

## **Infusing Entrepreneurial Skills into the Reading Curriculum for Basic Education in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper highlights the benefits of entrepreneurship education in actualising the goal of self reliance as stipulated in the National Policy On Education. The Basic Education level, according to the paper, should be the starting point. Suggestions regarding ways in which entrepreneurship skills can be infused into the reading curriculum for basic education were highlighted. Sample reading comprehension passages on entrepreneurship skills were also provided. The paper recommends among others, the training of reading teachers (that will take on this new role in the classroom) as the way forward towards the development of entrepreneurial mindsets and skills in Nigerian students.*

### **Introduction**

Entrepreneurship is most commonly thought of in term of business. However, entrepreneurship may be related to all dimensions of life. In the broadest sense of the term entrepreneurship can be the means to stimulate the creativity and innovation necessary to create a better community, a better nation and a better world. To achieve this goal, government policies should focus on the educational aspects of the vast, human potential for entrepreneurship which exist in every society. A country like Nigeria is one of the developing countries of the world facing a lot many challenges of economy and employment (Yusuf, 2012). The most precious asset of a country is people who have the potential to spark and do business to strengthen the economic growth. These are called the ‘entrepreneurs’.

Abraham Maslow indicated that “The most valuable 100 people to bring into a deteriorating society would not be economists, or politicians, or engineers, but rather 100 entrepreneurship is seen as an engine of economic progress, job creation and social adjustment. The fast growing world of change has made the role of entrepreneur very important and functional. It also has increased the need of entrepreneurial education because this is the best way to improve the economy of educational organization. (Akanwa 2006, Ereh 2005, Hannon 2005).

### **The Need to teach Entrepreneurial skills at the Basic Education level**

The Federal Government recently acknowledged that about 80% of Nigerian youth are unemployed and 10% underemployed (as cited in Afoha, Uchegbu, Anyikwa and Nkedirim, 2009). Alarmed by the worsening unemployment trend in the country, the Federal Government has through the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) developed a broad based school curriculum for secondary level students. The new curriculum was expected to be fully operational as from September 2011. Subjects like trade and entrepreneurship skills have been inputted in the new curriculum in a renewed bid by the government to promote entrepreneurship education among secondary level graduates that would equip them to effectively tackle growing inflationary trend in the society.

At the Senior Secondary Level, the National Policy on Education (2009) further states that Senior Secondary School shall be comprehensive with a core-curriculum designed to broaden student’s knowledge and outlook. On the contrary, students who graduate from secondary education in Nigeria are not qualified for the labour market.

This is because the curriculum only provides simple life skills and not applied skills for job market. (Yusuf, 2012). While acknowledging the need for the incorporation of entrepreneurship education into the senior secondary education curriculum, there is need to inculcate entrepreneurship skills in children at the basic education level (ie. Primary 1-6 and JS 1-3). This paper proposes this level to be the starting point since it is the foundation level.

All through my primary, secondary and university education, at no point did a teacher, career counsellor, school or university teach me about or encourage me to think about starting my own business. I am sure colleagues all over the country also have a similar experience. Even those who studied Business Administration or Financial Management are not taught the nature and skills of entrepreneurship. So the right attitude and inspiration is not there. Hence none of us ever had the idea that one could start a business and it could succeed. Perhaps if we had been exposed to such skills we could have been better and more successful entrepreneurs. I am of the opinion that entrepreneurs are not born, they are made and can be made through teaching. In view of this therefore, entrepreneurial skills needed to turn ideas into commercial successes should be taught in schools especially at the foundation level, in order to give this generation and other future generations the opportunity to become more successful entrepreneurs.

### Benefits of entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is an employment strategy that can lead to economic self-sufficiency for people. Self-employment provides people and their families with the potential to create and manage business in which they function as the employer or boss, rather than merely being an employee.

Nearly 80 percent of would-be entrepreneurs in Nigeria should be between the ages of 18 and 34. An interview conducted recently by this researcher found that 68% percent of the 50 students interviewed wanted to become entrepreneurs, even though they know that it would not be an easy path. 22% wanted to be employed by government while 10% wanted to work in private company as shown in the table below

Item	Students' response %
I want to become an entrepreneur when I complete schooling	68
I want to be employed by Government	22
I want to work for a private company	10

In spite of this overwhelming interest, however, students rarely receive any information about entrepreneurship as a career option in Nigeria. (Ekpoh and Edet, 2011, Agu, 2008).

Entrepreneurship education offers a solution. It seeks to prepare students to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurial thinkers by immersing them in real life learning experiences where they can take risks, manage the results, and learn from the outcomes.

(Oduwaiye 2005, Kirby 2004, Kyro, 2003).

Through entrepreneurship education, students, learn organizational skills, including time management, leadership development and interpersonal skills, all of which are highly transferable skills sought by employers. Other positive outcome according to (Ifedili and Ofeogbu 2011, Hessel and Auke 2008, Akanwa, 2006) include:

- improved academic performances, school attendance; and educational attainment
- increased problem-solving and decision-making abilities
- improved interpersonal relationships, teamwork, money management, and public speaking skills
- job readiness
- enhanced social psychological development (self-esteem, ego development, self-efficacy), and
- perceived improved health status

Entrepreneurship education can increase interest in attending school, occupational aspirations, independent reading, leadership behaviour and belief that attaining one's goal is within one's control as indicated in the responses of 50 students and 50 teachers interviewed in the table below.

**Responses of students and teachers interviewed by the researcher**

Item	Students' Response %	Teachers' Response %
interest in attending college	80	92
occupational aspirations	95	98
independent reading	73	88
leadership behavior	89	85
belief that attaining one's goal is within one's control	75	87

**Infusing entrepreneurship skills into the reading curriculum for basic education**

Entrepreneurship skills can be infused into the reading curriculum for basic education by providing reading tasks and activities that will encourage, stimulate and get students interested in business. Teachers need to identify what can work for children within a particular class level by considering the age of the students, their interests and abilities, the time they have to devote to entrepreneurial activities, the available fiscal and human resources (i.e, community support, business support).

**Proposed Reading Tasks/Activities**

The table below indicates some entrepreneurial skills that should be taught and inculcated in children's reading comprehension passages to make them succeed as entrepreneurs. The following content should be developed by teachers as reading tasks. Care should be taken in simplifying the language of each task to suit the age/class level of pupils or students.

Entrepreneurial skills	How to teach	Expected outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Vision</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create a reading comprehension passage with the following content.</p> <p>Vision means something perceived in a dream. It is the ability to perceive something not actually visible. A successful entrepreneur has a clear and communicable vision of the opportunity his or her business will create or exploit and is completely dedicated to making this vision a reality, even when it means taking risks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student clearly state their vision.</li> <li>Students indicate how they will make their vision a reality.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Goal Setting</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teacher creates a reading passage on goal setting. Teacher teaches students how to set and accomplish their goals in a fun and exciting way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students define and write out their top ten goals. They choose their biggest goal and start taking appropriate action to achieve it.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Determination</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create a reading comprehension passage with this content.</p> <p>A successful entrepreneur must be completely determined to succeed, even in the face of doubts of family, close friends and associates. This determination must fuel the tireless effort to make it happen.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students indicate ways they can show determination towards business.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Motivation</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create a reading comprehension passage on motivation.</p> <p>An entrepreneur lets very little get in the way of making the vision into reality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students show ways they can motivate their vision into reality.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Focus</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create a reading comprehension passage on focus.</p> <p>An entrepreneur must keep his or her eye on the ball at all times, never allowing precious time, energy and other resources to be distracted from the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students show ways they can maintain focus.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Devotion</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create a reading comprehension passage on devotion.</p> <p>Entrepreneurs must be completely devoted to the project, enjoy working on the project and deeply committed to the ideas and beliefs on which the project is founded</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students show ways they can demonstrate devotion to their vision/progress.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Passion</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create a reading comprehension passage with this content.</p> <p>An entrepreneur must really love what he/she is doing in such a way that it does not appear to be hard work, but rather something they enjoy and want to do.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students show or express love towards their chosen business.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adaptability</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create a reading comprehension passage on adaptability.</p> <p>An entrepreneur must be able to adapt personally and ensure that the organization has the ability to adapt to new challenges. Allow people to provide their point of view and identify issues and opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students indicate ways they can show adaptability.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Display Self-awareness</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create a reading comprehension passage on self awareness with this content.</p> <p>An entrepreneur must be able to recognize their own strengths and weakness and hire their missing skills within their team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students indicate ways they can show self awareness.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Creative Thinking</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create a reading comprehension passage on creative thinking.</p> <p>An entrepreneur has to be able to think through the innovative idea and deal with the many variables facing the business – global market, technological change and diverse work force etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students demonstrate creative thinking through innovative ideas.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recognizing opportunity</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teacher creates a reading passage on how students can recognise opportunities and take action on them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students brainstorm on possible solutions to identifiable problems/challenges.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Marketing skills i.e selling products and services to customers.</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create reading passage on how students can market their products or services to attract customers to their future business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students design and write captions for their handbills, posters and bill boards. They also write and produce jingles for radio and television.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Financial Literacy</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create reading task on how students can earn money from chores, or their own business. Teacher should teach students how money can be used to create more money.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students write out ways they can use their money to create more money.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Effective Communication</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create a reading task that will teach children how to communicate effectively either face to face, telephone or e-mail. Effective communication is the wing edge in business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students practice communicating in pairs face to face, via telephone and e-mail messages.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Art of giving back to the society</b></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers create a reading task to demonstrate the art of giving back to others, putting smiles on other people's faces. Teach them that successful business provides benefits to more than just its owners. All great businesses contribute to improving the lives of other people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students choose a charity or special cause to support with a portion of the income they hope to generate from their business.</li> </ul>

Teachers should inform students that there is no magical formula to be an entrepreneur and there are no quick steps to succeed. Students considering being entrepreneurs, should realize that being entrepreneurs mean that they are responsible for making decisions, solving problems, resolving conflicts, developing opportunities and motivating others to share their vision.

## **Sample reading comprehension passages**

### **Grab every opportunity to make a difference**

An entrepreneur is; a person who organizes and manages a business undertaking, assuming the risk for the sake of the profit. Someone who perceives an opportunity and creates an organization to pursue it or simply someone who is looking for how to build a company.

Entrepreneurs are simply those who understand that there is little difference between obstacle and opportunity and are able to turn both to their advantages. As an entrepreneur, you must think and see things differently than most people.

When you look at a situation you must see opportunities on how to improve it or how to do it differently. You have to be very aware of all many things that are involved in business. You have to want to make a difference. You can't be satisfied with the status quo. You have to be very committed to what you are doing – eat and sleep it. It is not work but rather what you love to do. What you do is a big part of your life it is not just a job.

You must be able to take rejection many times during your entrepreneurial journey. Many people will say “No” as they don't believe in your concept, don't like your product or they don't think you can make it work. Always try to look at everything in terms of how it can be effectively or better done. You can come up with many ideas from just questioning how a lot of things are done.

#### **Activity**

Children should list five things they must do as entrepreneurs.

### **Creating a vision for your business**

Vision means something perceived in a dream. The ability to perceive something not actually visible.

The vision of an Entrepreneur comes as they develop their idea further through lots of thinking and dreaming. Entrepreneurs are fanatics (very enthusiastic, excited) about their ideas. They dream day and night about how they can develop their business idea and relate almost everything to it.

A vision is when you can see in your mind the idea and dream in great detail. You can see how it starts to work. You will find that if you give an idea to a number of people and ask them to think of the potential of the idea, that you will get many different responses. You will find that an entrepreneur will really stretch beyond the limits and will be very creative on the opportunities of the idea.

#### **Activity**

Write your vision for your business.

### **Invest in yourself**

Business is not something children want to spend their time on. It probably won't be as fun as video games, internet surfing, talking on the telephone or watching TV. Children need to be offered more of what is good for them rather than what they want. It is like junk food. Children love junk food but it is not the right choice and can lead to lots of health problems.

You may think that business is not the greatest thing to spend your time on, but it is really about spending some time on your future – investing time in yourself! Yes, at some point in the future you will spend more and more of your time involved in business (working/career). Spend a little time each year preparing yourself for business so that you give yourself the best possible chance for what you want to do and give a lot of thought to how you want to spend all that time in business. You are basically a kid for about 20 years and work for 40 to 45 years (working years). So, minimize the use of internet, chat rooms, talking on the phone, watching TV, hanging out somewhere, getting in trouble etc. and use your time to dream about the future and prepare for the future. You would be better off.

#### **Activity**

How do you invest in yourself?

## Recommendations

- It is clear that children of all ages are generally more interested in sports, music, TV and video games than thinking about business. Teachers should device a very simple way to get children at the basic education level interested in business by asking them for instance to create a written product and think of ways of making it the best product in the whole world! A product that children around the world will enjoy and pay to buy. It can be making toys, ice cream, chocolate or yoghurt. Teachers should encourage children to be in business by dreaming of a product that excites them. Teachers should motivate them to learn how to further develop their interest and make their product or their talent successful. Children should tell their friends about it, take pride in telling people they are in business and work at getting people interested in their product. Children can be encouraged to make perfumes, body splash, soap, deodorants etc. The key learning lesson is for children to enjoy to compete and develop in business and work at getting people interested in their product, and to understand that rewards are in the learning experiences and success should be measured in more ways than the money earned.
- Teachers need to be equipped with the right skills, knowledge and attitudes to relevant pedagogies and learning environments that will help them to acquire entrepreneurial competences. The development of the entrepreneurship competence is not simply a question of knowledge acquisition. Since entrepreneurship education is about developing the ability to act in an entrepreneurial manner, attitude and behaviours are perhaps more important than knowledge about how to run a business. In short, entrepreneurship education means developing a culture for and about entrepreneurship. Such competencies are best acquired through people-led enquiry and discovery that enable students to turn ideas into action. They are difficult to teach through traditional teaching and learning practices in which the learner tends to be more or less a passive recipient. They require active, learner-centred pedagogies and learning activities that use practical learning opportunities from the real world. Entrepreneurship skills should be taught in all teacher training institutions to prepare teachers to competently teach entrepreneurship skills in schools. Specialist reading teachers should be trained in teacher training institutions to cope with this new demand.
- Entrepreneurship skills should be taught as a theme in reading comprehension passages (in addition to its being taught as a separate subject) at all stages and levels of education. Specific training should be organised for teachers in order to make entrepreneurship education generally available and effective. This will enable teachers to take on a new role in the classroom as “facilitators” of learning. They should use innovative and entrepreneurial methods of teaching to help young people to develop entrepreneurial mindsets and skills.
- Reading teachers should show their students the excitement and fun of turning their ideas into successes. By the time six or seven year old are ready to launch their business by venturing into the “lions den”, we can confidently claim to be the most enterprising nation in the world.
- Curriculum planners should ensure that entrepreneurial skills are included in reading comprehension texts, prose and poetry texts of the Basic Education Curriculum.

## Conclusion

Every learner needs to acquire the knowledge and skills of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship should be taught in all Basic Education Schools in Nigeria. In the past, children are taught in schools to go with the flow and follow the rules. They are programmed to learn and memorize facts instead of becoming independent thinkers. Entrepreneurship forces children to think ‘outside the box’, create unique solutions and lead others. This will make children become leaders at an early age, which will result in more income opportunities, self confidence and self reliance. Teachers should be adequately trained to cope with this new classroom challenge. Therefore, the training of reading teachers at the basic education (foundation level) is indeed a sine qua non to the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. Enterprise and entrepreneurship are keys to sustainable growth and development of the nation’s economy. Hence the entrepreneurial skills needed should be taught across the reading curriculum for Basic Education in Nigerian schools in order to achieve the much desired national growth and development of this great country.

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