
Conclusion

- An educated people can be easily governed. Frederick The Great
- Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army. Edward Everett
- Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself. John Dewey
- Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another. Gilbert K. Chesterton
- In an emerging knowledge-based economy, education is equal to good future. Abubakar Inuwa Tata
- Truly, the superiority of a learned man over a mere devotee is like that of the full moon over the stars. Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud and Daramy
- Search for Knowledge from Cradle to Grave
Thank you for your time.

Together we can change the world