

Inculcating Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurial Development through Indigenous Languages: The Igbo Language Perspective

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Abstract

This study examined the role of Igbo language in inculcating skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development in public secondary school students in South East geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The design of the study was descriptive survey. One research question guided the study. The sample of the study consisted of 64 Igbo head teachers, drawn from three states through purposive proportionate stratified random sampling technique. An 11-item questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was validated by two experts in Igbo language education and one from Measurement and Evaluation, from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.91 using Cronbach Alpha method. The data were analyzed using mean scores. The results showed that Igbo language as one of indigenous languages in Nigeria is indispensable cultural legacy without which all forms of human interactions can be carried out and such is very effective in making students comfortable in expressing their thought and translating their ideas in acquiring the necessary skills in Igbo craft, arts,

indigenous knowledge and the likes thereby, attaining desirable entrepreneurial development. It was recommended, among others, that the teachers should give the students in-depth teaching in Igbo language to ensure that they acquire the necessary skills needed to equip them for entrepreneurial development.

Key words: Indigenous language, Igbo language, skill acquisition, Entrepreneurial development

Introduction

Every linguistically distinct community is known to have been settled in an area for many generations, where they use indigenous language as their identity. These indigenous languages are spoken by indigenous peoples and it has remained their desire to rebuild their communities on a traditional and culturally grounded foundation (Iwu, 2016). These indigenous languages are indispensable cultural legacies without which all forms of human interactions can be carried out, hence development indices such as internal cohesion, integration, unity, economic wellbeing and citizens' participation in skill acquisition as well as entrepreneurial development are promoted through indigenous languages. Since language and culture are inseparable, this indigenous language is the medium which is used to transfer culture from one generation to another for equipping individuals in the community, thus the need for it to be a medium of instruction and subject of study in school. Orakwe (2016) asserts that these cultures comprise enormous talents, skills, oral literature and tradition, ingenuity that are bound in the rural populace that is essential for development of that community. Nigeria has many indigenous languages of which Igbo language is one of them. It is the duty of the Igbo indigenous people through the teacher and community member to inculcate or pass on their ancestral language and the cultural

content to the next generation as part of their education due to its enviable role in their lives.

Education is a potential instrument for encouraging independent thinking among the learners. Education is indispensable for all nations aspiring towards basic knowledge and skills to achieve greatness. Ekwe (2015) asserts that nations that consider compulsory education for her citizens see it as an agent of sustainable growth and development. Education therefore, represents the totality of the institutional structures and processes that determine both learning and teaching as a means for transmission and improvement of a society's repertoire of knowledge, ideas, skills, traditions, abilities, morality and culture from one generation to another to enable them be a functional member of the society(Ibrahim, 2016). The functional aspect of these virtues of education is in line with the federal government's measure for self-reliance among her citizens. The self-reliance on part of students can only be attained where the teacher emphasizes indigenous language and culture as its core curriculum and focuses on enhancing these ideas and potential to enable citizens acquire practical skills which will enable them to be employer of labour rather than seeker of job from the public sector (Ebo, 2016). In support of the above, Idu (2016) opines students should be allowed and encouraged to come up with their own opinions and interpretations of events around them. Idu further observed that indigenous language play importance role on the individual's personal and intellectual development. Studies show that students who have a solid foundation in indigenous language develop stronger literacy abilities and practical skills to enable them to be functional member in the society. Thus the present study sets out to investigate the true position of Igbo language with respect to skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development.

Statement of Problem

Over the years, Igbo language as one of the indigenous languages in Nigeria have suffered greatly as a result of shifting economic forces, advancing technologies, encroaching population centre, social acculturation, and colonial expansion. This situation has led to chronic poverty, under development, unemployment among Igbo citizen and lose of Igbo culture, thus the need to respect and promote capacity building in areas such as skills acquisition and skill enhancement, entrepreneurial development and subsequent utilization for economic transformation. Igbo language as one of the recognized indigenous languages in Nigeria has a lot of traditional skills/ potentials, indigenous knowledge, oral literature, resources, cultures, oral traditions, histories, philosophies and ingenuity meant to pass on from generation to generation for producing self-reliant citizen, for sustainable development in the society and preservation of these cultures. Due to the relevance of indigenous language in passing on these cultural contents for development of its citizens especially on the areas of skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development, there is need for the teacher to utilize Igbo language as subject and as a medium in transferring these Igbo rich cultural heritage, where the younger ones will receive training for tapping these potentials. Thus the present study sets out to investigate the position of Igbo language with respect to skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study.

1. What are the role of Igbo language in enhancing students' ideas and potential for entrepreneurial development?

Impact of Indigenous languages on skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development

An indigenous language is a language that is native to a region and spoken by indigenous people, who are identified through their unique culture that are mostly found in the rural areas. Indigenous languages are treasures of our culture and self-identity. In other words, it is the indicator of history and self-identification. Indigenous languages are indispensable cultural legacies without which all forms of human interactions can be carried out. The knowledge of this indigenous language is very relevant to the development of each indigenous community. Each indigenous community has a lot of traditional skills, knowledge and ingenuity meant to pass on from generation to generation for preservation and sustainable development. Thus, the need to respect and promote the inherent rights and characteristics of indigenous peoples, especially their resources, their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, potentials/skill for capacity building in areas such as skills acquisition and skills enhancement, entrepreneurial development and subsequent utilization for economic transformation. Plavier (2008) sharply asserts that this indigenous language that carries the culture are transmitted orally, experiential rather than theoretical as well as learned through repetition and constantly changing in nature. Education is a singular factor that brings about national development and its central goal is to prepare one for productive employment. Indigenous language has a rich potential for rebuilding indigenous communities. Tarugarira (2009) asserts that indigenous language is capable of being developed to the highest levels of science and technology provided its owners have a patriotic will to do so. In support of the above, Ugochukwu (2016) opines that indigenous languages is capable of enhancing cognitive understanding and removing pedagogical barriers in learning. Some indigenous

language have remained essentially the same for hundreds of years, even into the modern era, while others have been highly integrated into the dominant cultural and economic society. In the words of Emenanjo (1996), the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around is best done and realised in the language in which the students are most familiar. Toeing the line, Emenanjo observes that people think more productively in their indigenous languages and posits that, A Scientific impetus or technology acquired in learners indigenous language becomes second nature to the person. He reiterates that Nigeria and indeed Africa can only achieve mass scientific literacy needed for her technological and scientific development through the medium of indigenous languages. In order to enable a child to develop curiosity, manipulative ability, industry, mechanical comprehension etc. more easily, Fafunwa (1975) argues that the indigenous language remains the most natural way to learn. Skill acquisition is very crucial in the life of students especially at this present era. Skill acquisition simply means getting creative knowledge and empowerment needed for developing self-sufficiency. Skill acquisition is better understood as a rich field of study with a practical activity full of varied experiences. It is generally believed that the child's creativity is enhanced if he or she comes to meet an already familiar language at school. By contrast, a child's spirit of innovation may be inhibited if he or she is confronted with an unfamiliar language at school.

Among the Igbo people of Nigeria, Ugbor (2016) points out that every able bodied person is normally employed in gainful economic role and in pursuit of maximum self-fulfillment. In addition, idleness and deliberate underutilization of manpower are ruled out by the social values of the people as it is referred as "efulefu". The Igbo man is very gregarious, dynamic, republican, self-enthused, aggressive, hardworking egoistic, self-opinionated, daring, honest and the like because

of his individualistic nature, he moves out on his own without support from anybody to make it in life. This means that Igbo people are known for struggling. As language and culture are the same, Igbo language concerns a dynamic phenomenon that deals with the artifacts and mores by which the Igbo of Africa distinguish selves from other racial or ethnic groups. The Igbo people are superbly intelligent and capable of innovative thoughts and endowed with imaginative and aesthetic sense. They practice gainful agriculture to sustain their apparently dense population. Igbo people have culture in the totality of behavioural patterns of a particular people which include their craft, art, indigenous knowledge, oral literature, aesthetic sense and the likes which are transferred through Igbo language. Simply put, culture is the peoples way of life. It is the totality of social transmitted values, languages, dialects, attitudes, social structures, political perspectives, social sophistication, economic endeavours and thought patterns, traits and particular products expressive of a particular period, class, community, or population (Ebo, 2016). Taking cue from above, the economic aspect of the indigenous language matters most. By so doing, the teacher factor comes into question.

It is expected that the teachers should be grounded in this area of skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development so as to produce future generations of youths who will be independent of the public sector to earn a living. Teacher factor or preparation refers to the process whereby adequate arrangement are proceeded for the full implementation of entrepreneurship education in the area of Igbo cultural values such that an average Igbo graduate of the programme remains independent and as an employer of labour, helps to create job (Ugbor, 2016). Inculcating entrepreneurial spirit in the young Igbo generation will help tap into their unrealized talents. It will force the students to think outside the box, to fail and to persist - experiences that would inspire them to become creative,

inventive and innovative. The current trend of mass production of job seekers would be curtailed if the academia instills in young minds a sense of self-discovery, experimental learning and self-determination to develop innovativeness to become entrepreneurs (Ugochukwu, 2016). Expatriating further, Ugochukwu observed that a shift in education centre from being places for job seekers to places of job creators needs special emphasis. Igbo language as one of the indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria has all it takes to instill entrepreneurial spirit in the teeming young Igbo generation.

The desire of any government is the achievement of self-reliant and resilient economy capable of resulting in economic, entrepreneurial and national development. In the light of the above, (Ugbor, 2016) observed that it is imperative that educational institutions produce people endowed with skill acquisition for entrepreneurial development, especially in this period of high incidence of unemployment. As water is very essential to human life, so is skill training and acquisition needed in the life of every serious minded human being for overall development of the society. However, the success in acquiring these skills depends on how this knowledge is imparted. Teaching is a process whereby worthwhile values are transmitted to the learners by a more knowledgeable person and understanding of a given society, which may be in the school or at home to enable the learners, to be functional members of the society. The teacher plays a significant part in entrepreneurial development in Nigeria.

Theoretical Overview

Social learning theory is propounded by Bandura 1977. As one of the learning theories, it basically observes behaviour and is followed with modeling. It believes that cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences, as well as prior experience, all play a part in how understanding, or a world

view, is acquired or changed and knowledge and skills retained. This entails that ability of an Igbo teacher in the use of Igbo language in teaching Igbo language and their exposure in Igbo culture determines how knowledge is absorbed, skill acquired and extent of entrepreneurial development. This shows that the ability of the teacher to recognize the role of Igbo language in the acquisition of necessary skills determines the entrepreneurial development in the society.

Empirical Studies

Mohammed (2016) undertook a study on the role of Hausa language in promoting students' acquisition skill in North East Nigeria. The study showed that the students are not exposed to their language well enough and there is lack of field trips to communities where the student should tap necessary potential to equip them. The researcher recommended among others the exposition of students to rural communities where they should tap the necessary skill to reduce the rate of unemployment. Also, Kemi (2017) carried out a study on the challenges of teaching Yoruba's language in Nigeria Universities in view of the 21st century. The researcher found out that teachers lack the necessary support from the government and non-existence of Yoruba language in a website. The researcher recommended among others the support and establishment of websites for Yoruba students in Universities to enable them to grasp the rudiments of the language for development of the society. Also, all these studies are similar to the present study which is the role of Igbo language teacher in inculcating skill acquisition for entrepreneurial development.

Method

The research design employed for the study was descriptive survey which involves obtaining information from respondents based on the responses from a section of respondents which represent the entire population used for the study. According to Ali (2006) when a survey centers on describing some variables in relation of a given population, the descriptive survey research design is the most appropriate. The area of the study was all the public secondary school in South East Nigeria. The population of the study was the entire Igbo head teacher in the public secondary school in South East Nigeria. The sample of the study consisted of 64 Igbo head teachers, drawn from three states through purposive proportionate stratified random sampling technique. An 11-item questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was structured on a 4-points likert type scale on which the respondents reacted to. The items in the questionnaire were weighted as follows: Strongly Agree (SA)-4 points, Agree (A)- 3 points, Disagree (D) -2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) -1point.

The criterion mean of acceptance is 2.50. The instrument was face validated by two senior lectures in Igbo language and one in measurement and evaluation, all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The Cronbach Alpha, Co-efficient method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. It yielded a co-efficient of 0.91. The data was analyzed using mean scores. Any item statement with mean rating of 2.50 and above was accepted value while item statement with a mean rating less than 2.50 was rejected.

Results

The result of the data collected from the study is presented in table 1.

Research Question 1

1. What are the role of Igbo language in enhancing students' ideas and potential for entrepreneurial development?

Table 1: Mean responses of teachers on the role of Igbo language in enhancing students' ideas and potential for entrepreneurial development.

S/ N	Statement	Me
	Teachers role on use of Igbo language in enhancing students' i deas and potential for entrepreneurial development: Teachers should use Igbo language in equipping students on the following areas	
1	Igbo oral literature(Igbo folk lore, storytelling)	3.3
2	Igbo craft(bead making, body arts, cloth (akwuete) and pottery making	3.4
3	Igbo arts (Black smithing, wood carving-drum ,stool, door)	3.1
4	Oral traditions (myth and popular legends)	2.8
5	Indigenous knowledge(Igbo graffiti, local pomade (Usheyi), Palm- wine tapping, Herbal medical practice	3.0
6	Igbo proverbs and idioms	3.2
7	Igbo communicative system	3.4
8	Igbo festivals(New yam)	3.4
9	Igbo philosophy of life and values	3.0

10	Igbo history	2.5
11	Igbo agricultural system	3.7

Grand Mean = 3.25

Research question 1 identified role of Igbo language in enhancing students' ideas and potential for entrepreneurial development in public secondary schools in south East Nigeria. Table 1 indicates that items 1-11 were all above the criterion level of 2.50 which shows that they are the roles of Igbo language in enhancing students' ideas and potential for entrepreneurial development. Items 1-11 had mean scores of 3.38, 3.40, 3.17, 2.85, 3.00, 3.25, 3.4, 3.41, 3.00, 2.54, 3.77 with respective standard deviation of .42, .51, 1.22, 1.20, .64, .53, .54, .52, .66, .75, .51 and a grand mean of 3.25 which is above 2.50 criteria mean, it shows that the above items identified the role of Igbo language in enhancing students' ideas and potential for entrepreneurial development.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that Igbo language is very vital in enhancing students' ideas and potential for entrepreneurial development in areas of Igbo crafts, arts, indigenous knowledge, oral literature, oral tradition, Igbo philosophy of life and values and the like. All these are relevant aspects of Igbo people which can be fully emphasized with the use of Igbo language for acquisition of necessary skills needed for entrepreneurial development thereby curbing the unemployment problems witnessed in the south-east Nigeria. The Igbo language teacher is in the centre of utilizing Igbo language in inculcating these habits on students for self-sufficiency. These findings are in line with the findings of

Ugochukwu (2016) who observed that Igbo culture is replete with traditional beliefs which are embedded in the native folklore, proverbs and popular legends which help to inculcate entrepreneurial spirit on the younger ones. The researcher further asserted that the integration of the Igbo proverbs which represent a people's philosophy will build up the individual talents of the students towards self-sufficiency to curb the problems of unemployment that is ravaging the zone in recent times. The study is also in line with Iwu (2016) who found out that classes are very faster and effective in transferring knowledge, desired skills and attitude to learners when it is done in indigenous language. Iwu equally observed that it is well recognized that use of indigenous language for instruction often leads to inclusion of more local content in the curriculum, which makes the educational experience of greater relevance to learners, thereby opening up the possibility for greater participation of parents and community members as classroom resources. From the above discussion, the teacher factor should be taken into consideration with regards to all the identified means, Igbo language can help to enhance students' skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The involvement of indigenous language in the development process is a mandatory precondition for sustainable development. Education is one of the most powerful tools for bringing people into the development process so that they may acquire the necessary skills to enable them attain socio-economic development. The right to education in one's own indigenous language is well recognized by UNESCO, and it is now on the global agenda for action. Importance of Igbo as one of the indigenous language cannot be over emphasized especially in area of skill acquisition. The teachers' effective use of Igbo language in secondary schools is capable of curbing unemployment crisis in life of Igbo

youths. In this direction, the effectiveness of skill acquisition via Igbo language and its cultural content for entrepreneurial development in secondary schools becomes imperative. Through the teaching of Igbo philosophy of life and values embedded in the Igbo language, the values and attributes that historically made the Igbo tick will help to awaken the attributes of hard work, industry, enterprise, intellectual pursuit, integrity, creativity and the likes in students. This in turn will implant the spirit of acquiring Igbo craft, arts indigenous knowledge and the likes for entrepreneurial development. This should also be a pointer to other tribes and the country to design an educational programme that will help in tapping the hidden potentials in her indigenous languages that are being wasted. Based on the foregoing, the researcher recommend as follows:

1. The teaching of the Igbo language should be made more effective at all levels of education to enable them acquire the entrepreneurial skills early in school.
2. Igbo children should be indoctrinated in the proverbs and other aspects of the language that encourage hard work, self-reliance and perseverance.
3. School libraries should be stocked with books related to the skill acquisition process on Igbo language in schools.
4. The teachers should be encouraged to attend workshops, seminars, in-services training to enable them to beef up their knowledge and pedagogy in teaching Igbo indigenous knowledge in schools.
5. Resource persons who have different in Igbo should be invited in schools to help students tap the potentials.
6. Recruitment of skilled Igbo teachers is recommended to enhance the teaching of Igbo skills in schools.

7. Proper motivation of Igbo language teachers through extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. The welfare of the teacher should be at the heart of the government.
8. Teachers should use varieties of methods in teaching the students in school.
9. The government in collaboration with private enterprises should provide secondary schools with teaching and learning resources needed for teaching Igbo practical skills.
10. Culture room should be established in schools.
11. Teachers should encourage the students to undertake field trips to places where beads, pottery, black smiting are made. Also, visits should be made to places where Igbo skills are exhibited to enable the students to have firsthand information on them as a phase of entrepreneurship education programme.

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