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# ROLES OF READING IN ENHANCING ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## **Abstract**

*Reading has not been given the considerable attention it deserves in the school curriculum despite its enviable roles in conditioning our attitude, providing leisure, empowering the mind and broadening our vision etc which are cardinal ingredients in national development. The result is that many students cannot read some materials that could enhance their skills for entrepreneurship. This paper, therefore highlights ways in which Reading can enhance entrepreneurship skills in secondary school students for national development. It also proffer solutions to the reading constraints which hinder students from acquiring entrepreneurship skills through reading.*

Reading is the process of getting information from printed materials. Reading can also be seen as a literacy skill which is basically concerned with meaning and the reader's responsibility for getting meaning out of the text (Omojuwa, 2005). Reading is only meaningful if the reader comprehends what he reads. In fact, there is no reading without comprehension. It is only when the reader comprehends the message the writer wants to convey to the audience that meaningful reading has taken place.

Since reading is a literacy skill, that is, a way of making a person functionally literate, the materials to be read should be purposeful, goal- oriented as well as easy to comprehend. The comprehension of reading materials by the reader will help the reader achieve its basic aims of promoting literacy. It will also help to close any gap between reading, literacy and comprehension. Some scholars did not find any difference between reading and literacy. To them, it is only a literate person that can read and comprehend what he reads. They also stated that reading enhances literacy. Omojuwa (2005) stressed this when he stated that functional literacy means that an individual can read with meaning, think critically and utilize efficiently problem solving life skills which are crucial for effective and successful living. To stress this, Etim (2005) states that critical reading involves analysis, evaluating arguments, considering multiple perspective, being mindful, using imagination and projecting oneself emphatically into new contexts and experience. He maintained that critical thinking is essential because it

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is a liberating force in education and a powerful resource in development. The ideal critical thinker is habitually open minded, flexible, fair minded in evaluation, prudent in passing judgment, willing to consider situation in complex matters, diligent in seeking relevant information for the selection of criteria and focused in inquiry.

Utiam (2005) also saw reading as an important language skill that every literate person must embrace. This is because the acquisition of knowledge and improvement on such knowledge is done through reading. Utiam (2005) pointed out that literacy work like novels, plays, poems and non literacy works like newspapers, magazines, biographies etc constitute materials for reading. These reading materials when read meaningful will help increase the reader's vocabulary. Faniran (1988) cited in Faniran (1997) commented on this when he stated that the acquisition of large vocabulary needed for clear and accurate oral or written expression depends to a large degree on reading. On the role of reading to enhance the students' writing skills, Guth and Schuster (1977:256) cited in Faniran (1997:318-322) declared that a good writer is a good reader. According to them

*In our writing, we draw first of all our experience. But our personal experience is limited. Most of us have little chance to become a recognized expert in some branches of science or a brilliant analyst of foreign affairs ... But all of us can share in our experience through reading and writing of those who have the knowledge and have taken the time to set it down for us in books and magazines.*

Faniran (1997) also gave comprehensive reasons for reading. According to him, there are eight reasons why we read. These are

- i. to get detailed information;
- ii. to get important facts or main ideas;
- iii. to locate a particular fact or to find answer to a specific question;
- iv. to identify supporting ideas;
- v. to get materials for a critical analysis, to share the author's feelings or those of his character;
- vi. to find out how to do something;
- vii. to increase knowledge and broaden experience;
- viii. to get pleasure.

Mohammed (1982) commenting on the role of reading said that apart from reading to meet the daily need of contemporary Nigeria, good reading skills are necessary for adult if he/she is to function successfully in career development and personal life. He pointed out that reading disability results to severe behaviour problems, and that inability to read prevent many adolescents from achieving, which is fundamental need of human beings.

### **Reading and Entrepreneurship Skills**

The roles of reading in enhancing the entrepreneurship skills of secondary school students becomes meaningful when we look at Faniran's (1997) reasons for reading which stated that we read to find out how to do something and how to increase knowledge and broaden experience. Mohammed (1982) reiterated Faniran's (1997) opinion on reading for entrepreneurship when he stated that good reading skills are necessary for an adult if he/she is to function successfully in career development and personal life. Mohammed lamented that despite the enviable roles of reading in socio economic development of a nation, a great number of secondary school students cannot read most of materials in newspaper, job application forms and direction for performing various tasks. To address the above identified problems the teaching of reading in secondary schools should receive urgent attention if the students are to embrace the modern techniques in commercial and industrial sectors which are the available economic opportunities for entrepreneurship. Mohammed (1982) also stated that the adolescent disabled reader must be helped to achieve, become independent and earn a living. Reading enables such students to engage in productive works related to their capabilities and their interest.

The above statement from Mohammed highlights the need for teachers to help students develop entrepreneurship skills in school through reading so that when they come out of the school, the knowledge they acquired through reading would help them establish their own business or become self employed, which is all about entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship according to Etov (1997) is a business venture carried out by one person as a sole proprietorship venture or jointly carried out by two or more persons as proprietors.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English sees entrepreneur as someone who starts a company, arranges business deals and takes risks in order to make a profit. The aim of such business is not only to enhance the economic growth of the proprietor(s) but for the economic well being of the community where it is cited, as well as the overall economic emancipation of the state or nation, (Etov, 1997). Etov pointed out that entrepreneurship needs renewed skills for production or manufacturing of veritable goods and that every entrepreneur and his workforce should be engaged in one aspect of a learning culture that would enhance the relevant transfer of learning for improved job performance. He lamented that problems confronting Nigerian workers is that they lack a book reading culture. They regard reading as something associated with school learning, passing examinations. He also stated that a young entrepreneur engaging in a skill(s) thinks that he has no business with reading but fails to realize that lack of professional manuals and journals may render him out of touch with production and manufacturing techniques, thus rendering his products inferior in the competitive market.

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Oduaran (1989) cited in ETov (1997:182) expressed the need for workers to improve their production skills this way:

*Workers have had to learn to cope with computers, calculators, machinery, new job situation as they bring forth need for new knowledge, skill and attitudes. The great sweep affects all categories of workers including those who are self employed, millions of large and small farmers, craftsmen, and people in different kind of trade learn to be conversant with new and strange technique.*

Although the literature above seems to state the need for workers to cultivate the habit of reading, it also provides a ground for a desired entrepreneur to cultivate the spirit of reading culture. This, therefore, makes it imperative that our secondary school students should like reading if they wish to remain functional as proprietors or entrepreneurs in trade and industries after school. This is because reading improves skills in spoken and written language which promotes inter-personal relationship between the entrepreneur, his customers or his workers. This makes knowledge gained from reading done in secondary school go beyond the school level. This is an evidence that education they received in schools is functional to them and the society. Cook (1999) in Otagburuagu (2007) stressed on this when he said that functional literacy is the magic word for the building of a total man and for every form of development. He defined functional literacy as skills used by those engaging effectively in all the activities in which literacy is normally assumes in a culture of a group. He also stated that functional literacy is achievement and occupation oriented. Offorma (2007) commenting on functional literacy or functional education stated that functionality is the ability to transfer knowledge gained from scholarship to solve one's social and economic problems. Akinpelu (1992) also stated that functional education raises the consciousness about the oppressive structure within which one lives and empower people to organize themselves in order to embrace existing realities. Obi-Okoye (1997) also highlighted this when he stated that emphasis on the training and socializing function of schooling is on the value-added to an individual's productive skills when he/she enters the world of work. He stressed that education like land, labour and capital is viewed as a factor of production that generates wealth and also the means by which the social relations of production are produced as well as transferred. He pointed out that the development of human capital and economic growth will be seriously hampered if not jeopardized in the absence of effective literacy. He also opined that the corollary of effective education, which of course is got from reading, enables school graduates to enter into employment or become self employed.

Eisemon (1988:4) cited in Okoye (1997:465) enumerating the roles of school in impacting a worthwhile knowledge that would help students achieve a desired goal put it this way:

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*Formal employment, in turn, provides the where withal to satisfy the expectations schooling generates; disposable income to purchase consumable including medicine, modern healthcare, nutritious food and better education for our children. What schooling (especially the aspect of effective literacy) impact in brief, is not only notions of a better life but the means through which this can be achieved, both educationally and in terms of the social conditions that help to satisfy material aspiration.*

### **How Reading can Enhance Students' Entrepreneurship Skills**

Reading and communication are twin sisters in national development. Agwu (2006) pointed this out when he said that reading and communication enhance national development by job creation, sustainable agriculture, enhance modern technology, improve literacy and socio economic activities. What Agwu (2006) stated above is that literate person: students, graduates get information on the availability of job and techniques of performing economic activities through reading. The knowledge they get through reading helps them to engage in trade or industry of their own thereby contributing to national development. It is important to state that an entrepreneur on computer business must read the computer manuals for him to carry out the business successfully. An entrepreneur in agricultural activities must read Agric textbooks or manuals on agriculture to get information on how to carry out the business. In the industrial sector, no entrepreneur can succeed in that business if he has not read enough materials that provide information on how to carry out the business. In the literary art, a successful film producer or actor/actress must have read the literary work that he turned into a play or drama. Onukaogu, Arua and Jegede (2008) threw more light on this when they said that the way the written text affects people conditions their attitude towards it. To some people, it is the means of empowering the mind, broadening their visions, deepening their horizon and reaching out to other people, places and event. They stressed that if we are to benefit from the knowledge which is enriched in the written text, we must know how to read.

As curriculum incorporates all subjects of study and each subject has its objective for its inclusion in the curriculum, literature text books, which are reading materials enhance entrepreneurship skill in students not only because it enhances manipulative skills but also because they enhance practical experience thereby making the curriculum rise beyond conventional approach. Esu (2005) cited in Ogboji (2009) emphasized this when she stated that implementing curriculum has to rise beyond conventional approach and emphasize manipulative skills and practical experiences. She stressed that the essential things in education is that the society builds educational institutions and also dictates its curriculum that should be in operation with the consideration of the needs and aspiration of the society. He stressed that the curriculum of cultural and Creative Arts is rooted in the culture which provides inspirational perspectives to the art activities involved. He also stated that the curriculum takes into

account among other things, the social and economic wellbeing of the society. The learners at the end of their programme, attain some levels of education which make them self employed or provided opportunity to work for a private or government establishment. Literature text books like some reading materials enhance skill acquisitions as learners tend to acquire knowledge, manipulative skill, have creative thinking and sensitivity towards their environment. This makes them to produce works of art which earns them a living, (Esu (2005) cited in (Ogboji 2009) also stated that a curriculum is one that is strategically packaged to build competence in the recipient the activities which enhance manipulative skills in the teaching and learning of cultural and creative arts which is achieved as a result of learning experiences exposed to the students at secondary schools.

Although the above literature seems to present the value of literature in enhancing entrepreneurship skills, it goes beyond that because it stressed the value of reading educational materials for functional and effective entrepreneurship skills to be inculcated not only to secondary school students but also for entire society. Diangungu (1980) cited in Onukaogu, Arua and Jegede (2003), stressed this when he said that books provide the most effective means of disseminating and popularizing scientific and technological knowledge. Manning (1995:658) also cited in Onukaogu et al (2003:67) also stated that from the written words comes gentleness, from the line ... patience, from the phrase ... joy, from the story ... compassion, from the poem ... beauty, from the epic... courage, from the saga ... perseverance, from the tale ... humour, from the play ... justice, from the soliloquy ... forgiveness, from the monologue ... insight, from the essay ... justice, from the dialogue ... love, from the forward .... hope, from the prose..... tolerance, from the narrative ... understanding, from the epitaph ... peace and from all literary odyssey ... wisdom.

A look at Manning's (1995) statement cited in Onukaogu et al (2003) shows that reading provides answer to all human problems because every reading material has its own objective of achieving human desire. Onukaogu et al (2003: 64) made the above assertion clear when they said that if we are to continue to prosper as a moral people, a just people and a free people, we need students in our schools whose ethical behaviour and personal values are affected and positively influenced by what they do as a result of what they read.

### **Constraints of Using Reading to Enhance the Entrepreneurship Skills of Secondary School Students and the Way Out**

Many graduates from secondary schools and higher institutions could not become self employed in some economic activities because they could not make reading a hobby. If they have done so, they could have been inspired by the materials they read to become enterprising and self employed. Mohammed (1982) frowned at that

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and stated categorically that a great number of secondary school students could read most of the materials in newspaper, job application forms and direction for performing various task. The question to be derived from Mohammed (1982) is whether reading is being given a considerable time in secondary school curriculum and whether the little reading the students do is directed towards achieving a desired goal, especially in the area of entrepreneurship. Besides, secondary school teachers do not encourage students to cultivate the spirit of reading culture by forming reading clubs.

In addition to the above problems, some reading materials are very expensive that indigent students cannot buy them. This greatly affects the students social and economic development as they cannot improve their knowledge.

To use reading to achieve some desired goals especially in the area of entrepreneurship, reading should be given a considerable time in the school curriculum. Enough time should be given for reading in the school library under the supervision of the school librarian. Teachers should also encourage students to read by providing fertile ground that favours such reading activities. Government should endeavour to provide reading materials in schools at little or no cost to the learners to enable indigent students have the benefit derived from reading.

### **Conclusion**

Reading is a veritable language skill that not only condition our attitude towards people, provide leisure, acts as means of empowering the mind, broadening our visions but also enhancing our entrepreneurship skills especially for the students who make reading a hobby. In view of the above benefit of reading, it should be taught effectively in schools as well as made a course of study in the school curriculum.

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