

## **BOOK REVIEW**

**Title: Beyond Classroom Walls**

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### **Introduction**

Education in its truest sense is not about academic work, book learning or examination results; it is about the preparation of well-rounded young people with a leadership mindset for the future.

The pathway to success in college and beyond is very different now than it was several years ago, thus students must be willing to adapt to the unique demands of this information age by effectively applying the timeless principles of success and skills taught *beyond Classroom Walls*.

*Beyond Classroom Walls* is a book targeted towards high school and college students to help them approach college with the right mindset: as a place brimming with diverse opportunities that should be maximized. It also aims to encourage students to fully develop themselves while affirming their individuality in order to live successfully as well-schooled adults; build fulfilling careers and make enduring contributions to society.

## **SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

### **CHAPTER 1- STUDY SKILLS**

There is a general assumption that students should innately know how to study and make good grades not bearing in mind that certain skills are required to achieve this.

*Study skills* or *study strategies* are approaches that can be applied effectively to achieve learning. These skills are generally critical to success in school. They are essential for acquiring good grades while in school as well as being useful for learning throughout an individual's lifetime.

Among the secondary students, who took the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and Nigerian Examination Council (NECO) examinations in the year 2009, 75 percent failure rate and 90 percent failure rate, respectively, were recorded. Even more alarming, most of the candidates who took these exams were unable to score a credit/pass in English Language and Mathematics. According to the news report, only 1.8 percent—representing only 4,223 of the 236,613 candidates that wrote the examination—of all the candidates who took the examinations passed with five credits, including Mathematics and English language. Taking into consideration these abysmal statistics, I believe there is an urgent need to the review the strategies engaged by Nigerian students when studying.

To be a successful student, getting good grades with minimal efforts, you have to develop the different types of skills such as:

- Study Skills
- Organizational Skills
- Time Management Skills
- Test and Exam Taking Skills
- Note Taking Skills
- Stress Management Skills

## CHAPTER 2 - SCHOOL: MORE THAN BAGGING A DEGREE

*The most dangerous way to approach college is with the idea that all you need to do is pay your dues and get a degree.”*

– Patrick Combs

Approaching your college years with the traditional degree-conscious mentality just like past generations did is like preparing yourself for a world that is fast becoming extinct. There was a time when employers wanted only trained graduates in specific courses and from specific universities to fill in positions in the workplace. I am glad to inform you that this is no longer the case. Just like so many things have changed in the past decade or so – for instance most students in our colleges and universities today are more comfortable working on a keyboard than writing in a spiral notebook, and are happier reading from a computer screen than from a textbook – even the demands of employers have changed.

There are two types of students who attend college and they can be described as:

1. **The Degree-Minded Student:** These individuals are considered the **traditional, triangular** and **rigid** students.
2. **The Depth-Minded Student:** These individuals are considered the **modern, well-rounded** and **flexible** students.

The road to a bright and promising future is being the **depth minded, modern, well-rounded and flexible student**. These students want more than a degree and they want more than a decorated cardboard paper called a certificate. They differentiate themselves from the crowd through the experiences they have and the knowledge and skills they learn along the way...

They focus on extracurricular activities as well as academics;

They focus on developing their interests, skills and strengths not necessarily on the popularity of the course or such whims;

They focus on maximizing all the opportunities that college can give before launching out into the work-place.

## CHAPTER 3- SELF DISCOVERY: CHOOSING YOUR CAREER

An understanding of your personality type is crucial to deciding the degree course and ultimately the career that you should pursue. Certain courses and careers are more suitable for certain personality types than others. Just as no two snowflakes or fingerprints are exactly alike, each person is a different and unique individual. Geneticists say that each human being is the product of 23 chromosomes from the mother and 23 chromosomes from the father. Consequently, the odds of your parents having another child exactly like you are  $10^{2,000,000,000}$ . The discovery, understanding and development of this uniqueness must therefore be an issue of the highest priority. Unfortunately, very few people have discovered or understood the essence of their uniqueness as individuals and so not many have identified what course or career they are truly interested in....

Many career planning experts are of the firm belief that when you know your personality type, as identified using the MBTI, you have the ability to make better and more accurate decisions about your career.

You could also figure out your personality type using the temperament analysis as explained by other psychologists and individuals namely:

- ① Sanguine
- ② Melancholy
- ③ Choleric
- ④ Phlegmatic

It is important to note that each personality type is unique. Fitting into one type rather than another does not bring with it any special status. In other words, it is not better to be a Sanguine instead of a Phlegmatic. A phlegmatic may function better in certain environments, situations and roles, or do better in certain courses or careers than a Sanguine would, while the opposite would be true in others.

## CHAPTER 4 - SIGNPOSTS ON YOUR ROAD TO CAREER SUCCESS

*Success is not the key to happiness; happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."*

– Albert Schweitzer

### Values, Interests, Skills and Ambitions (VISA)

According to Les Hewitt, Andrew Hewitt and Luc d'Abadie, authors of the ***Power of Focus for College Students***, a career that can ignite a passion in you must align with your **Values, Interests, Skills & Ambitions**.

Building a career around the type of work that you are passionate about and truly enjoy is very powerful and fulfilling. Success comes much easier when you have a strong passion for what you are doing. ....

It sounds like wise counsel to tell a student to pursue a professional course usually the popular or 'prestigious' Medicine, Engineering, Accounting and Law; relegating the so called 'unprofessional courses' to the background. I often say that just because a course or career is not so popular does not mean it is not professional. One does not negate the other. A friend of mine, in his book ***The Oracles***, opined that

there are no professional courses in the real sense of it. There are only men with professional mindsets and attitudes, which means therefore that professionalism is a state of the mind. The most respected and successful fashion designers today are simply 'tailors' who approached tailoring with a very professional attitude. The course, therefore, does not make the man; it is actually the man that makes the course!

Students may be interested in certain courses and career choices, but are constrained from following their dreams because of societal and parental influences. Oftentimes their concern is a result of genuine parental love and concern for your future, but it is important to know that doing what you love and loving what you do is the pathway to success and personal fulfillment.

## CHAPTER 5 – SOCIAL GRACES

*"If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world."*

– Francis Bacon

In order to set some standard for good behavior, society has created what we call 'etiquette'. The *Oxford English Mini-Dictionary* defines 'etiquette' as "*conventions of behavior accepted as polite*".

*Webster's New World Dictionary* defines 'etiquette' as "*the forms, manners and ceremonies established by convention as acceptable or required by society in a profession or on official life*".

We might therefore consider etiquette as the ability to reason and do the right or appropriate thing at the right and appropriate time. Anyone who practices this can be said to have **social grace**.

It is quite unfortunate that the culture today does not place much value on the development of social graces or basic good manners in an individual. One would naturally imagine that good manners would be passed to children by their parents at home, but simple observation reveals otherwise. Many parents are either too busy to be bothered or they simply underestimate and overlook the importance of essential social graces. Children are often unsure of how to behave in a particular social situation, causing them to feel uneasy and to lose confidence. Teenagers, by the very nature of the developmental stage they are going through, tend to feel awkward; so they are often waiting to take a cue from their parents on how to behave and if the cue does not come, they waver uncertainly – unsure of what to do next. The schools and the educational system, which are meant to be the next alternative to teaching these social rules to children, are doing very little or nothing about it due to the restricted and regimented curriculum.

A recent survey conducted at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston USA revealed that students are being encouraged to attend Charm School, which is an annual tutorial in social graces. Some of the highlights include how to eat apple pie with a spoon (not a fork), the use of dual-sex lavatories (toilets), ballroom dancing, etc. The idea of establishing a charm school was conceived by an MIT professor in Literature, Travis Merritt who recalls, "*A bunch of us were sitting around in the office one day and I said: Am I imagining it or are MIT students a little bit peculiar in lacking the social graces?*"

Britain's first male finishing school is opening soon. The aim is to transform rude and smelly 'guys' to smooth-talking and freshly scented gentlemen! Students at University of Cincinnati in the United States are being taught which fork to use at formal dinners as part of their course work and a school in Mexico is offering classes that will teach girls between the ages of 13 and 18 years how to become perfect wives!

All of these developments reveal that there are many more things that can be learned in school than those which have been traditionally taught. Now schools can offer more skills to students—teaching them how to properly comport and conduct themselves in public.

## CHAPTER 6- SUCCESS PRINCIPLES FOR COLLEGE AND BEYOND

*'To live your life in your own way, to reach the goals you've set for yourself, to be the person you want to be—that is success.'*

- Anon

Do you know that success resides inside each and every one of us? It is not the exclusive reserve of a chosen few. Be assured that you already have what it takes to be successful residing within you – your talents, abilities, desires and choices. All you need to know is how to do things in a way that will enable you to succeed all the time. Success is a journey that involves forming certain habits, imbibing certain principles, making certain choices and continuing in them. You must be a certain kind of person to succeed; it does not come automatically. If you are not yet that type of person, you should not despair, but determine to become that kind of person. If you consistently apply the principles which are listed below to any area of your life – not only in college – you **will** experience a certain level of success. ....

- **Right Relationships:** If you want to be a success or an achiever in school, you need to make friends or keep company with other students who are of the same mind and are already successful. You must learn their habits and the secret of their success.
- **Continuous Learning:** Always remember that no knowledge gained is lost or totally useless. You can never know what would be useful to you 5, 10, or 15 years down the line. Knowledge makes us valuable to ourselves and others no matter how insignificant the particular information may seem at the moment.
- **Time Management:** Time is a currency and your success in school is determined by your ability to use your time wisely.
- **Discipline and Goal Setting:** As a student, the successful achievement of your academic goals requires more than a decision; you must add discipline and strong determination so that you do not fall by the wayside.
- **Financial Literacy:** *The main reason people struggle financially is because they have spent years in school but learned nothing about money.*”- Robert Kiyosaki

- **Excellence:** Excellence demands and speaks of quality in an unusual high degree, in every performance or activity. Make excellence your lifestyle today.
- **Honesty and Integrity:** Cheating is a sore problem in Nigeria today, not only in our schools but also in the larger community. Wherever cheating takes place, whether in the examination hall or the sports field, it is undoubtedly the worst thing any student can do to himself during these critical learning years.

## CHAPTER 7- SKILL BASED EDUCATION

*As skills and energy became more of a demand, people who didn't have skills just got left behind, got shuttled to the side. Education didn't keep up with their promise. Education didn't prepare them for this new world...*

- Julian Bond

In 2006, I had the opportunity of serving as a volunteer under the UNICEF/NYSC Peer Education Campaign on HIV/AIDS and adolescent reproductive health issues. During this period, I came across various publications in form of newsletters and books which revealed the following statistics that I considered quite shocking:

- Every single day, nearly 6,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 become infected with HIV worldwide. Yet only a fraction of them actually know that they are infected.
- Another alarming statistic is that over 30 percent of adolescents in Nigeria have had sexual intercourse by 15 years of age. Research also shows that by age 20, over 75 percent of women have had sexual intercourse. – (NDHS 2003)
- Most shocking of all, over 600,000 abortions occur annually in Nigeria and more than 60 percent of these are once again attributed to young persons. About 37 percent of these are secondary school students – (CAUP 1999) .....

The good news is that currently these numbers seem to be on the decline because Government bodies, communities, NGOs and individuals have been raising the necessary awareness among the populace and have thus created zero tolerance for HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse, exploitation and any form of violence against children and adolescents.

On the other hand, it became quite obvious that these **young people**, as stated in statistics, were not totally ignorant about HIV but did not protect themselves against the disease because they lacked the skills, the support or the means to adopt safe habits. They lacked the requisite *basic life skills* that would improve their self esteem and allow them make informed choices such as not becoming sexually active until they are mature enough to protect themselves from HIV, other STIs as well as unwanted pregnancies.

Below are the some of the skills required to effectively fight and overcome the challenges of their time and protect themselves from the pervasive influence of peer pressure, the danger of unwanted pregnancies, STIs and HIV, substances and drug abuse, drunkenness, sexual abuse, violence and other youth related problems.

- Self Love/Self Esteem
- Assertiveness
- Refusal Skills
- Negotiation Skills
- Decision Making

## CHAPTER 8 – SIGNIFICANT LIVING

*“As everyone has received the **gift**, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*

– Apostle Peter

A very famous quotation attributed to **Mahatma Gandhi** goes: *“Be the change you wish to see in the world.”*

The 18<sup>th</sup> century English Philosopher, **Edmund Burke**, warned *“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”*

The wise words of **Nelson Mandela** resounds these truths even more:

*“During my lifetime, I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African People, I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if it needs to be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”*

I believe that everyone has a responsibility to invest quality time and material as well as financial substance towards creating positive change in their generation. It is important to live a life of purpose to make a positive difference and leave a lasting legacy that will impact generations to come. I believe that the Almighty God has endowed each individual with **GIFTS** to be used for the benefit of humanity. This chapter has been specially dedicated to reminding us that we do not belong to ourselves, but to the Universe and so we must ensure we approach everything that we do with the heart of a philanthropist and generous giver; thereby leaving our footprints engraved in the sands of time.

I strongly believe that we can no longer afford to stand quietly and hopefully by the wayside, or sit on the fence in the hope that someone else would rise to the challenge of the day. The stark reality is that there is no one to bring about this change that Nigeria needs but you and I.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yejide Akiode, a graduate of the renowned Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, is an ardent and dynamic trainer and speaker. She is an Education Consultant of many years training and experience. She currently serves as the Managing Consultant of **I-excel Consulting** – an education consulting outfit – and is the initiator of the award winning Young Minds Empowerment Initiative (YMEI), a non-profit and non-governmental organization established in 2006.

Yejide is an avid reader of books and very passionate about learning and impacting others. She has compiled very useful information into this book for the benefit of her reading audience.

She is married to Toyin Ezekiel Akiode and they are blessed with a very handsome Son – Oluwaseyitan Daniel Akiode