

Review

Making the most of students' potential: Some tips and hints

Edward M. Mukandala

Faculty of Economics and Business Studies University of Dodoma, Dodoma, Tanzania. E-mail: Edward_mm@gmail.com

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Achieving success in studies is important. However, there have been no clear strategies that inspire the students and or lecturers on how best could the studies be carried for the purpose of attaining maximum performance. This paper therefore, expounds some strategies that need to be observed by the students on the one hand and the lecturers on the other. The article further narrates the barriers to achieving success at school or college and suggests some measures that could be observed for the purpose of managing performance optimally. The article concludes that most students are capable of doing more than what they have done, and that managing time while studying is the key towards achieving success. The paper appeals to lecturers to also manage time and that the failure of students should not be linked to the performance of lecturers. It further argues that the pertinence of any program is pegged on the timely accomplishment of the same.

Key words: Education, college, school, potential, maximize.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the key to development. However, the pertinence of education depends on many factors. To some, is its ability to offer jobs to those that have attained that education. To other people, the importance or value of education depends on the competitiveness of the graduates of one university versus other graduates of another university when subjected into one exams normally executed through professional bodies such as the National Board of Accountants and Auditors (NBAA), which weighs the quality of accountants in Tanzania. Other bodies include; the national procurement and supplies board of Tanzania, which sets standards for quality procurement and supplies professionals in Tanzania. Altogether, the challenges that exist in education arena are many and diversified. We have challenges that are posed on the quality of education. We have some challenges that are posed on whether the grades attained by a student 'A' in one university under a certain set of lecturers, would attain the same grade or rank if undergone same course or program of study in another university under another set of lecturers.

Norman (2005) poses other challenges which include the time set for accomplishing a certain program in Africa and the link with the same program pursued in Europe but given different time of accomplishing. He further insists that while programs in African university seem to take more time compared to that which is taken in Europe particularly United Kingdom, yet the cognisance seem to

be high for those attained in United Kingdom compared to those attained in African countries. This paper however, does not discuss on the challenges to quality education, rather it avails strategies to maximizing student's potential at school or colleges by narrating some measures that need to be employed by students on the one hand and lecturers on the other for the purpose of increasing the utilization of each student ability.

While it is crucial to discuss any matter, yet it is always important to avail the limits of meanings on terms that are the key in the discussion. Norman (2009) reveals that at times it is taken for granted that readers are aware of the meanings of the terms discussed. And he emphasizes that, professional or academic papers or articles need to be understood by any person irrespective of the area of specialization. In this view, we put forward some definitions of terms that are the key in this discussion.

Defining maximum, potential and education

What does it mean to maximize? The word maximum refers to the highest level, optimal, no more than that level. Maximize can be defined as attain the highest level possible, achieve the greatest level. Munroe (2004) defines maximum as supreme, greatest and ultimate. Therefore, to maximize is to express, expose, experience, and execute all the hidden, God-given abilities

abilities, talents, gifts, and potential through God's vision breathed in our souls to fulfil His purpose for our lives on earth.

Potential can be defined as totality of ability, total endowment, and total power. Potential refers to capacity to act. On the other hand, education refers to the skills acquired through various methods aggregated as teaching or training. Various authors consider the concept in different ways. Some look at the education as a concept to refer to schooling, certification, initiation and indoctrination. Some see it from functional angle; others from its aims while many see it as a process (Dada, 1999).

Some refers the concept of education as the transmission of people's culture or part of it from generation to another (Nduka, 1982 in Lawal, 1999). In this regard, Oyewomi (2010:202) provides that from the definition above, we can infer that education is a process through which norms and values of a particular society could be transmitted to another generation, even generation yet unborn. In other words, education could mean a means through which continuity could be guaranteed in the society. He adds that, from critical examination the definition fails to explain the kind of norms and values to be passed across to another generation because any norms or values which do not conform to the general opinion may not survive because they are going to face stiff opposition.

Nevertheless, it is worthy noting that differences that are pertaining to the definition of the concept of education and even other concepts depends on other factors: 1) the time at which the definition is propounded- normally definitions are propounded basing on the experience attained prior to defining the concerned concept. Hence it is normally limited to the exposure of the person providing a definition. 2) The level of understanding of the person providing the definition. Generally the more the exposure and knowledge of other concepts the more precise rendered into defining the concepts and the reverse is also true. In this regard, Norman (2005) asserts that education is a noun which refers to skills or knowledge attained through formal or informal ways for the purpose of enlightening the person acquainted with such skills or knowledge with ability to soften the problems of the surroundings, hence improved livelihood. Norman seems to; in other words, provide the characteristics of education in that it has to 'enlighten the person to deal with surrounding societal problems ranging from economical, political, sociological and environmental for the purpose of attaining an improved living'.

Why maximize potential

We go to school and start the studies because we want to achieve. No body wants to attend the studies and end

up failing. We equally establish businesses so as at the end of the day we attain the fruits of the work well done. In order to attain success, in all ventures including studies, realization of what is success is pertinent.

True success is not a project but a journey. The spirit of achievement is guided by the notion that success is an instalment plan on which we make daily payments until we maximize ourselves. This success begins when we understand and accept that life is a process of growing and developing. Thus, life is meant to be a never-ending education, a journey of discovery and adventure, an exploration into our God-given potential for His glory.

We need to maximize potential because we are underutilising the potentials that are availed in us. Vehicles that are made to travel at the speed of 180KM/H would reach differently if driven by two different drivers who observe different speed. Assuming that two drivers are driving two similar make vehicles and the journey total length is 180,000 Kilometres per year. This could take about 41 days to accomplish the journey if the vehicles are optimized (driven at 180 KM per hour speed). Assuming the stipulated length is to be continued annually for ten years then the total number of days will be about 410 days when the car is optimized. In order to understand the concept of maximizing potential, let us name the two drivers as X and Y.

X has decided to optimize the vehicle's speed in all his trips and thus throughout the journey. Y has decided that he will maintain the speed of 80KM per hour.

CASES AND EXAMPLES –RESULTS

In order to realize the potential, we must understand that the maker of the vehicle as stipulated above has already determined the potential of the car in terms of speed- it is 180KM per hour. The speed of this vehicle is not determined by reluctance made by the drivers. Whether the car is driven at 40KM per hour or otherwise does not change the potential of the car, it only tells the efficiency and/or deficiency of the drivers. Assessing the two drivers, it could be realised that they will end up with the following results: X will accomplish the journey in about 410 days which is 14 months. Y will accomplish the same journey in about 820 days, which is 28 months.

For obvious reason, one driver has in hand a year for doing other business of development. The extra year is realised from the fact that maximizing potential is a journey; sensitivity to saving a second will lead into saving a minute and finally a year. The time saved by X, could be utilised into doing master degree program, among others. If the two were in need for pursuing the same degree, then it could be obvious that X will succeed in attaining it a year before Y has done the same. The aggregate of what is being put forward in this example is that an attempt of deciding to maximize potential will cause

cause massive effect in the entire life of the person pursuing it.

Therefore students at university level, exercising how to maximize potential is crucial. And the need become huge to distance learning students because while they intend to accomplish the studies, yet they are required to equally perform well in their working places. Some key components to maximizing potentials.

a) Self realization and actualization. In life the most important thing is to realise what you are. In this regard, it is important to let each student and lecturer know that no student is un-teachable. To student it is important to realise that lecturers competence differ just as student's abilities. Hence looking at lecturers positively is the best way to enabling easy follow-ups to what they teach and so forth. Generally, any thing that is done by a lecturer to students is meant to make the student perform well. There are few instances when the behaviour of some lecturers may connote vengeance. This is also normal just as your fellow students could at times demonstrate a behaviour which is abnormal; the same can be made by a supervisor. It normally ought not to be so.

b) Success is what we are called for. To complete the piece of work that we have just started is what we are there for. Thus students should start their programs of study knowing that they are expected to complete. Both the endogenous (you) and exogenous environment (other people) is expecting each student to accomplish the studies. Never think you are just incapable of accomplishing the studies, never. That is simply mediocrity. That is you perceive inferior even when you have not optimized your ability.

c) Ignore deterring factors. There times people may advise you on the failures that you are likely to encounter when pursuing the studies, the totality of their advice is simply 'do not go for it'. Pieces of advice are good, particularly when they render or facilitate a way to achieving your goal. When an advice is meant to fail you, the best way to sustain your goal is to ignore it. Do not look at the people you consider friends, some time you may not know what they think of you. Just pick the advices that grant you possibility to achieve.

d) Observe the guardian/lecturers irrespective of what they look like. At schools we are not there for status quo. We are there to pass the exams after we have understood what is being taught. Most of students are also working and some are holding the perceived key jobs in the society. As a student do not relate what you are at jobs against the status of your lecturers. A lecturer is worthy and the most important creature at the college or school, irrespective of what he/she might look like. Just follow the teachings and the modality of completing the assignments. Ignore your past experience that you have attained when doing studies in other colleges. At times colleges differ on how to disseminate knowledge and therefore the most important thing is to accept the

present college as it is and the strategies towards studying as they are being presented.

e) Accomplish assignments on time. Any student or lecturer, and generally every person's abilities are pegged on the time for completing the task. If students would want to maximize potential, they must complete tasks or assignments presented to them in due time. Never say I will do it tomorrow when the lecturer has given you a deadline to be today. Observing time set to accomplish assignment and tasks is what makes us differ in terms of prosperity. In this regard, we must learn how to make choice of what we consider pertinent for our success.

f) Learn to ignore preferences that deter your success. In modern world it is normal to see people speaking aloud about their hobbies and other preferences. Some of us love football. We love Arsenal football club of England, and Simba Sports Club of Tanzania. Generally we love football. Now consider a situation where the world cup is being held in South Africa, games are set all most a quarter of a day for about two months. If we would consider watching the games all the time, then nothing will be achieved in 31 days or more. We must pose questions on ourselves, such as what will I benefit by seeing Arsenal defeating, for example, Manchester united even 10 goals nil. What will I benefit by surrendering most of the programs for the sake of watching football? We must learn to forbid our interests that do not render success in what we consider achievement. The world over, people seems to care little on the things that do not boost their carrier. It is normal in schools when a person will come and 'launch' a discussion on a movie. Young people will discuss about the movie for four hours, not taking the same number of hours on courses that relate to studies. It is wastage of time.

g) Avoid comparison. One of the greatest mistake people make is to become void of their own capacity at the expense of others. People differ because they vary, comparison can deter your success. You are unique with specific abilities. Do not peg your abilities at the abilities of others. Ones ability is not defined through others. Some of us prefer soliciting solutions for community problems some prefer personal aggrandisement. If the two groups of people would compare each other, it would be an obvious mistake. I keep asking myself suppose the entire city of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania was mine, what next? But suppose the level of poverty among our communities is reduced, what next? Wow, that would be great, no tears no suffrage, life would become easy. Some of us enjoy solving societal problems.

h) Avoid pegging experience with your future fortune. Experience may be defined as observation of facts as a source of information gained through past ventures; activities, and other facts. And thus, the more the exposure the more the information summed up as experi-

ence. However, much as we refer on experience, the same is bound to the extent of exposure. In this regard, we are not saying that experience is bad, rather when used as a premise for decision making, indeed it is harmful. People who consider experience as a mirror will always decide the future as if they are living in the past. Experience should only tell us on how and why we failed and what should have been done to reverse the situation. Experience may not tell you the potential you lost or which were underutilised. In this case, some of you might have done poorly during the form four exams, yes some ten years ago. That should not mean you are incapable of pursuing the degree you have registered, not at all. Maximize potential. You might have had bad experience regarding teachers, unnecessarily avoiding you or throwing bad words at you- indeed this should not mean you will experience the same at the program you are registered, not at all. Just maximize potential by observing some key notes stipulated in this paper. My primary school teacher made a decision to go for further study when she was at the age of 40, by then I just completed my form four education level. She joined Kleruu teachers college in Iringa Tanzania; she performed well and qualified to join the university at mature age entry. She joined the University of Dar es salaam in Tanzania. At 45 she graduated her bachelor's degree and was retained as tutor. At the age 54 she became a PhD holder. Remember she was actually standard seven at forty she became a primary school teacher through the program of Universal Primary Education (UPE), which was propagated by the former president of Tanzania, Mwalimu J.K. Nyerere in 1970s. She maximised potential, indeed you can.

i) Avoid/control sexual affair. Researches have made it clear that the most deterrent factor to student's performance is sexual relationships. The International Institute of Training Research and Consultancy (IITRC, 2006) in the study titled 'the ups and downs of the students at colleges and schools' revealed that students perceive that sexual affair is a burden and that those who live at colleges without sexual relationships become masters in studies. The study further indicates that those deterred most with such relationships are female students compared to the male counterparts. We all went to school and do firmly confirm that sexual relationships is an enemy of students at school. We are at colleges and schools to assimilate the studies, understand them, and when exams are set before us be able to perform well-prove beyond reasonable doubts that we have understood. Other business other than studies is not part of the students.

Time management versus hobbies

Time management refers to pegging hours to the work. It is literally ensuring that every single minute is set to

accomplish a certain package of work. In this vein the most needful work must be given first priority and those that are not fruitful if weighed on its ability to add value to the students' courses, must be ignored. No time should be allocated to unfruitful works, meetings and so forth.

Students, and in this vein African students devote their time into watching movies popularly known as series. A study by the international institute of training research and consultancy (IITRC) reveal that most teenagers at the age of 18-25 who are capable of accessing television do spend about 8 hours per week on watching movies. This means that they spend 416 hours per year. The study further reveals that most of them maintain such habit for 40 years. After that the need for movies starts declining and they verge into more similar time wasting practices such as stories. Thus the total number of hours spent for forty years will be 16640, which is equivalent to 693 days (about 2 years) day and nights seated watching movies. The total day time wasted is about 1386 days which is about four years. While some people were seated watching movies some at the same very time went for further studies and they became PhD holders, some master degree and others bachelors degree holders. There are other implications for remaining seated for long time. One needs to exercise. Play football, hockey, netball, basket ball, do some jogging, running, walk long distance and so forth. One needs to energise the body and become fruitful.

There are many other areas that we waste time and thus money without gauging the impact rendered by the same. An appeal is to be sensitive to programs and abide to what we are called for. As Norman (2005) asserts, in order to develop each person should work today as if tomorrow will not be alive. He insists that development is a war, lecturers should save the country as lecturers, and for so the students. To lecturers, enabling competent grandaunts at the time set should be the prime objective and thus the vision. Students should not fail to accomplish the studies at the right time because of the lecturers. In this view Norman seems to peg time versus completion period which is determined by lecturers. This is in conformity to Norman (2003) who further argued that lectures must boost their abilities to mark, read and make decisions regarding assignments, theses and or dissertations.

An attempt of delaying students to accomplish their studies for reasons other than inabilities of students should not be entertained. The impact of such delay is huge to personal ambitions of students, which may range from promotion, acquiring new jobs, improving their performance, and increment in terms of salaries. The negative impacts could trickle down to hamper the majority of the people that were depending on such benefits of such people for improving theirs. The totality of the delays is huge loss to the nation because of being unable to utilize the skills that could have been ripped from the services of the grandaunts. Heroes to lecturers

should be good product (students) processed through competent methodologies (teaching techniques) attained at the stipulated time.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is imperative that each of us plays his/her part and realize that unfortunately, experience has compelled many promising people to cower in the shadows of fear and failure because they were not willing to venture out into the uncharted frontiers of new possibilities. Experience is given not to determine the limits of our lives, but to create a better life for us. Experience is a tool to be used. Always remember that the maker knows the true potential. And that while at colleges just know for sure that you will pass the exams and attain whatsoever you planned for. Concentration must be to realise the fact that students must behave as students with purpose and fulfilment. Lecturers too, should work as lecturers by purpose and fulfilment. Maximizing potential is possible when each of us is capable of ignoring negative opinion, rather echo positive opinion even if it is considered by people we think enemies. Education is the key to prosperity and it is realised through pegging it with time spent in attaining the same. It is worthy noting that time lost cannot be restored.

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