

Indigenous Language Education for Entrepreneurial Skills and Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

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Abstract: Education is a process of imparting knowledge, skill and attitudes to the learners through the appropriate use of languages. The state of Nigeria's education system had hindered the process of empowerment of youths in the country. The paper examines the role of indigenous languages as an instrument for the provision of qualitative and functional education that would instill in the life of the youth an entrepreneurial skill for self-reliance. Education, formal and non-formal, public awareness and training are considered as key processes by which humans and the society can reach their full potential. However, despite the huge investment of Nigerian government in education at all levels, many Nigerians are still wallowing in abject poverty. The youths happened to be the worst affected because they lack the informal type of education that can allow entrepreneurial diversity, therefore their hope is on the government and the few corrupt elites without a mind of being self employed. Indigenous language education which despises idleness, instills discipline and stimulate creativity have become a thing of the past in our society. Data were collected based on variables such as folklore, names, proverbs, taboo through a structured interview of identified resource persons and relevant textbooks and these were analysed. The findings revealed that indigenous language is such a potent tool that will allow youths to diversify their employment search from mainly white-collar jobs to self empowerment, having the strong mind that no job is too low for an idle hand, or else the devil will find work for them. The paper hereby posits that empowering our youth through our indigenous language is the best course of action by exposing them to different teaching in our culture.

Keywords: Education, Entrepreneurial skill, Indigenous language, Language, Youth empowerment

I. INTRODUCTION

Language generally speaking is a medium of communication among human beings based on oral and written symbols. It is the vehicle through which people's culture is transmitted. Banjo (2010, p.5) posits that language is the "life blood of every community whether large or small, and whatever the stage of the community development." The most effective engine of a people's culture is their mother tongue (MT). By indigenous languages we mean the "Mother Tongue" or various native languages spoken in a particular place. Indigenous languages are treasures of culture and self identity. "Education is an enduring socialisation process which naturally conforms an individual to his community and indeed, the society" Odeiran (2014, p. 1). The definition cited above implies that education is the foundation upon which other human activities revolved. What an individual becomes in life as well as his service to his fatherland has a

strong bearing with education. Consequently, education may either be formal or informal. Informal education is synonymous with traditional or indigenous education which has its pattern, and is flexible enough to conserve and transmit the culture, tradition and experiences of a particular society. Formal education on the other hand, "is the systematic or organized schooling in planned institutions of learning at whatever level" Afólábí (2017, p.3).

The state of Nigeria's education system nowadays had hindered the process of empowerment of the youths in the country. The role of indigenous language as an instrument for provision of quantitative and functional education, that is, an education that would instill in the life of the youth an entrepreneurial skill for self reliance. Education is said to be functional and quantitative when the desired goals and the overall philosophy are accomplished. Hence, it eradicates poverty, unemployment, ignorance and all forms of social vices. "Functional education enables individual to solve their personal problems and participate in decision making" Ikuenomore (2009 p.147). This paper therefore, examines the functionality of indigenous education system in the empowerment of youths in the society. Youth empowerment according to Wikipedia free encyclopedia:

...is an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby an individual gains the ability, authority and agency to make decision and implement change in their own lives and in the lives of other people, including young people and adult.

Osolor (2012 p. 5) sees empowerment as "the thing that gives an individual more control over his/her life and the situation he or she finds his/herself. It is a path to international equity, civil engagement and democracy building". It is also a means of fighting and preventing unwholesome behaviour. If the youths are developed and empowered, they will abstain from negative tendencies. Empowerment is engaging young people to do their best, hence the need for entrepreneurial skills. An entrepreneur is "an enterprising individual who builds capital through risk or initiative" Adedapo (2012 p.12). Entrepreneurial skill and innovation inter-alia, innovation, creativity, risk taking, resourcefulness, financial control, self confidence, versatility, knowledgeable, dynamic thinking, optimum disposition, originality, people oriented, flexible in decision, responses to suggestions and criticism, need achievement driven, profit oriented, persistent and persevering, energy for hard work, adjustment to challenge

and future looking (Anho (2011 p. 10). According to Afolábi and Àlào (2012 p.13) “entrepreneurship education is the inculcation in the individual, entrepreneurship skills, knowledge, attitude and competences that would make such individual live happily and successfully to its development.” Here education is considered as the basic need for the training of an individual, especially for the acquisition of skills and competences that will enable him to become a useful member of his society. Education occupies the centre-point of youth development and empowerment. But upon the huge investment of Nigerian government in education, many Nigerians are still wallowing in abject poverty, where the youths happened to be the most affected. This is because most of the youths lack the informal type of education that will make them to take risk on their own to achieve goals. Such education are given in our indigenous language (native languages), which according to Táiwò (2016 p. 3) is simply “a language acquired by birth, such as Yorùbá, Ìgbò, Èbìrà, Hausa etc”. The Yorùbá indigenous language education for instance, had been operating for many centuries before the contact with European and consequently before the formal school system as posits by Awoniyi (1978 p. 22) “is a traditional system of informal education that are not only flexible enough to conserve the tradition and culture of the people, but also prove adequate in transmitting the cultural heritage from generation to generation through the vehicle of communication known to them that is, the mother tongue.

This paper therefore posits that, placing our indigenous language in the right place for real traditional education, which despises idleness, instill discipline and stimulate creativity, is the best course of action for entrepreneurial skills and youth’s empowerment in Nigeria.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary source of our data for this study is structured on the interview of identified resource persons and relevant textbooks. The respondents were interviewed on values and various indigenous education knowledge such as proverbs, folklores, taboo, names etc that are related to entrepreneurial skill in Yorùbá language. Data were collected on educative functions of those mentioned variables. These were data analysed and the findings revealed that indigenous language education is capable of imparting appropriate knowledge for self reliance into the lives of youths in the society. The secondary source is library based. Relevant authored books and material were as well consulted

Indigenous Language Education and Entrepreneurial Skills

Language is an indispensable tool in the importation of ideas, concepts, skills and knowledge to the learner. Fádorò (2008), cited in Sàkà (2012 p.108), explains the importance of language to education and concluded that, education cannot take place without language. According to him, it is a channel for transmission of people’s culture, norms, ideas and belief. Músá and Atúramú (2017 p. 125), posited that, “the repository of a people’s identity and way of life is enclosed in their

language”. This therefore proves that a lost language is a lost identity as well as a lost race and people. Táiwò (2017 p. 3), views indigenous language as a language that originated in a specific place and was not brought to that place from elsewhere. For example, Yorùbá, Haúsá, Ìgbò, Tiv etc, are languages that originated in Nigeria, and are therefore, indigenous language in the country. On the other hand, languages such as, English, French, German, etc, did not originate from Nigeria, they are not indigenous language but foreign languages. The definition that relates education to culture as posited by Awóniyi (1978 p.24) could be seen to be more comprehensive as it includes the formal education, non-formal and informal education. If truly education is a tool that can broaden the horizon of individual and remove ignorance and poverty in the society, there is the need for Nigerian government to invest more on education for the purpose of improving the youth empowerment and eradicate poverty in our society

The root of what is known to be entrepreneurial skills in Nigeria today could be traced to our indigenous languages where the home happened to be the starting point as a school for impartation of knowledge. The iron benders and blacksmith were found in Sákí, while we have indigenous textile industries (Àdiré) in Abéokúta, hence the development of vocational and technical education in Nigeria today. The total neglect of vocational and technical education by the government has serious implications for the growing unemployment and the provision of middle level manpower in the nation’s economy. Nigeria is presently experiencing high rate of unemployment to the extent that university graduates are roaming the streets or engaging in commercial motorcycle business. The expansion of educational institutions in Nigeria in the last two decades could not cushion the effect of poverty but rather increasing the rate of unemployed youths in Nigeria. The reason for this is that, Nigeria has not done well to promote and use the indigenous languages for effective entrepreneurship education in the country. The fact that indigenous languages are not placed in the right position has resulted to the lost of our traditional education. Worst still, no number of entrepreneurship education centres could bail the nation from the present predicament. There has never been an agency whose aim is to expose our youths to various traditional education in our indigenous languages for the actualisation of entrepreneurial skills and social values that will empower the youths and the interested members of the community. Since the home is the foundation stage where children observe the techniques and skills as well as the habits of their elders and parents, such education, given to the younger ones at the early stage, will later help the growing child in their youthful age to diversify their mind towards self empowerment and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society.

Relevance of Indigenous Language Education for Youth Empowerment

The Nigeria government has recognized that unemployment that paves way for poverty must be tackled collectively by all Nigerians. It is worthy of note here that the efforts of the Federal Government of Nigeria to come up with various Schemes with a view to alleviating poverty and enhancing development must be commended. Such schemes as enumerated by Afolábí (2017 p. 15) include:

- ✓ Social Welfare Scheme (SWS)
- ✓ Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES)
- ✓ Micro Finance Coordinating Scheme (MFCS)
- ✓ Capacity Enhancement Scheme (CAS)

The national poverty eradication programme and the establishment of entrepreneurship education centres of the Federal Government of Nigeria are quite laudable in terms of its intention to reduce the problem of unemployment among the Nigerian youths. However, if the teeming population of Nigeria continues to wallop in abject poverty as a result of unemployment or joblessness, then something is wrong. That which is wrong is that, prominent attention is not given to our indigenous language education in our society. Government efforts in managing entrepreneurship education for job and wealth creation would remain onerous to accomplish if our indigenous language is not given attention. Hence, it is in the indigenous education system that a child is expected to learn about their traditional religion, customary laws, history, customs and good habits which become, over time, part of his life as enunciated in this paper.

Good moral (iwà Ọmọ̀lúàbí): The philosophy of Yorùbá education is embraced in the concept of *Ọmọ̀lúàbí*. (a dignified child). According to Awóniyì (1978 p.56), Olúyámò (2008 p. 26), the end-product of education is to make an individual an *Ọmọ̀lúàbí*. To be an *Ọmọ̀lúàbí* is to be of good character in all ramifications. Good character in the Yorùbá context includes, to develop love and respect for the ancestral gods, respect for old age, dedication to duty, readiness to assist the poor, courage, honesty, loyalty to ones parents, selflessness, sympathy and many other desirable qualities. In the real sense, the main idea of Yorùbá education has always been to foster good character in the life of an individual and to make him/her a useful member of the society. The Yorùbá traditional education embraces character building and the entire society is the school. A trained child with good character would definitely not want to stay idle, but rather look for ways of creating wealth for himself, having understand the the meaning and consequences of the following sayings in Yorùbá:

Iṣẹ̀ kì í paní, àìṣẹ̀ rẹ̀ nì àbùkù (work does not kill, it is idleness that kills)

Ọ̀lẹ̀ ò ráyẹ̀ wá (a lazy one are not fit in the society)
Agbájọ̀wọ̀ lá fí n sọyà,

Proverbs: Here are some proverbs as found in Délànò (1983) on good character.

- ✓ Charity begins at home (ilé la ti n kó ẹ̀sò ròde)
- ✓ Brilliant child exudes brilliancy from childhood (omọ tí yòò bá jẹ̀ àsámú, kékeré nì ó ti n senu sámúsámú)

The transmission of the type of education that reflects from the proverbs above would give the youths the consciousness of their responsibilities as useful members of the larger community.

Culture: are of great value in educating our youths in order to make them to be self-reliant. Culture can be defined as the way of life or life style of a particular society. It contains the belief, conduct, customs, behavior, norms, material or properties, occupation and interaction among the people living in a particular environment (Aládésanmí and Akíntóyè (2005 p. 23) Language and culture are of the same motherhood and cannot be separated. Aládésanmí and Akíntóyè (2005 p.24) submit that, there are two types of culture, material and spiritual or social culture. The knowledge of the two is enough for the empowerment of our youths. Material culture is usually determined by the environment. In the environment, we have human beings, trees, hills, mountains etc. It is this environment that determines our occupation. Yorùbá is blessed with deciduous forest, sea and ocean, hills and mountains and good land for farming. This is the reason why their major occupation is farming. Inside the deciduous forest zone, there are varieties of wild animals, and this explains why hunting could be a profitable occupation. If our youth could explored all these natural phenomenon in our environment, joblessness and poverty would definitely become a thing of the past. It is out of material culture that we have the following local works in Yorùbá communities:

Blacksmith → alágbèdẹ

Wood carver → gbènágbèná

Spiritual and social culture on the other hand is what we believe. It is natural for human beings to know that certain behavior is not proper and should be avoided without anybody telling him or her. The existence of gods is not contested, and these gods were held in awe by the people. It is the social cultures that tame our behavior towards one another; hence we learn to live amicably with one another in the society. Here we have this saying in Yorùbá that:

A mòkùnkùn jalẹ̀, bọ̀ba ayé ò rí ọ̀, tọ̀run n wò ọ̀ (for those that does evil in the dark with the thought that no king sees them, there is a king above watching your doing)

Keeping strictly to the knowledge of the above saying would make such person to work hard and not to engage in any act such as stealing but rather work hard and be self reliance in life

Taboo: There are laws called taboo (èèwò) guiding the societal acts. Taboo, in the actual sense, is a traditional law that serves as warning against misconduct in the society . According to Òpádòtun (1991 p. 21), “taboo is a kind of warning instituted by our ancestors after their experiences and observation about the society for the betterment of culture, religion and occupation so that we can be living together in peace.” The sole law enforcement agent on the compliance with taboo is our conscience. The breaking of taboos in those days attracts punishment such that, people fear breaking of taboos.

Traditional Religion: Yorùbá had the belief in Olódùmarè before the advent of Christianity and Islam. God is known to the Yorùbá as the creator of heaven and earth . There is a common saying in Yorùbá that,

Eni tí kò bèrù Olórún tá ò fòjú rí , kò lè bèrù èniyàn
(he who does not fear God whom he cannot see, such cannot fear man)

Ìbèrù Olórún ni ipilẹ̀ ogbón (the fear of god is the beginning of wisdom)

Orí ẹ̀ni làwùre ẹ̀ni (ones head is the source of one's fortunes)

Orí là bá bọ , la ò bá fi òrìsà sílẹ̀ (it is better to appease one's head rather than deity)

Ìpín ò gbẹ̀bọ , àyànmọ̀ ò gbòògùn (destiny need no sacrifice)

Olódùmarè is always at the centre of their deeds , whereas, there are gods (dieties) who serves as mediators between Olódùmarè and human beings . The fear of God they considered as the beginning of wisdom. Where is the fear of God again in our society? It is the attitude of get rich-quickly that is in the mind of many of the youths.

Folklore is the cornerstone of the Yoruba literature with immense value in Yorùbá education Olátúnjí (1984 p. 56). Moral values like honesty, truthfulness, hard work are revered in Yorùbá education . Truthfulness is meant to be exhibited in both private and public lives. Stories of consequences of idleness, lying are told to the children so that they can be guided thereby. Appropriate proverbs are rendered into the ears of the children motivating them from the subconscious mind on the values of hard work, honesty, truthfulness. For example on truthfulness and hard work, these proverbs could be rendered.

(a) *Bí irọ̀ bá lọ lógún odún* although, lie may have gone for twenty years

Ojọ kan lòótọ̀ yóò bá a it takes truth one day to catch up

(b) *Ìsẹ̀ kò gbẹ̀kún* weeping is not the answer to abject poverty

Ebi jàrẹ̀ ọ̀lẹ̀ a lazy man who is hungry has no one but himself to blame

Even when a child emanates from a wealthy background, the world admonish him with this metaphoric aphorism, *Agbójú lógún fi ara rẹ̀ fòsì ta* (Those hinged their hope on the inheritance of their parents may eventually succumb to poverty). A child is rather taught that, *Apá lará , igùnpá ni iyèkan* (Your hands are your relatives , your kith and kin are your elbows). For a child to be hard working and courageous , Yorùbá wì say that ; *Eni tí yóò joyìn inú àpáta , kò ní wo ẹ̀nu àáké* (He who wishes to eat the honey which is buried under the rock, should not be unduly worried about the edge of the axe). Written literature is also available in Yorùbá to educate the younger ones on self empowerment and job creation. A good example of this is found in Odúnjọ (1961 p.5), *Işẹ̀ ni Òògùn Ìsẹ̀* . The poem is an ever-green future message boosting for an enduring and lasting legacy. It goes thus:

<i>Işẹ̀ ni òògùn isẹ̀</i>	work is the antidote for poverty
<i>Múra sí isẹ̀ ọ̀rẹ̀</i>	mi work hard, my friend
<i>Işẹ̀ ni a fi í di ẹ̀ni gíga</i>	work is a major tool for elevation
<i>Bí a kò bá rẹ̀ni fẹ̀yìn tí,</i>	if we do not have anyone to lean on,
<i>Bí ọ̀lẹ̀ làá rí</i>	we appear indolent
<i>Bí a kò rẹ̀ni gbẹ̀kẹ̀lẹ̀</i>	if we do not have anyone to trust
<i>Á á tẹ̀ra mọ̀ isẹ̀ ẹ̀ni</i>	we simply work harder

A cursory look at the poem above shows that if the moral lessons in Yorubá literature are well taught and acquired by the younger ones, they will surely be empowered and cast their minds away from get-rich-quick syndrome that is making our environment dreadful for living as a result of joblessness.

Name: Names in the African society are of great values. Virtually, nothing exist without a name which further attest to how important names are in any given society . Naming in Yorùbá is of practical values and has influence on the life and attitudinal reflection of a child . Ógunwálé (2016 p. 21) further affirm the above statement when he posits that:

...almost everyone aspired to obtain heroic names and be in the honors lists in the community. Your good deeds will become your attributes and they will be knitted into the oral poetry, songs, panygerics etc that will be orchestrated by ballad singers and oral poets all around the society

This is the more reason why Yorùbá would not just want to give name (s) to a child. These were the circumstances that kept the community aglow with sustainable cultural ethics. It is rather unfortunate that converse holds these days where money and lust for affluence have replaced cultural values. People no longer value names as lens which clearly reflects all the people's lives and the family they belong. Let us consider the following names and their meanings in Yoruba

Kóláwólá (a child who bring honour to the family)
Káyòdẹ̀ (a child that brings joy to the family)
Tùmínínú (a child that brings comfort)
Dúròdọ̀lá (a child who persevere for honour)

For any child who values the above mentioned names would never indulged in any act that may tarnish the name such as

robbery and other social vices. Yahoo boys activities is on the rise in Nigeria. It as a matter of fact gone beyond the traditional scamming of innocent people's money, here today is yahoo plus (rituals killing to back up cyber crime) is what an average yahoo boy wants to do. Funny enough is the involvement of teenagers that should be under the roof of their parents, who should be receiving proper home training. Who is to be blamed? Charity they say begins at home. The fact remains that many parent of this era to a great extent have lost touch with the tools employed in the grooming of kids like the need for a child to protect his names and that of his parents. We are in a society today where some parents defend every misdeed of their children. Teenagers as young as 17,16, 15, are actively involved in yahoo in virtually every nok and crannies of the country.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The challenge being faced by the Nigerian education sector is that of empowerment wherein language plays a very important role. As earlier stated, the major root of what is known as entrepreneurial skills in Nigeria today could be traced to our indigenous languages. In the time past, the problem of unemployment did not arise at all, and there was no question of being without means of subsistence. Everyone was engaged in agriculture and some other local works like harvesting, decoration of calabash and wood carving, goldsmith, blacksmith, weaving, textiles industries etc. The position has somewhat change. However, the desire for wealth creation through self employment has become a thing of the past, and the system of education in Nigeria is not really sufficient enough to ensure youth empowerment. It is high time we explored the values in our indigenous languages in order to assist our youths to diversify their employment search from white collars jobs to self empowerment for the peace and stability of Nigeria.

No nation can develop when adequate attention is not given to indigenous languages. An overview of the state of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria today shows that the government has not done well to promote the use of indigenous languages for the empowerment of our youths. Indigenous language in its character is therefore more relevant in passing good instructions from generation to generation.

The Nigerian populace starting from the parents to other relevant stakeholders should be educated on the need to turn away from their negative attitudes towards indigenous languages. It is highly devastating to see a seasoned educationist denouncing the use of indigenous languages. It is high time for the Federal Government to find a way of actualising the reversal of the status of indigenous languages

education from being optional to compulsory subject in the various institutions.

Above all, parents need to understand their responsibilities to our indigenous languages. The education of their wards on the right attitude to life will give them the knowledge, skills and self-confidence to create wealth and contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation.

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