

Revitalizing Literacy for Entrepreneurship among Nigerian University Students for National Growth

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Abstract

The fast increasing rate of under-development in Nigeria as a result of nonchalant attitudes towards literacy and entrepreneurship by Nigerian students propelled this researcher to carry out this study. The study adopted a survey research type. The population for the study was all the Nigerian students from the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 30 students (15 males and 15 females) from each of the 25 universities in this zone. A twenty-item researcher-designed questionnaire (RDQ) was used for the purpose of collecting data. The content validity of the instrument was done by two experts while the reliability of the instrument was ascertained via test re-test statistical method, thus giving 0.58 reliability index. The three null hypotheses were tested using Pearson r statistical method at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The findings revealed that there are positive but low correlations between literacy and entrepreneurship as well as entrepreneurship and national development having computed calculated r-values of 0.289 and 0.299 which are greater than the critical r-value of .195 respectively at 0.05 alpha level of significance. However, there was positive and high correlation between literacy and national development having calculated r-value of 1.296 and critical r-value of .195 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Based on these, it was concluded that national development is a result of intellectual work and an easy facilitator of intellectual development is in the art of literacy. As a result of the findings and conclusion of this study, it was recommended among other things that the Federal Government should entrench mass literacy and entrepreneurship education in schools' curriculum

and also put up a unit that would be vested with the responsibility of monitoring the full implementation of the mass literacy program and entrepreneurship education as well.

Keyword: Revitalizing Literacy in Nigeria, Entrepreneurship and Nigerian Students

Introduction

Literacy as a concept is a subject that cannot be defined because it is a different thing to different scholars. For instance Uzodinma (1993) identifies many types of literacy from 'Pre-literacy' via 'dysfunctional literacy' to 'computer literacy', all of which are considered to be united in purpose, function and importance. On the other hand, Postman (1978) postulates that literacy should be tied to a nation's aspirations and efforts geared towards the liberation of an individual. Despite the divergent views held about literacy, most scholars have agreed that it is an essential ingredient for individual and national development (Olajide, 2002). Similarly, Nzuoke (2006) views literacy as a code of visual representation of an aural/oral communication in a particular language. Also, the United Nations Economic and Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) submits that a person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him or her to engage in all activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his or her group and community, and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic (3rs) make it possible for him or her to continue to use these skills towards his/her

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own and the community's developments and for active participation in the life of his/ or her country (UNESCO, 1962). However, the world has been struggling to attain the much desired level of literacy since decades, and regardless of their degree of development or industrialization, many nations have suffered the effects of illiteracy, although the developing countries are the worst hit by the scourge (UNESCO, 1965). Studies have shown that the economic situation of any nation particularly per capita income affects a nation's level of literacy, and national development is consequence upon the nation's literacy attainment, as observed by Olajide (2002) that socio-economic development does not produce literacy; rather the latter is the part of the former.

Entrepreneurship as a concept, is a business venture carried out either by one person as a sole proprietorship venture or jointly owned by two or more people. The aim of such a business is not to enhance the economic growth of the proprietor(s), but for the economic well-being of the community where it is situated, as well as overall economic emancipation of the state or the nation (Bello et al 20014). In another development, Bello et al (2014) opine that any entrepreneurial developmental initiatives demand the involvement of all business entrepreneurs who are expected to be literates or avail themselves of learning opportunities through literacy or continuing education programs in their communities. They should also provide learning opportunities for their workers who are literates or semi-literates. But it has grossly been seen that the average literate Nigerian reads what he is forced to read, he may be 'forced' to read papers as part of professional day to day activity (Akinlolu,1993). Akinlolu further submits that, for many, anything outside their professional areas does not call for reading on it. Even students who are supposed to be wide-read may read only when examination is close, while for some, the textbooks are the beginning and the end of reading. While lending credence to the above, Bello et al, (2014) also submit that it is not out of place to find university students hardly reading novels for leisure, while even newspapers are like a taboo to some. This trend has therefore made many Nigerians literate but uneducated in many respects. In a similar instance, Yekinni (1999) argues that, rather than find time to read, the average Nigerian is contented with sleeping or spending hours talking in a beer parlor, or spraying naira notes senselessly on the head of a praise-singing musician, or watching movies for hours endlessly.

On literacy as a tool for national development, Akinpelu (1992) argues that development embraces all the aspirations, dreams and goals of peoples, nations and governments, and that to a developing nation like Nigeria, development is expected to be transformative in native. Akinpelu goes further to state that a developed nation is one in which the citizens experience a measure of self-fulfillment, happiness and in which they can realistically hope and work for a better tomorrow, and that if modernization of the economy and democratization of the political structures are to be meaningful, sustainable and permanent literacy is the key. Akinpelu further submits that without mass literacy, the future will be worse than the present or the past for Nigeria, as the key to peace on the political and social scenes is literacy. In other words, no nation can develop better than the level of its citizen, hence, 'no mass literacy, no mass development'.

In another development, Adiseslia (in Akinpelu, 1992) posits that countries which UNESCO has identified as accounting for 75.25% of words illiterates are also the poorest countries in the world, and Nigeria ranks fifty of the last nine countries. This significantly shows that there is a correlation among poverty, literacy and levels of development. By inference, this implies that development is a result of intellectual work and an easy facilitator of intellectual development is reading, and reading extensively.

When observing literacy and development, Onyea (2000) views reading as travelling without exerting oneself (or travelling on the spot) and that information one picks up from biographies, philosophical and psychological books to a large extent, goes into shaping one's thinking and personality. Reading, according to Onyea, was the tool that built up Britain and developed America and great men like Nehru who made reading their second nature. Similarly, Bello et al (2014) posit that development cannot, but be in a literate society. Illiteracy has a way of perpetuating the exploitation of individuals. This goes without saying therefore that literacy has a way of being a liberating force to individuals and societies. Literacy raises the consciousness about the oppressive structures within which one lives and it empowers people to organize themselves in order to change the existing realities. Literacy is therefore a tool for liberating people from the shackles of political, economic and social oppressions, as studies have shown that illiteracy hinders the people's participation in their own development.

Entrepreneurship as a concept is a business venture carried out either by one person as a sole proprietorship venture or jointly owned by two or more people. The aim of such a business is not only to enhance the economic growth of the proprietors(s), but for the economic well-being of the community where it is situated, as well as the overall economic emancipation of the state or the nation (Bello et al, 2014). In another development, Bello et al (2014) opine that any entrepreneurial developmental initiatives demand the involvement of all business entrepreneurs who are expected to be literates or avail themselves of learning opportunities through literacy or continuing education programmes in their communities. They should also provide learning opportunities for their workers who are illiterates or semi-literates.

Statement of the Problem

Study by Uzodinma, (1993) shows that illiteracy is as high as the nation's level of poverty in Nigeria today but with the help of various academic/literacy bodies, Nigeria has mounted quite a number of literacy campaigns and programmes that enhance national prosperity as evident in the last few decades that successful Nigerian governments seem to have seriously given credence to the UNESCO's wise saying that 'only a changed socio-economic and political order can reduce a nation's illiteracy, and increase her chance of prosperity', thus increasing in entrepreneurship skill development. However, studies indicate that since the last half a century, the world, especially Nigeria has been struggling to attain the much desired level of literacy (Olajide, 2002). Similarly, Bello et al (2014) posit that entrepreneurship skills acquisition of any nation, particularly the per capita income affects its level of literacy, and national development is consequence upon the nation's literacy attainment. In the contrary, UNESCO (1978) argues that socio-economic development does not produce or enhance literacy; rather the latter is part of the former. It went further to state that it is difficult to specifically determine how many illiterates a country has, but it appears that the world may be far from attaining full literacy.

Since it is not easy to determine who an illiterate is, just as it is almost impossible to peg a final point at which illiteracy starts or ends, Hillerich (1978) posits that an illiterate person is one who is unable to read and write

well enough to perform social functions successfully. Yet, literacy goes well beyond mere performing social functions; it entails the abilities to use numerals wisely, undertake risks, and project adequately for the future which is entrepreneurially oriented. By implication, this means that the classroom teaching of reading and writing (literacy) cannot be useful unless it links the learners with school system for their holistic future development.

Purpose of the Study

This study is aimed at using literacy as 'awareness creator' in the mellifluous of entrepreneurship growth in Nigeria. The study advocates the introduction of reading culture by entrepreneurs for themselves and for their workers with a view to ensuring greater awareness for job weeds, communication and interpersonal relationships as well as work efficiency.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were generated for this study:

- Ho₁. There is no significant relationship between literacy and entrepreneurship.
- Ho₂. There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship and national growth.
- Ho₃. There is no significant relationship between literacy and national growth.

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive correlation research. It made attempt to find out the relationships between literacy and entrepreneurship, relationship between entrepreneurship and national growth, and relationship between literacy and national growth.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The population for this study was all the university students of North Central geo-political zone of Nigeria. Total numbers of government universities (Federal and State) in this Zone are 25. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 30 students (15 male and 15 female) from each of the 25 universities in this zone, making 750 respondents.

Table 1: Pearson r Analysis of the Relationship Between Literacy and Entrepreneurship

Variables	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Df	Critical r- value	Calculated r- value	Decision
Literacy	375	9.53	3.88	374	.195	0.289	Ho ₁
Entrepreneurship	375	4.02	0.69				Rejected

Instrumentation

A twenty-item researcher-designed questionnaire (RDQ) was used in this study to elicit information from the respondents. The questionnaire was given to two experts for content and construct validity of the instrument. The corrections and advice of the experts were used to write the final questionnaire. A test re-test reliability method was used to ascertain the reliability of the RDQ through the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistic which resulted in 0.58, an indicative of a reliable instrument.

Data Analysis and Results

The data collected for the study were analyzed using Pearson *r* statistical technique at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

I. Hypotheses Testing

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between literacy and entrepreneurship.

Tables 1 above shows that the calculated *r* value of 0.289 is greater than the critical *r* value of .195 at 0.05 alpha level of significance, and as such the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship

between literacy and entrepreneurship is rejected. This means that there is positive, but low correlation between literacy and entrepreneurship.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship and national growth

Table 2 shows that the calculated *r* value of 0.299 is greater than critical *r* value of .195 at 0.05 alpha level of significance, thus, an indicative of a rejected null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship and national growth. This implies that there is positive but low relationship between entrepreneurship and national.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between literacy and national growth.

Table 3 shows that the calculated *r* value of 1.296 is greater than the critical *r* value of .195 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. This therefore means that the null hypothesis which says that there is no significant relationship between literacy and national growth is rejected. This implies that there is positive and high correlation between literacy and national growth.

Discussion

Table 1 is in conformity with the findings of Nzuoke, (2006) and UNESCO (1962) that a person is literate

Table 2: Pearson r Analysis of the Relationship Between Entrepreneurship and National Growth

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	Critical r- value	Calculated r- value	Decision
Entrepreneurship	375	6.31	1.77	374	.195	0.299	Ho ₂
National growth	375	2.71	0.42				Rejected

Table 3: Pearson r Analysis of the Relationship Between Literacy and National Growth

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	Critical r-value	Calculated r- value	Decision
Literacy	375	3.07	1.05	374	.195	0.296	Ho ₃
National growth	375	8.11	2.78				Rejected

when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enables him/her to engage in all activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his/her group and community, and whose attainments in reading, writing and (a)rithmetic (3rs) make it possible for him/her to continue to use these skills towards community development.

Table 2 agrees with the findings of Bello et al (2014) that entrepreneurship skills acquisition of any nation, particularly the per capita income affects its level of literacy, and national development is consequence upon the nation's literacy attainment.

Table 3 supports the findings of Akinpelu (1992) that development embraces all the aspirations, dreams and goals of peoples, nations and governments, and that to a developing nation like Nigeria, development is expected to be transformative. Also, that a developed nation is one in which the citizens experience a measure of self-fulfillment, happiness, and in which they can realistically hope and work for a better tomorrow.

The findings in **Table 3** further attests to the findings of Akinpelu that if modernization of the economy and democratization of the political structures are to be meaningful, sustainable and permanent, literacy is the key, as such no mass literacy, no mass development.

Conclusion

As a result of the findings of this study, it was discovered that literacy has a lot to do in the annals of entrepreneurship because the life key to a sustainable peace on the political and social scenes of any community is literacy. The study also concluded that national development is a result of intellectual work and an easy facilitator of intellectual development is in the art of literacy.

Recommendation

Based on the analysis of the data collected and the conclusion, the following recommendations are projected: That the Federal Governance should entrench and encourage mass literacy and entrepreneurship in educational system by drawing a curriculum that is entrepreneurship inclined if there must be rapid national development in developing nations like Nigeria. There should be monitoring unit to ensure strict compliance of the teaching of entrepreneurship in our schools. Parents

would need to cooperate with the school authority in the cause of full implementation of extensive reading exercises and entrepreneurship education in schools. It is also recommended that heads of schools should at their own end enforce extensive reading exercises and strict compliance of the teaching of entrepreneurship to complement the efforts of the government monitoring unit.

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