RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF IGBO LANGUAGE IN DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AMONG THE IGBO SPEAKING CHILDREN.

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Abstract

This paper discussed the concept of educational research and innovation in education. The target objective is to find out how Igbo language can be used effectively in the entrepreneurial skills development of the Igbo speaking children. The role of technology in driving the innovation agenda was discussed extensively. Igbo language was seen in this paper as the tool to impact and disseminate knowledge to the students. The importance of entrepreneurial education was discussed using Igbo language as the means of driving the message home to the students. Any innovation coming into the school system comes with a change. The result of the research conducted especially applied research will serve as the basis on which innovation will be initiated. Such innovation is usually carried out using technology and for a proper understanding among Igbo speaking children the need to use Igbo language for instruction is highly recommended. Recommendations were given on how to achieve the development of entrepreneurial skills among the Igbo speaking children.

Education is very important in the daily activities of man, whether formal or informal education. The United Nations Development Goals specifically stated that education should be inclusive and equitable, (UN 2015). Any nation that wants to advance must invest greatly in the development of the minds. This was why Fafunwa (1995) said that "we must have the will to make education a priority" this means that at the centre of any development plan of any nation, education sector should receive utmost attention. This is because the leaders of tomorrow are being made in the school. In essence, education sector is a factory where the

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great minds are nurtured and raised to transform our world.

In the light of the above, entrepreneurial skills are the hallmark of our educational pursuit in this century. It is an established fact that in Nigeria for example, the government cannot provide jobs for the growing population. This means that the private sector holds the key to the economic advancement of our nation. Yet raising entrepreneurs require a well thought out plan that will emanate from research and innovation.

Research and innovation are two words that go together. This is because from research and innovation, an idea will spring up. Research in education looks at solving existing problems in the education sector. Every research must be scientifically based to produce an objective result. Innovation brings something new in the sector so as to achieve an established agenda. The concern of this paper is to see how Igbo language can be effectively utilized to promote entrepreneurial skills via research and innovation. It will be examined under these segments.

❖ Introduction
❖ The concept of educational research
❖ Innovation as a tool for change
❖ The use of Igbo language as a tool for entrepreneurial development
❖ Conclusion
❖ Recommendation

The Concept of Educational Research

Research in education refers to a variety of methods in which individuals evaluate different aspects of education including students learning, teaching, methods, teachers training and classroom dynamics (IAR, 2011). It is a diligent inquiry or examination to seek or revise facts, principles, theories, applications etc. It is the laborious or continued search after truth (Oxford Dictionary 2014) Therefore; research in education in this regard seeks to find the truth behind any situation found in the field of education.

The process involved in this section of education must be rigorous and thorough. That is to say that it must be systematic in the process of conducting it. Anderson et al (1998) are of the opinion that "educational research is aimed at solving educational problems. These are problems that militate against the smooth execution of teaching and learning". For research to be systematic and scientific, it must gather new data from primary or firsthand source or using existing data for a new purpose. It is based on observation or empirical evidence. It is a spark of insight that leads a scientist or inventor to investigate an issue or phenomenon. That insight is usually shaped by an observation of what appears to be true or the creative jolt of a new idea (Diane, 2004).

This involves accurate observation and description. It adopts carefully designed procedures and rigorous analysis. The concern of this field is to bring out a generalization, principles or theories that will assist in understanding, prediction or control of the set target problem (Anderson et al 1998). So educational research must collect and

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analyze data on the said or identified educational problem.

The essence or reason for research in education is to find an objective, unbiased solution to the problem and takes enough time and pain to validate the procedures employed so as to justify the objectivity of the result. The researcher has a great role to play in the final result to be recorded. He should have an experience and familiarity with the field he is researching on. He should have competence in methodology, technical skill in collecting and analyzing the data.

Therefore, the process of collection and analysis of data must be well thought out and an unhurried activity. It has direction and often refines the problem or questions as the research progresses. It is also open to verification by any other interested party or person in the researched problem.

According to Lodico et al (2010), there are two main approaches to educational research. The first is basic approach and the second is applied approach. The two approaches have different purposes which influence the procedures of the respective research.

Basic research or academic research focuses on the search for truth or the development of educational theory (Anderson et al 1998). Researchers in this area design studies that can test, refine, modify or develop theories (Lodico et al 2010). The researchers are affiliated with an academic institution where they are performing this research as part of their graduate or doctoral work.

Applied research on the other hand is the more to access information that can be directly applied to practice. It is also known as contractual research. The researchers in this field are trying to find solution to existing educational problems. The interest of this approach is to ensure the usage of the result to solve an immediate educational challenge. This will influence practice in the field of education. It is determined to find out the actual use or application of an educational theory. From the result of the research an innovation will emerge.

Innovation as a Tool for Change

Innovation in education is the process of making changes to something established by introducing something new. It applies to radical or incremental changes to products, processes or services (Wikipedia, 2016). This is an act of introducing something new, in custom, rites etc. A change effected by innovation is contrary to established customs, manners or rites. It is characterized by the creation of new ideas or things. Such act is for looking ahead of current thinking (Hornby, 2014).

Technology is at the centre stage to advance the innovation in education in our present day. This is because the level of development in technology is touching every areas of human endeavor and education is the centre stage for innovative ideas to spring up. Today, technology is a significant driver behind changes and sometimes/often plays an important role in educational design and delivery. The challenge facing educators and policy

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makers is to make sure that innovation plays a constructive role in improving educational opportunities for billions of people who remain under-served in a rapid developing world (Olabisi, 2015).

Technologies that are now available in most countries increase the possibility of learners and educators to bridge time and distance. The use of the e-learning platforms made education to be easy and interesting. Research and innovation report can now be accessed via the internet; Thereby increasing the speed in teaching and learning. New Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) do not replace all previous ones, nor do they replace the need for good educational design and delivery. However, appropriate technologies can bring in additional possibilities for learners support, interacting and access to education (Olabisi, 2015).

The use of innovative aids like Iphone, smart phones, computers, televisions, projectors, radios, internet, e-book, e-library have made access to information very flexible and possible. The innovative idea of using ICT to bridge distance in learning has made Open and Distance Learning a reality. With the emergence of Smart phones, e-book readers, podcast and vodkas, internet and low cost computers, as well as solar electricity, cell-phones access and other technologies, comes the opportunity to provide education to assist individuals and communities. The ICT and other innovations enable educational design and delivery to be structured to the needs and environment of the students undergoing open and distance learning (ODL) and traditional educational programs.

Innovation is driven by a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. The innovator is interested in questioning and challenging the status quo. He takes opportunity when it presents itself. So educational program implementation needs a regular overhauling, depending on the need for continuous improvement. We have to be ready to take risks and experiment to test assumptions if innovation will take place. Innovation also comes in education through system overhauling. An upgrading of the system for effective service delivery is pertinent (Diane, 2004). Some technologies offer greater opportunities for product and knowledge diversification than others, which gives countries greater opportunities for generating new economic combinations, the creating of novel products, processes and markets as well as new raw material and organizational form (Juma, 2014).

The need to utilize the knowledge from the previous experience to invest in the new technological inputs is very important. This is why Camison and Fres (2010) in Juma, (2016) state that "innovation is thus a recombinant process that builds on the absorption and deployment of prior knowledge". Juan (2016) is of the opinion that "it is clear that no change related to massive education system is simple or abrupt. Nothing is going to change overnight. Gradual steps must be taken. Though it may take time to see the result of any innovation in the system especially

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educational system, but for socio-economic and political advancement; innovation in education is inevitable.

The Use of Igbo Language as a Tool for Entrepreneurial Development

Language is a creation of God given to man for communication (Holy Bible KJV 2007). Igbo language spoken in South Eastern part of Nigeria is one of the three major Nigerian languages as indicated in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004:10). The policy gave the teaching and learning of local languages in Nigerian education institutions a big boost (Ezea and Anochirionye, 2014). Technology is of great importance in the development of human society. Local language remains the best tool to impact knowledge to the younger ones. Ugwu, Ezea and Anochirionye (2015) are of the opinion that "the use of local languages doesn't in any way impede the education of a child…local language remains the best instrument for social change, education, new innovations and a medium for instruction in schools".

N.C.C.E (2012) also said that "teaching and learning in the mother tongue helps in the quicker acquisition, retention, dissemination and use of knowledge in other subjects". It further states that "in relation to Nigerian languages, it is assumed that the mother tongue of the child is closely related to the child's total growth and development i.e. cultural, psychological, social etc. This shows that for an effective entrepreneurial development among the Igbo speaking children, the use of Igbo is very important. Igbo language should be used as a tool for instruction in our schools within the Igbo speaking communities. Research and innovation can only be realized within the school through the use of language of instruction which is Igbo language.

Entrepreneur is considered by National Directorate of Employment (NDE), (2004) as "the owner of or the borrower of a business enterprise. Hence, an entrepreneur can be an initiator, owner and manager of a business organisation". Gana (2001) says that an entrepreneur is a person who is willing and able to seek out investment opportunity in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on the identified opportunity".

The inclusion of entrepreneurial education in our curriculum is a welcome development; for this will stir up the hunger to be an entrepreneur in the minds of the young ones or students. Growth in the world economy now is powered by the entrepreneurial class. The likes of Bill Gates, late Steve Jobs, Edison, Morgan dynasty, Igbo entrepreneurs are like Cosmas Maduka (Coscharis), Innocent Chukwuma (Innoson motors), Pharns Okoli (Emzor Pharmaceuticals), ABC motors, Peace Mass Transit Ltd, Orange drug ltd etc are world class entrepreneurs that their businesses are making global impact. Utilizing Igbo language to encourage entrepreneurial skills is possible through the result of the research and innovation that has been introduced. The use of technological gadgets will open a wide range of opportunities to the young

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ones/students on areas where they can invest their energy and talent.

The likes of Bill Gates and others mentioned above started as entrepreners before they became a global image. Steve jobs started his apple trade mark from his car park and gradually developed it to the level it is now. Though he is dead but his dream is still going on.

Language is a very big factor in the technological advancement of man. Information and knowledge impartation are done using language. Therefore, for effective stimulation of entrepreneurial spirit in the psych/mind of the Igbo speaking children, Igbo language must play a very vital role. That role is the use of it to inform and impart knowledge to them.

The use of video clips, documentary programs, projector, internet, will be a good avenue to educate the children on skills they can pick up in life. The need to use Igbo language to explain vital issues to the students is very important, especially where the language of the production is not Igbo. The language will be used to encourage them to go for technical or service based courses. In a situation where one is arts based he/she should be encouraged to pick up interest in any skill to enhance his/her opportunity of being self employed. Some science courses can lead to self employment while technical courses lead to self employment.

Teaching the rudiments of the targeted skill using innovation techniques in Igbo language is highly recommended. This is because the children are at home with the language. The use of improvised local materials is very important so as to domesticate the skill and the expected output. The growth of any nation technologically is only possible through the domestication of the technology it acquired. India, South Korea, China, Malaysia and other Asian tigers are typical examples that moved away from theoretical approach of learning to an applied approach, using available technology, with their tocal languages as the medium of teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Research and innovation in education can only be feasible and of great value when the result of the research is applied through innovation. The achievement of this can only be possible through the use of appropriate language to carry out the innovation in this regard and Igbo language is the best tool to achieve this among the Igbo speaking children. Bearing in mind that information is best given using the language of the immediate environment which the speakers are at ease with.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made to encourage entrepreneurial skills among the Igbo speaking children:

❖ Igbo language should be effectively used in the teaching of the Igbo speaking children.

❖ Research in areas of opportunities in skills acquisition should be encouraged.

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❖ Innovation should be seen as part of human activities and therefore should be highly encouraged.

❖ Entrepreneurial education should be made compulsory up to senior school certificate examination.

❖ Practical exercises inform of individual training, mentoring, immersion, and internship should be encouraged right from the upper primary school till the end of the secondary education.

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