

**ENHANCING STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURIAL PRACTICES THROUGH
LANGUAGE / LITERACY SKILL FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

This paper posits that entrepreneurship education goes beyond business creation as it is made up of all kinds of experiences that give students the ability and vision of accessing and transforming opportunities of different kinds. Some of the attitudes and skills that would-be entrepreneurs must possess include: positive attitudes, high aptitude for rational critical thinking and timely decision making; clear vision, generation of progressive ideas, drive and passion for success; creativity, innovativeness, courage and self-confidence; This paper portrays the relevance of literacy skills to the impartation of these delineated attitudes and skills on children / students. Language as a tool for communication plays tremendous roles in attitude/ character formations of individuals. On-the-spot observations revealed that extant entrepreneurial practices in the Nigerian society are not encouraging, as such agencies like the homes and schools have inadequately synergized literacy skills and entrepreneurship education for proper grooming of the children /students for life experiences. For the transformation of the nation to an environment where knowledge-based entrepreneurship transpire as a driving force towards job creation,

economic growth as well as competitiveness, language/literacy instructors must ensure proper inculcation of these required aptitudes, skills and knowledge reviewed on the students. Thus, the paper from the critical and analytical perspectives reviewed the extant entrepreneurial practices in our society to ascertaining the degrees of progress and limitations; as well as proffer ways to remedy the observed defects through language use and literacy skills.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Language, Communication, Literacy skills and National Development.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship education cum entrepreneurial practices has in recent times become the desire of global citizens. This is sequel to the present economic meltdown that has hit many nations. According to Banabo & Ndiomu (2011) “due to the current political, economic and social influences of the global economic, many countries of the world have resolved to focus on their domestic economy so as to foster a sustainable and virile domestic economy that will be moderately resistant from the economic and financial strangling that may try to reoccur in the future”. They also noted that the recent global economic meltdown has brought to limelight, as well as the reality, that the world is a global market.

Historically, entrepreneurship education and practices are age-long activities among mankind. Every community has its entrepreneurial practices that have been in existence and passed from one generation to another generation, though in various forms, peculiar to each era. Currently, entrepreneurship education and its practices are gradually developing and carried out in various nations of the globe in line with each nation’s socio-economic and technological advancement. Besides, the current global economic recession has made entrepreneurial practices to spread across the frontiers of every nation. Thus, there is exchange of entrepreneurial literacy globally.

In Nigeria, entrepreneurial education has witnessed transitional stages from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras. During the pre-colonial era, the nation’s economy was agrarian; hence the people’s entrepreneurial practices were agriculture based. For instance, in the South-East, precisely Igbo community, the children were taught at the informal education setting, such crafts as: weaving of baskets, mats, raffia bags, beads making, cords weaving; carving of flutes, molding of clay pots and making of bamboo beds etc, from materials got from the plants and environment.

The colonial era witnessed the advent of western civilization, which transformed the economic activities from agrarian to industrial. This era, in fact witnessed a mixed economy as agriculture, commerce and industry thrived. The aftermath is that the economy was boisterous. However, the

era of heavy dependence on oil and gas economy set in immediately after the nation's independence in 1960. This trend has lasted till date. Unfortunately, the Nigerian economy which used to thrive on agricultural exports of such produce as palm produce, cocoa, groundnut, hides and skin products, shifted to a mono-economy status, that is solely dependent on the price of oil in the international market. Hence, any fall in the price of oil affects the nation's GDP adversely.

It is against this backdrop that the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Universities Commission (NUC), introduced entrepreneurship education which is aimed at equipping tertiary students with entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and competences in order to be job creators and not job hunters. The Federal Government adopts this strategy to improve the economic, technological and industrial development of the nation, as well as reduce the high rate of employment and poverty to a minimum levels.

However, in the spirit of Bernard and Toulouse (1998), this paper toes the line of thought that entrepreneurship education is a lifelong learning process, starting as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including the university education experiences that will enable them to develop the insight needed to discover and create entrepreneurial opportunities and the expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses. This study upholds the view that this type of education that imparts entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and abilities on students to enable them succeed in their future career as entrepreneurs, can only be effective when introduced at the grass root level just as language literacy is imbued early in every child's life to make him a total-child. Suffice it to state that language and literacy skills are needed in entrepreneurship education for proper training of students to gain innovative enterprise skills and capture the opportunities to succeed in business ventures. Going by the fact that entrepreneurship education as a teaching process that provides information and training educates anyone that is interested in entrepreneurial activities, it becomes imperative that language literacy is acquired simultaneously. An entrepreneur with sharp perception acquired through language literacy performs better than those with little or no literacy. Perception in this context entails one being aware of one's environment through the senses. Thus, entrepreneurial practices conditioned by perception would entail individuals efficiently interacting with their environment, thereby discovering, evaluating and exploiting opportunities.

Theoretical / Conceptual Frameworks

The theoretical framework of this paper hinges on some theories of education and language acquisition/learning theories very relevant to the issues under deliberation. The conceptual description of education as any process by which an individual gains knowledge or insight, or

develops attitude or skills rightly approves the adoption of the theory of pragmatism as the theoretical framework of this paper.

Pragmatism as developed by the American Philosophers – Charles Sandes Peirce and William James in the 19th century, has its central focus on the practical and scientific utility of knowledge. Pragmatism as a theory posits that knowledge is only meaningful if our senses can experience it.

This theory in relation to man and nature asserts that:

- Nothing is permanent and the only thing that is permanent is change;
- Values are relative;
- Man has both biological and social nature;
- Man is very intelligent and calls for the use of his critical intellectual ability.

From the foregoing, the relevance of pragmatism to education becomes glaring and requires that:

- Education should serve as an end and a means (i.e. education should improve man and serve as a means of doing things. In other words, education should serve as a tool for mobility and instrument for practical and successful living;
- Education is life, hence it should be sort for/and provided at all times adequately;
- Teachers should always develop relevant scientific and practical approach/methodology in imparting knowledge in their students;
- Educational system should constantly reflect the rapid changes in the world of knowledge;
- Education which is a child-centred, should be systematically provided in such a way that it constantly challenges the intellectual ability of the learner through experiments.
- Education should provide democratic setting to accommodate the individual differences in human nature.

To achieve all these lofty requirements through education, language must be employed. The conceptual description of language as a means of communication shows its relevance in education of any kind. From a psychological perspective, language is a human behaviour, very unique to man that it enables him organize his environment as well as co-ordinates his activities. According to Noam Chomsky, the proponent of the Mentalist theory on language acquisition, when we study the human language, we are approaching what some might call the “human essence”, the distinctive qualities of mind that are so far as we know, unique to man.

(Fromkin & Rodman 1993:3).

However, Chomsky's mentalist theory became relevant in language teaching/learning situations as it buttressed these four notions:

- The creativity aspect of language;
- The abstractness of linguistic representation;
- The universality of underlying structures and;
- The role of intrinsic organization in cognitive process.

Suffice it to state that language apart from being a communication tool, is also an indispensable tool for the impartation of knowledge and skills. Besides, the mentalist's theory of innate predisposition of language acquisition by every normal child reveals the practicability of early exposure of entrepreneurial skills to children for easy acquisition. This goes to posit that language as an embodiment of the people's culture, values, mores, norms and beliefs, moulds the three domains of a child, viz: the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor. Therefore, just as a child immersed into the language of his immediate environment/speech community easily and naturally acquires it so also a child naturally develops the interest, apt and attitude to whatever entrepreneurial skills operational in his immediate environment – (whether home and/or school). Entrepreneurial practices through language literacy reside in the domain of education, hence in the light of Fafunwa (1974) ascertain on education as “the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or a young adult develops ability, attitude and other forms of behaviours which are of positive value to the society in which he lives”. This paper takes a critical review of entrepreneurship education in our school system.

Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian School System

Currently, it is only at the tertiary level of the Nigerian school system that entrepreneurship education is given prominence. This is sequel to the fact that the massive unemployment of Nigerian tertiary graduates in the country is traced to the problem of disequilibrium between the labour market requirements and lack of essential employable skills by the graduates. According to Oviawe (2010) findings from a three-week large scale, rapid national survey in 2004 jointly sponsored by National University Commission (NUC) and the Education Trust Fund (ETF) to determine the needs of the labour market which Nigerian University graduates are failing to meet are shocking. Report reveals that of the 100 individuals and 20 organizations visited, 44% rated Nigerian science graduates as average in competence, 56% rated them as average in innovation, 50% rated them average in rational judgment, 63% as average in leadership skills, while 44% as average in creativity. However, 60% of the respondents rated the graduates as very poor in the needed skills and such as literacy, oral communication, information technology, entrepreneurial,

analytical, problem-solving, and decision making. These findings explain why there has been very obvious increase in unemployment rate (Oviawe, 2010).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in a bid to tackle this problem in 2006 directed Nigerian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to include Entrepreneurship Education (EEd) as a compulsory course for all students with effect from the 2007/2008 academic session.

From the foregoing, unemployment is the major factor that necessitated the inclusion of Entrepreneurship education into the curriculum of all universities and other higher education in Nigeria. Presently, most of the universities and polytechnics in Nigeria have a centre for entrepreneurship education. The question that remains is that for a decade, this kind of education came on board, to what extent has the problem of unemployment in Nigeria been tackled?

It is pertinent to note that Nigerian educational system is defective due to poor synchronization of the nation's socio-political cum economic structures and the educational curricula at various levels of education. Besides, the borrowing culture associated with the incessant changes of the nation's educational system is the bane of the educational sector. This explains the reason its products cannot be maximally fixed in the labour market. There is need for government and all stakeholders in education to go back to the drawing board and re-design the school curriculum at all levels to accommodate the nation's needs. Entrepreneurship education ought to start from the homes and at the basic level of education. Though the introduction of entrepreneurship education into the institution of higher learning is a step in the right direction. There is need to adopt grass-root approach for effective entrepreneurial practices. This is obvious as there are many unskilled youths that are either primary or secondary schools' leavers also hunting for jobs.

Thus, to change this extant status quo of Nigerian formal labour market being saturated, unable to absorb the ever increasing number of the labour force, entrepreneurial practices must be multi-disciplinary. This position paper forms the language and communication perspectives, advocates early immersion of both children and youth into traditional enterprise education. The language acquisition development of a child should be accompanied by the acquisition of some entrepreneurial skills. Therefore, the language / communication personnel in our educational system should through effective communication with the youths, re-orientate them to have passion of entrepreneurial skills.

Entrepreneurial Practices and Challenges in the School System

Nigeria's heterogeneous nature due to its multi-ethnicity, multi-cultural and multi-lingual settings has both favourable and adverse effects on her projects. There abound many challenges

forestalling the smooth flow of entrepreneurial practices in the Nigerian school system. According to Amoor (2008), these challenges include:

- Lack of lecturers with practical entrepreneurial training and consciousness.
- The task of drawing up course content to be included in the curriculum of entrepreneurship-related education programme in Nigerian universities will require a very long educational process.
- Entrepreneurship education is capital intensive and both lecturers and students need money to practice the theory of initiating, establishing and running enterprises.

In the same vein, Brown (2012) identifies the following challenges:

- Poor knowledge-based economy and low spirit of competition
- Poor enterprising culture.
- Lack of entrepreneurship teachers, materials and equipment.
- Unavailability of relevant funds.
- Non-inclusion of entrepreneurship program in the general school curricula.
- Poor societal attitude to technical and vocational education development.
- Inadequate facilities and equipment for teaching/learning in practical-related courses.
- Poor planning and execution of processes of action.

Having delineated the various challenges of effective entrepreneurial practices in Nigerian school, this paper advocates a synergy between entrepreneurship education and language/literacy practices to ensure the following:

Proper impartation of entrepreneurial skills goes hand in glove with effective language and communication skills. For an entrepreneur, who is efficient and result-oriented to emerge, such a person must be well-groomed in language use. Nigeria as a multi-lingual national must ensure that the choice of language for communication does not constitute barrier to effective entrepreneurial practice. Hence, the language of instruction at any level of education must be appropriate. Take for instance, at the basic level of education; the children should be drilled in their mother-tongue also, at the tertiary level, the entrepreneurial skills instructors must ensure that the technical registers of each vocation are explained for easy comprehension.

- The language personnel must also ensure that non-indigenous entrepreneurial skills are delivered to the learners in the language they can understand. The translators of foreign languages and interpreters must use their wealth of knowledge to ensure that the entrepreneurial skills are presented in English language (the official language) and/or indigenous languages (Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa).

- Adoption of the Whole Language Instructional Approach (WLIA), in addition the two teaching methods in use viz: The traditional (Passive) method and the innovative (active) method, would aid in achieving efficiency in entrepreneurship education/entrepreneurial practices.
- Promulgation of language policy on entrepreneurship education by the Federal Government is imperative, to ensure proper entrepreneurial practices.
- The Federal Government should, through will power, establish entrepreneurial literacy among the citizenry. Thus, all environmental/culture-based challenges against entrepreneurial practice would be resolved.

Conclusion

It is evident that levels of entrepreneurship are still not improving in the country. There has been an upward trend in the number of young people gaining admission into institutions of higher learning, hence, the resource persons and facilities on ground in various entrepreneurial centres of our universities/polytechnics are not adequate to cater for the mammoth crowd of students desiring to acquire the entrepreneurial skills. The daunting observations of some language use/linguistic based challenges that entrepreneurship education is facing can be handled by the language personnel in the educational system. Hence, combination of language literacy and entrepreneurship literacy as a remedial package in the Nigerian school system would go a long way in repositioning the mind-sets of our youths.

Recommendations

For proper enhancement of entrepreneurial practices among students in particular and Nigerian citizenry in general for national development, the following recommendations are proffered:

- **Re-orientation:** There must be a grass-root re-orientation of all Nigerians starting from our homes through communities, the states and entire nation. To realize this, effective communication skills must be employed to transform the mind-set of our children/youths that have become aliens in their own country due to acculturation. Such agencies as the home, school, church, mosque, age-grade, social clubs etc must educate their members on the essence of entrepreneurial skills. It is not improper to desire to become such professionals as doctors, lawyers, engineer, teacher, banker etc, but situations in our country demand that one acquires other skills through entrepreneurship education. Hence, the need to educate everyone in this area.
- **Re-designing of School Curriculum:** The Federal Government and all stakeholders in education should redesign the current curricular ranging from the basic level of tertiary

level of our education system to ensure that entrepreneurship education is inclusive in the learning contents.

- **Certification of Entrepreneurial Skills:** To curb the adverse effect of quest for paper qualification has caused in society, there is need for the Federal Government to institute schools designated to train and certify artisans in various fields of skills acquisition, and this would check-mate the extant practice of some people that purchase grades/degrees in our school system without marketable skills.
- **Trainings:** Entrepreneurship education is multi-disciplined in nature. Hence, there is need for all lecturers and instructors especially those ones that are in language-based disciplines – (English Language, Foreign Languages, Linguistics and Communication, Interpretation & Translation) to be co-opted with entrepreneurship instructors for regular trainings. The Federal Government should ensure that they are sponsored to attend both local and international conferences to acquire more knowledge so that they can effectively transfer entrepreneurial skills into students.
- **Funding:** Provision of access to adequate resources especially capital for trained entrepreneurs/students to enable them start their own businesses.
- **Proper Information Dissemination:** Nigeria citizenry should be provided with adequate information through such communication outfits as Radio/Television houses, print media, symposia, seminars/workshops etc on the ‘How’, ‘where’, ‘when’, and ‘who’, acquires entrepreneurial skills.
- **Computer Literacy:** As we are in technological era, computer literacy is imperative for effective entrepreneurial practices. In fact, students should be thoroughly taught how to troubleshoot, service, maintain computer and other related office equipment.
- Proper Equipment of Centres for Entrepreneurship Education established in Nigeria Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges.
- **Organization of Workshops:** There should be constant organization of workshops/talks and symposia on entrepreneurship for students. Successful business men and women should endeavour to be part of the workshops so as to talk to the students and educate them on the relevance of entrepreneurship education; as well teach them on how to initiate, source for funds, start and run a business successfully.

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