

**LANGUAGE AS A VERITABLE TOOL FOR SUCCESSFUL  
ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*Language is at the centre of education and the right language will certainly make for optimal achievement in learning. This paper argues that using the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment in which the child is comfortable with will build a solid entrepreneurial foundation. The use of the language of the child's immediate environment will give the child a solid entrepreneurial foundation before such a child is introduced to a foreign language, which is alien to him. As a nation committed to unity in diversity, there is no better way than the government recognizing the major and minor languages and developing them equally. In this way, multilingualism could become an asset for our country as well as a source of cultural and social enrichment.*

**Keywords;** Language , Education, Learning and Environment

**Introduction**

Entrepreneurship is a derivative of the French word ‘entrepreneur’ meaning someone who undertakes something: used to mean someone who owns or runs a business. It also means someone who risks his capital in a business enterprise; a person who starts or organizes a business company, especially one involving risks.

An entrepreneur has also been defined as a person who does not work fulltime in the service of another and who has economic responsibility for his or her own work (Kettunen 1980:20). Additionally, through owning the business, an entrepreneur may experience both the positive prospects and the risks (Makinen 1982:7).

Huuskonen (1992: 101- 105) defined entrepreneur by defining the way a person chooses entrepreneurship. First, the person becomes interested in entrepreneurship, then ponders about entrepreneurship, and then intends to become an entrepreneur by setting up his or her own business. The time between these stages towards entrepreneurship varies; there may be delays in each of the levels.

The characteristics of the entrepreneur include being an initiator, risk manager, and able to bear responsibility. He should be creative and have cooperative skills. Entrepreneurial education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of setting. Variations of entrepreneur education are offered at all levels of schooling from primary or secondary through higher education programmes.

#### **Importance Of Entrepreneurial Education**

Entrepreneurial education is a life-long learning process, starting as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education including adult education. The importance of entrepreneurial education to any economy cannot be over-emphasized. Entrepreneurial activity and the resultant financial gain are always of benefit to a country. If you have entrepreneurial skills, then you will recognize a genuine opportunity when you come across one.

Entrepreneurial education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes in widely different contexts. It can be portrayed as open to all and not exclusively the domain of the high flying, growth-seeking business person. The propensity to behave entrepreneurially is not exclusive in certain individuals. Different individuals will have a different mix of capabilities to demonstrating and acquiring entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes. The behaviours can be practiced, developed and learned; hence the importance to expose all students to entrepreneurial education.

Entrepreneurial skills and attributes provide benefits to society, even beyond their application to business activity. Obviously, personal qualities that are relevant to entrepreneurship such as creativity and the spirit of initiation can be useful to everyone in their working responsibilities and in their daily existence. Also, the relevant technical and business skills need to be provided for those who choose to be self-employed or to start their own venture or intend to do so in the future.

Entrepreneurship should be taught to students in all disciplines in the institution. It is not out of place to say that many business ideas emerge from non-business disciplines but are often waved aside or ignored because students are not sufficiently educated in the knowledge and skills required. The importance of introducing entrepreneurial studies in the universities by the National University Commission (NUC) cannot be overemphasized.

#### **Objectives**

Entrepreneurial education focuses on realization of opportunity where management education is focused on the best way to operate existing organization. Both approaches share an interest in achieving “profit” in some form. Entrepreneurial education can be geared towards different ways of realizing opportunities:

- The most popular one is opening a new organization (e.g. starting a new business).
- Another approach is to promote innovation or to introduce new products or services or markets in existing forms. This approach is called corporate entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship, and was made popular by author, Gifford Pinchot.
- A recent approach involves creating charitable organization (or portions of existing charities) which are designed to be self-supporting in addition to doing their good works. This is usually called social entrepreneurship or social venturing.

### **Language In Entrepreneurial Education**

Due to the linguistic plurality of Nigeria, the National Policy of Education (NPE, 1981, 2004, 2013) assigned different functions to the many languages in the nation's education. The outcome of this is that more than one language is used both in the classroom and in the course of the child's education. Although the language provisions in the NPE are predicated in the four principles of national unity, equality of opportunities, permanence of literacy and numeracy, and linguistic competence required for communication and higher education, the role of language in proper entrepreneurial education cannot be over-emphasized. The centrality of language to the teaching-learning process is thus brought into focus.

It should be fully appreciated that education is not about languages, teaching language or teaching in languages. It is about responsible and responsive citizenship. It is about the acquisition of skills. All these can be taught and learnt in any language but best in the language in which the teacher and his students are more at home. And there is no gainsaying the fact that that language is their mother tongue.

These were the revelations of the Ife-six-yea- Yoruba project as recorded by Fafunwa et al (eds.) 1989:141, thus:

- i. (Primary) education in mother tongue leads to more permanent literacy and numeracy.
- ii. It leads to faster and more rounded development of the affective, cognitive and manipulative skills of the human person. Those who turned to technical pursuit have proved more resourceful than others without their exposure to a foreign language. They demonstrated greater manipulative ability, manual dexterity and mechanical comprehension, greater sense of maturity, tolerance....
- iii. (Primary) education in mother tongue (or any language in which people are competent) has greater surrender value and makes the child a better and adjusted citizen in the community.

If we look closely at the general and specific objectives of primary education as spelt out in the revised NPE (2004:14) it does appear that the Ife SYPP approach will help us realize these objectives faster and better. This same experiment has been carried out in the Philippines (Sibayan, 1978), in Niger Republic (Badejo, 1989). In countries like England, France, Germany, Japan, Korea and China, the whole of formal and informal education from the cradle to the grave is given in mother tongue.

We should not lose sight of the fact that English is the mother tongue of England, French of France, German of Germany, Japanese of Japan, Korean of Korea and Chinese of China. We should also remember that in these countries the whole of education is conducted in their respective mother tongue.

It has been argued by Emenanjo (1995) that the crisis in present day Nigerian education is that of verbal communication and that is the fact that the standards of education had fallen or are falling; the lack of effective manipulation of verbal communication in the popular, non-elitist public schools is at the core of it all. According to him, if the present crises in Nigerian education are to be slammed and standards prevented from further falling, then effective communication has to be seen for its vast potentials in Nigerian education.

The implication is that since education is for skill acquisition, the proper mode of communication has to be employed for maximum impartation of entrepreneurial skills. The

best communication mode by these arguments will be no other than the language in which a teacher and his students are more at home which should be the mother tongue, and definitely not a borrowed language or another person's or people's mother tongue.

### **Conclusion**

Given Nigeria's multilingual nature with an estimated number of more than 400 indigenous languages, the fundamental problem is that none of these languages can be accepted conveniently as the national language. Any attempt to enthrone one of these languages at the expense of the other has proven a failure due to the fact that it appears as distrust which is inherent and regrettably discriminatory and domineering on the other languages; and this dies in the mine of ethnic bickering.

However, we will not allow the problems posed by multilingualism to rob us of the benefit of exploring the advantages of using the mother tongue of the child to educate the child at least in his earlier years. On the other hand, what we see today is a young lad who cannot even communicate in his mother tongue, and cannot even communicate in the borrowed language which he wants to show off with. For many, it is a thing of respect to see a little child speaking English and a thing to be ashamed of when another little child can only speak the mother tongue. Many people usually look at that child with some sort of pity. In fact, some time ago when some of us were in primary school, the class monitor was asked to write the names of pupils who spoke vernacular in the class, and these pupils were made to face one kind of punishment or the other.

Given that it may not be possible in Nigeria to study through the primary to the tertiary education using one's mother tongue, a solid foundation can be laid for the Nigerian-child by strictly adhering to the recommendations of the National Policy on Education regarding the language by which a child should be instructed during his first three years in the primary school. Or better still the Ife SYPP project can be reintroduced in all Nigerian schools so as to give Nigerian children solid entrepreneurial foundation before introducing them to a foreign language, be it English or French or whichever language in later education.

As a nation committed to unity in diversity, it would not be out of place if the government recognizes the major and minor languages and develop them equally. In this way, multilingualism could be an asset for Nigeria and a source of cultural and social enrichment. This can help to reduce ethnicity and its attendant problems.

### **Recommendations**

No nation can advance beyond its level of industrialization and more often than not, industries are born from small businesses established by entrepreneurs. The writers, therefore, recommend that:

- i. We lay a solid foundation by teaching Nigerian children especially at the primary level using the mother tongue, at least until they finish primary school as earlier recommended in the Nigerian Policy on Education.
- ii. In multilingual zones of the country, the language of the immediate environment should be used in teaching the children at the primary level, at least.
- iii. This means that Government should give more incentive to teachers of Nigeria's indigenous languages. This will encourage people to get into studying the indigenous Nigerian Language at the University level and other institutions of higher level.

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