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FOURTH EDITION OF THE VALIDVIEWNETWORK MONTHLY GLOBAL DISCOURSE - THE LOST PROMISE OF 6-3-3-4: CAN NIGERIA STILL RECOVER ITS TECHNOLOGICAL VISION?

The Fourth Edition of the ValidViewNetwork Monthly Global Discourse was held virtually on Sunday, 27 September 2026, between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. WAT. The session brought together policymakers, educators, curriculum planners, youth leaders, industry stakeholders, diaspora professionals, researchers, and civic-minded citizens to interrogate Nigeria's long-standing struggle with technical education and its implications for national development.

The Monthly Global Discourse is ValidViewNetwork's signature global conversation platform, conceived to bridge the gap between knowledge and action by creating a forum where global perspectives meet local realities. Through robust discussions and evidence-based engagement, the initiative promotes informed decision-making, public awareness, policy innovation, and sustainable national development.

The theme of the Fourth Edition was **"The Lost Promise of 6-3-3-4: Can Nigeria Still Recover Its Technological Vision?"** The discourse examined one of Nigeria's most consequential educational challenges: the weakening of the country's technical skills pipeline and its long-term implications for industrialisation, youth development, productivity, and global competitiveness.

In a session marked by historical reflection, cultural insight, and policy analysis, the distinguished discussants examined how Nigeria's early technological aspirations were undermined by policy inconsistency, changing societal attitudes, institutional weaknesses, and the gradual relegation of technical education from the centre of national development priorities.

The Fourth Edition featured two eminent national thought leaders, **Emeritus Professor Michael Abiola Omolewa, OON, and Chief Tola Adeniyi, Akogun**. Their combined expertise in educational history, diplomacy, journalism, cultural analysis, and national development provided valuable perspectives on Nigeria's transition from an education system that aspired to produce technically competent citizens to one increasingly dominated by theory, credentialism, and inadequate investment in technical capacity.

Emeritus Professor Omolewa traced the historical foundations of Nigeria's educational evolution. He recalled that the 6-3-3-4 system, conceived in 1969 following the National Curriculum Conference held from 8-12 September of the year was designed to produce technicians, innovators, and industry-ready graduates. He emphasised that policy inconsistency, frequent curriculum changes, abandoned reforms, and weak institutional continuity progressively undermined the implementation of the system and eroded its technological promise.

Chief Tola Adeniyi examined the influence of cultural attitudes, societal elitism, and the devaluation of vocational skills on the decline of technical education. He drew attention to the wider consequences of neglecting technical competence and underscored the need to rebuild a skills-driven future anchored in practical competence, innovation, productivity, and industry relevance.

Together, the two discussants articulated a framework for reviving Nigeria's technological vision. Their proposals included strengthening technical colleges, restoring meaningful pre-vocational education, institutionalising policy continuity, reshaping public perceptions of vocational careers, and aligning curricula with emerging technologies and the evolving needs of industry.

Their submissions challenged long-standing assumptions about education in Nigeria and called for a comprehensive reorientation capable of rebuilding technical capacity, empowering young people, and repositioning education as a foundation for sustainable national development.

FUNDAMENTAL TAKEAWAYS

1. Harmonising Nigeria's Educational Structure

Prior to the introduction of 6-3-3-4, significant regional disparities existed in educational structures. The North operated an 8-5-2-3 structure, including eight years of primary education, while the West and East operated systems with fewer primary years. The development of a unified national structure was therefore intended, among other objectives, to harmonise educational duration and standards across the country.

2. The Original Vision of 6-3-3-4

The 6-3-3-4 system was designed as a transformative educational structure intended to equip Nigerian young people with practical, technical, and vocational skills necessary for industrialisation and national development.

The system was built around five important strengths: harmonisation of educational years across regions, broad stakeholder consultation, government investment in technology and specialised institutions, an embedded guidance and counselling framework, and an ambition to develop export-ready technical capacity capable of supporting national and regional industrial growth.

3. The Problem of Policy Discontinuity

Although the development of the system involved significant professional input, subsequent political and institutional changes affected its implementation. Constitutional and administrative changes altered the framework within which education was managed, while successive governments introduced structural modifications that weakened continuity.

The experience demonstrates that educational reform cannot thrive when major policies are repeatedly altered or abandoned with changes in government.

The discourse proposed a **National Education Continuity Act** as a mechanism for protecting major educational reforms from unnecessary political disruption and ensuring continuity, measurable progress, and institutional stability across administrations.

4. Revitalising Technical Colleges

Nigeria’s technical colleges were intended to serve as an important component of the nation’s technological future. However, years of inadequate funding, outdated equipment, weak industry linkages, and social stigma have diminished their effectiveness.

Revitalising technical colleges through targeted funding, modern equipment, competent instructors, and strong industry partnerships would help produce skilled technicians, reduce dependence on imported technical expertise, and improve national productivity.

There should also be a sustained and enforceable commitment to education financing. Increased funding, accompanied by stronger accountability mechanisms, transparent procurement, effective monitoring, and consequences for misuse, is essential to ensure that educational investment produces measurable outcomes.

5. Changing Public Attitudes Towards Vocational Education

The discourse noted the long-standing preference among many parents for university education, sometimes irrespective of a child's aptitude or interest. Technical and vocational pathways have too often been associated with lower social status and limited economic prospects.

This perception must change.

A sustained national campaign should elevate the status of technical and vocational careers, demonstrate their economic value, and encourage young people to pursue pathways that correspond with their abilities, interests, and the needs of the economy.

6. Restoring Practical Learning

Nigeria's persistent preference for predominantly theoretical learning has contributed to a gap between educational attainment and practical competence. This disconnect has implications for youth employment, industrial productivity, entrepreneurship, and dependence on foreign technical expertise.

Education should therefore place greater emphasis on the practical application of knowledge and the development of competencies that translate directly into productive activity.

7. The Economic Value of Skilled Work

Cultural attitudes that place university degrees above vocational competence have contributed to the marginalisation of technical careers. International experience demonstrates that skilled trades can provide respectable and financially rewarding livelihoods.

The challenge for Nigeria is therefore not merely to encourage vocational education but to create an economic environment in which skilled work is properly valued, fairly compensated, and professionally respected.

8. The Petroleum Economy and the Work Ethic

The petroleum boom contributed to profound changes in Nigeria's economic and social aspirations. Easy access to oil wealth and the perception of quick economic gains encouraged a shift away from some productive activities, including agriculture and skilled trades.

The long-term lesson is that a sustainable economy cannot be built around dependence on a single resource or the pursuit of unearned wealth. National development requires a culture that values competence, enterprise, creativity, productivity, and hard work.

9. Merit, Equity and Educational Opportunity

The discourse raised concerns about the effects of quota arrangements and federal character considerations on educational admissions and standards.

The objective should be to strike an appropriate balance between equity and merit while ensuring that admission systems remain transparent, fair, defensible, and capable of producing excellence.

10. Competent Leadership in Education

The quality of leadership within the education sector is critical to policy direction and institutional credibility.

Those appointed to lead the Ministry of Education should possess demonstrable knowledge, competence, experience, and a clear understanding of the challenges confronting the sector. Public scrutiny of qualifications, professional records, and achievements would strengthen confidence in educational leadership.

11. Restoring Civics and History

The declining emphasis on civics and history has implications for civic identity, national memory, and responsible citizenship.

Values education should begin early and should encourage integrity, responsibility, respect for institutions, service, and a sense of national belonging. Such education can help counter attitudes that encourage nepotism, selfishness, corruption, and disregard for the common good.

12. Restoring the Dignity of Teachers

The decline in teacher welfare, professional recognition, and social respect has weakened the attractiveness of teaching as a career.

Improving teachers' remuneration, working conditions, professional development, and social standing is essential to rebuilding educational standards. No educational reform can succeed without competent and motivated teachers.

13. The Role Model Crisis

The discourse also identified a growing challenge in the kinds of individuals presented to young people as role models. Excessive admiration for displays of wealth, particularly where the source of such wealth is questionable, can distort values and weaken the appeal of honest professional achievement.

Nigeria should deliberately elevate educators, scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, skilled tradespeople, public servants, and other citizens whose achievements demonstrate the value of competence, integrity, service, and productive enterprise.

14. Investment in Education

Increased and sustained national investment in education is essential to building technological capacity and achieving long-term development.

However, increased funding must be accompanied by transparency, accountability, effective monitoring, and measurable performance. More money without stronger institutions and accountability will not, by itself, produce better educational outcomes.

15. The Importance of Mother-Tongue Education

The discourse highlighted the importance of mother-tongue instruction in early childhood education. Strong foundational learning in a child's first language can support comprehension and provide a sound basis for subsequent language acquisition.

Nigeria should therefore give serious consideration to policies that strengthen mother-tongue and indigenous-language instruction during the formative years while ensuring a structured transition to English and other languages required for wider communication and global engagement.

16. Blend of the 3Hs with the 3Rs

The discourse proposed blending the **3H framework, Hand, Heart and Head**, with the 3R framework as a broader educational philosophy capable of integrating practical skills, emotional intelligence, creativity, critical thinking, and knowledge.

While the traditional 3Rs remain fundamental to literacy and numeracy, contemporary education must go beyond cognitive acquisition alone. Young people require practical competence, emotional maturity, creativity, problem-solving ability, and the capacity to apply knowledge productively.

17. Strengthening Apprenticeship

Strong apprenticeship systems remain important pathways for skills transfer, entrepreneurship, employment, and economic empowerment.

Nigeria should therefore strengthen and modernise apprenticeship structures while connecting them more effectively to formal education, industry, certification, finance, and entrepreneurship.

Recommitting to the technological aspirations associated with 6-3-3-4 should not necessarily mean reproducing the past in its entirety. Rather, the objective should be to recover the original emphasis on practical competence and adapt it to the technological and economic realities of the twenty-first century.

18. Linking Schools with Industry

Institutionalising meaningful school-industry collaboration is essential to ensuring that graduates possess relevant, market-ready competencies.

Industry should have a stronger role in curriculum development, apprenticeship, equipment provision, internships, assessment, certification, and research. Such collaboration would help bridge the gap between what students learn and what employers and the economy require.

19. Curriculum Before Structure

The quality and relevance of curriculum content should receive greater attention than the mere segmentation of educational years.

No educational structure can deliver meaningful outcomes without high-quality, relevant, practical, and future-focused content. A substantial proportion of the junior secondary

curriculum should therefore expose students to technical and vocational education while maintaining strong foundations in the humanities, sciences, civic education, and other essential disciplines.

The objective should be early exposure to practical skills and informed career choices rather than premature academic segregation.

20. Basic Practical Skills for Every Student

Every student should have an opportunity to acquire basic practical competencies such as electrical work, plumbing, carpentry, digital skills, agriculture, and other relevant trades.

Such skills promote self-reliance and reduce everyday dependence. They also provide young people with alternative pathways to productive employment and entrepreneurship.

For students who do not progress beyond junior secondary education, clear and respected vocational pathways should be available. Such pathways must be properly funded, certified, connected to industry, and capable of leading to sustainable livelihoods.

21. Learning From Earlier Models

There is value in examining earlier community-rooted models of education that combined academic learning with discipline, practical competence, civic values, and community responsibility.

Rather than romanticising the past, Nigeria should identify what worked, understand why those elements worked, and adapt them to contemporary educational and technological realities.

22. Youth and the Demographic Opportunity

Nigeria's young population represents a significant national asset. However, demographic strength becomes an economic advantage only when young people have access to quality education, relevant skills, productive employment, and opportunities for enterprise.

Without deliberate investment in technical and vocational education, the country risks leaving a large proportion of its youthful population idle, economically vulnerable, and susceptible to negative influences.

CONCLUSION

The Fourth Edition of the ValidViewNetwork Monthly Global Discourse affirmed that Nigeria's technological future need not be considered lost. It can still be reclaimed through deliberate policy, cultural reorientation, institutional continuity, quality education, and sustained investment in technical and vocational capacity.

The contributions of Emeritus Professor Michael Abiola Omolewa and Chief Tola Adeniyi provided historically informed and intellectually stimulating perspectives on the challenges facing Nigeria's educational system and the possibilities for renewal.

Nigeria now stands at a defining moment. The country must confront the consequences of prolonged credentialism, policy inconsistency, inadequate technical capacity, and the social undervaluation of skilled work.

The task before government, educators, industry, parents, and civic actors is therefore not merely to redesign educational structures but to restore the connection between education and productive national life.

The ultimate objective should be an education system that produces not only certificate holders, but thinkers, creators, innovators, technicians, entrepreneurs, professionals, responsible citizens, and skilled hands capable of building a productive and technologically confident Nigeria.

The lost promise of 6-3-3-4 may not be recoverable in its original form. Its central aspiration, however, remains relevant: **to build an education system that prepares Nigerians not merely to seek employment, but to create value, solve problems, build industries, and participate meaningfully in national development.**

The challenge before Nigeria is to recover that ambition and redesign it for the realities of the present and the possibilities of the future.

APPRECIATION

ValidViewNetwork expresses profound appreciation to the Distinguished Discussants, participants, contributors, and stakeholders whose insights enriched the Fourth Edition of the Monthly Global Discourse.

The platform invites stakeholders to the Fifth Edition, scheduled for Sunday, 25 October 2026, as ValidViewNetwork continues its commitment to evidence-based civic engagement, mindset renewal, knowledge development, and national development.

ABOUT VALIDVIEWNETWORK LIMITED

ValidViewNetwork Limited, founded by **Dr Kayode Ogunjobi, FHEA, FFAN**, is a multidisciplinary professional services organisation operating principally in consultancy, media, advocacy, environmental and educational consultancy, research, knowledge development, professional services, communication, publishing, public enlightenment, policy engagement, and sustainable development.

Through this integrated structure, the organisation advances evidence-based communication, sustainable development solutions, institutional strengthening, and community-focused interventions that promote environmental protection, academic excellence, and societal well-being.

Mr Lanre Ogundipe, former President of the Nigeria Union of Journalists and former President of the African Union of Journalists, serves as Chairman of the Advisory Council.

E-Signed

Dr Kayode Ogunjobi, FHEA, FFAN
Founder & Chief Executive Officer
October 1, 2026.