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Position Paper

Education and Training in Packaging

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To be able to get a full comprehension of the topic of Packaging Education we need to commence with an overall understanding of what packaging is and the role that education can and should have in packaging.

Definitions

Processes (such as cleaning, drying, and preserving) and materials (such as glass, metal, paper or paperboard, plastic) employed to contain, handle, protect, and/or transport an article. This role of packaging is broadening and may include functions such as to attract attention, assist in promotion, provide machine identification, impart essential or additional information, and help in utilisation. Therefore in summary, packaging is the technology of designing, evaluating, and producing packages enclosing or protecting products for distribution, storage, sale, and use.

Having a good packaging education system continually strives for increasing levels of educational excellence; is responsive to the needs and transparent in its deliverance; assures and improves standards; and includes processes for identifying and addressing unwanted practices. The need is evident that uniformity is required to ensure a constant level in education but suggests that capacity to formulate policy, set standards, and manage human and financial resources are as important.

Across the spectrum within the World Packaging Organisation (WPO), good governance with strong financial management and effective systems for managing lecturers which includes the recruitment, training and deployment of good lecturers, are all features of effective education systems. Investing at system level enables education reforms to build on good practice and ensure irreversible gains in learning.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to help and bring about on-going discussion on the implications of global packaging education in the developed and developing world. This paper is one of WPO's position papers intended to clearly state the Organisation's views and thinking on key issues relevant to packaging education today. The goals of this paper are to further explore and understand packaging education in a more globalised society; to recognise the importance that WPO gives to the subject matter; and consequently to outline WPO's position in this regard. The aim is to focus WPO's standard-setting,

capacity building and functions to assist Member Countries in the formulation of appropriate policies and strategies to meet the challenges posed to packaging education in a globalised world. As this is a rapidly developing field, the outlined position is likely to evolve as the debate progresses and will be subject to subsequent revisions.

This paper sets out how the WPO, through its Education portfolio works to improve education in some of the developing countries in the world. A good education is a human right, a global public good and a necessary ingredient for economic development and poverty reduction. Education enables people to live healthier and more productive lives, allowing them to fulfil their own potential as well as to strengthen and contribute to economically vibrant societies. It fulfills the WPO motto: Better Quality of Life through better packaging for more people.

Meaningful development

For packaging education to maximise its potential, students need not only to be at a learning place but also continuously learning. The world is facing a learning crisis; too many students in institutions are learning little or nothing at all and there are still too many who have never been to post school institutions, or do not complete the primary or secondary format of learning which impacts tertiary learning. Progress on getting students into packaging learning forums shows what sustained national and global investment can achieve but clearly more needs to be done, so as to ensure all students wanting to learn can access a quality education and learn further in their chosen field of packaging. This includes addressing causes of disadvantage, any gender disparities, geographic isolation, disability, ethnic and linguistic disadvantages.

The WPO is facing up to the challenge and providing global leadership on delivering value for money, developing new partnerships across the spectrum, using new technology and building new approaches and aid methods with partner companies, institutions, colleges and universities around the world.

In line with various projects around the globe like the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the goals of Education For All (UNESCO), the WPO needs to ensure that every student wanting to further their learning in packaging can access, and complete, a good quality education in packaging technology and /or packaging engineering. There is no single technical fix to guarantee improved learning outcomes for every student. Affecting change in learning outcomes can take time but a focus on learning does provide a clear measurable indicator of education quality and impact.

WPO's current education programme is flexible and well aligned to developing countries and countries furthest from meeting the education Millennium Development Goals. WPO is focusing its investment in packaging education on what makes the most difference, using the best available information, responding to requests, and working with local members of WPO within the applicable country.

Education is an essential part of responding to current and future challenges from both within and between member countries. The WPO is committed to the principle, that no-one should be left behind as we focus our packaging education work increasingly on the most vulnerable and marginalised, countries. Getting as many as possible students interested in tertiary packaging technology learning remains a challenge, both today and for the future. The WPO is committed to ensure that its Education resources can deliver its full potential.

The important for education development

Education is fundamental to development. It is both a human right and an investment for sustainable development. Education enables people to live healthier and more productive lives: a path to maximise individual potential, extend freedoms, build capabilities and open up opportunities. The benefits of education within the packaging industry remain particularly strong. Evidence highlights that for education to enhance economic growth, students must be both in a place of learning. Learning propels the transformational potential of education to contribute to better governance, more peace and democracy, political stability and the rule of law. Taken together, evidence suggests that a quality education can enable people to shape, strengthen and contribute to the building blocks of open economies and open societies. Education is also an essential part of responding to current and future challenges, rising inequalities within and between countries.

Technology - Reaching all WPO members and international partners

The rapid pace of technological change has implications for teaching and learning at all levels of the system that cannot be ignored; from the use of tablets and e-readers in places of learning to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) at tertiary level. Africa is now the world's second largest mobile market by connections after Asia. Over the past five years, the number of mobile phone subscribers across Africa has grown by almost 20% each year. Affordable information and communication technology has the potential to expand flexible access to better, adaptable educational content, including better services for students with special education needs. (<http://en.unesco.org/themes/education-21st-century>)

Core priorities

Residential Training Program in Packaging Technology is the flagship in WPO's training portfolio. WPO Education will tailor its training so as to continue to educate in whichever method suits the region or country. This can be adjusted to a 3, 4 or 5 day Packaging Technology training course with translators where required and within the curriculum requirements.

Future challenges

Demographic and climate change, rising inequalities on a global scale and getting students through a full cycle of education and learning are challenges both today and for the future. By 2050, most of Africa will see their populations double, and in Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia they are set to triple. In 11 of the world's poorest countries, half the population will still be aged 23 or younger in 2050. Uneven progress towards the achievement of the MDG's both within and between countries reflects the challenges raised by inequality. High levels of inequality between groups and individuals can blunt the impact of growth on poverty reduction, slow progress on development outcomes and slow long term growth. Climate change will affect the basic elements of life for people around the world

access to water, food production, health, and the environment. There is still time to avoid the worst impacts if strong action is taken now.

In the global packaging market, sustainability is driving product development and the shift to a circular economy. On the business side, the need to lower production costs and reduce material usage whilst creating durable and lightweight packaging solutions is influencing decisions to head in this direction. Many take the sustainability route in response to the trend for conscious consumerism or to help boost their public image.

Besides environmental awareness, greater emphasis on health and wellness is shaping consumer packaging demands. Urbanisation, increasing disposable income and purchasing power, and convenience are likewise influencing trends, spurring the rise of diverse packaging solutions to match lifestyle changes.

E-commerce is another force of change in the packaging sector. To address the needs of online shoppers, internet retailing needs packaging that is easy and quick to produce and can withstand the rigors of shipping to ensure items are delivered on time and in good quality. Packaging also needs to be versatile and creative to attract online shoppers.

Education and in particular within the context of packaging is an essential part of responding to these challenges. Learning is dynamic; the demand for knowledge and skills changes over time and across context. The role of packaging technology is part of this future and the WPO is positioning itself to understand how technology can best be harnessed to increase learning opportunities for all. The challenge of getting students through a full cycle of education and learning demands sensitivity to education's place in shifting economies and its role in building and sustaining inclusive societies. The WPO continues to drive forward approaches that are sensitive to both global and local contexts. The WPO needs to continue to ensure that the core education priorities are identified and suitably addressed, but simultaneously realising that the methods of achieving these changing demands are quickly recognised.

These approaches acknowledge the complexity of the issues that keep potential students, hinder their learning, and prevent them from converting educational outcomes into opportunities that realise their rights, reduce inequality, and deliver education's full potential, thus ensuring a better quality of life through better packaging for more people.

Additional information

1. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the world's time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions-income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion-while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability.
2. The Education for All (EFA) movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. World Education Forum (Dakar, 2000).
3. A massive open online course (MOOC) is an online course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web.