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Qualitative Study on Strategies for Promoting Entrepreneurial Skills Development for Self-Reliance among Primary School Pupils in Nigeria

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Abstract

Introducing entrepreneurial values from an early age is one of the most important efforts in shaping the character of future generations. Therefore, entrepreneurship learning in children leads more to child mental change so that entrepreneurship education will form a strong child character such as being creative, discipline, critical, able to solve problems, able to communicate, appreciating time, self-controlled, and so on. In promoting entrepreneur-based programmes in early childhood, it is not only the efforts of cognitive formation by informing children about the definition, benefits, and ways of entrepreneurship but also being able to integrate it through the themes in the curriculum used. The following terms were clearly discussed namely, childhood education, the entrepreneurship, self-reliance, entrepreneur for early childhood were also stated including the entrepreneur-based programmes to be adopted such as entrepreneur stimuli, visit to farm, bank, market, outing to culinary entrepreneurs and cooking learning activity. Entrepreneurial values instilled through those activities are creative, unyielding, action-oriented, hardworking, honest, resilient, imaginative, inquisitive, and communicative. Based on these propositions as well other discourses a number of recommendations were suggested which includes; a call for Nigerian Government and other relevant stakeholders must ensure that educational programme across all levels of education are relevant so as to provide children, youths and graduate with the necessary skills to go into entrepreneurship. The paper emphasis that based on the shared responsibilities for entrepreneurship development it can be employed as a viable tool for sustainable development in Nigeria

Keywords: Childhood, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Skills and Self-Reliance

Introduction

Education is a vital instrument for national and sustainable development and it involves the acquisition of fundamental knowledge and essential development skills needed for technological breakthrough and sociopolitical development which accelerates economic growth. According to Ndifon and Orim (2026), one way to transmit societal values that would transform the young child and make his society a better place to live, schemes for better ways of passing the desired knowledge and values that would make them functional is through education. Education is the process of preparing the younger generation to be useful to themselves and society. Educators have argued that one of the best ways for schools to prepare early learners for a successful future life is to develop in them a range of life skills (Bassey and Ndifon, 2021). The early learner must be developed totally through education to enhanced national development (Ndifon, Bassey, and Ewa, 2022). For the development of an educational system that is knowledge based both in structure and functionality, there is a great need for children's acquisition of creative and entrepreneurial skills for self-reliance. These skills may not be properly acquired without the contributions of childhood education. Childhood is the earliest period of human life, started at the time of birth and ended at the time of adulthood. It is a very decisive period of human life, having certain characteristics and potentials which become the basis for growth in the future (Wasty, 2018). Thus, early childhood education should be able to form the strong trait, character, and personality of children in order to achieve their success in the future. Early childhood education is the holistic development of the child for sustainable development (Bassey, and

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Ndifon, 2025). Thus, this paper is an attempt to discuss on strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills development for self-reliance among primary school pupils.

Literature Review

Childhood is a period of time in the life of any human between birth and eighteen years. Childhood as opined by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2004) is the foundation of the world's future and must be given the highest priority attention in all ramifications. The Encarta Encyclopedia (2006) described childhood as the first stage of life and the most important, tender and dangerous which is characterized by physical, emotional growth and development. Olaitan and Akpan (2023) see childhood as a unique, precious and critical period for effective development. The United Nations General Convention (1990) is of the view that childhood determines anybody's lifetime. Ogboru, Arinze and Eboh-Nzekwue (2015) said that childhood is a natural phenomenon. He stressed that it is a developmental period which biologically determines a distinct period of life. It is glaring from the aforementioned that childhood is an important period in the life of any human being. It is the period that determines the personality of any person. Because it is the foundation of life, it is therefore expedient that this very important period in anyone's life be handled with utmost care, and be given necessary attention because the period has the potential to make or mar the future of any person, as the case may be. Thus, childhood education is necessary. Childhood education is the education given to children from birth to 12 years. It comprises pre-primary and primary education. The focus of this paper is the Primary School Child. Because children is plural of child, both are used interchangeably in this paper. The primary school child receives education at the primary education level. Primary education is the education given in institutions to children aged 6 – 12 years (FRN, 2013). Its objectives are to:

1. inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively;
2. promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity;
3. instill social, moral norms and value in the child;
4. develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment; and
5. lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking;
6. provide opportunities for the child to develop life manipulative skills
7. that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity.

From this objective mentioned above it can be deduced that the objective is focused on reconciling the issues of self-reliance that is necessary for higher standard of living with that of enhancing with the challenges being faced in the Nigerian space today. Hence, entrepreneurial skills among primary school children can aid in fostering self-reliance and sustainable development. (Ani, H. S., Ndifon, F. O. and Bassey L. A, 2026). Skill could be defined as the learned capacity to carry out pre-determined results often with the minimum outlay of time, energy, or both. The concept of skill comes from the field of psychology, where it is widely used to explain human development across different domains. Fischer and Bidell (2005) define skill as "a capacity to act in an organized way in a specific context". A skill is a translation of one's expertise/knowledge into a behavior. In adapting the skill concept to entrepreneurial behaviour, it is suggested that entrepreneurial skills represent a capacity to organize and develop a business successfully and sustainably.

Concept of Entrepreneurship/Entrepreneurial Skills

Entrepreneurship is the creative and innovative ability that is used as the basis, tips, and resources to find opportunities for success. The essence of entrepreneurship is the ability to create something new and different through creative thinking and innovative action to create opportunities (Suryana, 2006). In the past, entrepreneurship was deemed to be done only through direct experience in the field and was an innate talent so entrepreneurship could not be learned and taught. Now that understanding has changed. Entrepreneurship is a separate discipline because it contains a complete and real body of knowledge which has objects, concepts, and methods. The discipline of entrepreneurship has rapidly grown. Initially, entrepreneurship was applied in the field of trade, but later it developed in other fields such as industry, government, health, and education. Entrepreneurship has become the core competency in creating change, renewal, and progress. In the field of education, entrepreneurship aims to foster entrepreneurship spirit in students so that in the future it can create entrepreneurs. However, the integration of entrepreneurship education in the learning process itself is an internalization of entrepreneurial values in learning activities. The values developed in entrepreneurship education are the development of

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values from the characteristics of entrepreneurs that should be owned by the learners. Some of the entrepreneurial values along with their descriptions will be integrated through entrepreneurship education as follows:

Table 1: Values and description of values of entrepreneurship education

Value	Description
Independent	Attitudes and behaviours that are not easy depend on others in completing tasks
Creative	Think and do something to produce different ways or outcomes from existing products/services
Take a risk	A person's ability to love challenging, courageous and risk taking jobs
Action-oriented	Take the initiative to act, and not wait, before an unwanted event occurs
Leadership	The attitude and behavior of someone who is always open to suggestions and criticism, easy to get along, cooperate, and direct others.
Hardworking	Behaviours that indicate efforts to complete tasks and to overcome various barriers.
Honest	Behaviours based on an attempt to make oneself trustworthy in words, actions, and works.
Discipline	Action that demonstrate orderly behaviour and abide by various rules and regulations.
Innovative	Ability to apply creativity in order to solve problems and opportunities to enhance and enrich life
Responsible	Attitudes and behaviour of a willing and capable to carry out duties and obligations.
Cooperative	Behaviour based on an attempt to make oneself able to establish relationships with others in carrying out actions, and jobs.
Resilient	Attitudes and behavior of someone who does not easily give up to achieve goal with various alternatives.
Commitment	Agreement about something made by a person, both to himself and to others
Realistic	Ability to use facts/reality as a rational basis of thinking in every decision and action
Enthusiasm	Attitudes and actions that always strive to know in depth and breadth of what is learned, seen, and heard
Communicative	Actions that show the pleasure of talking, getting along, and working with others
Strong Motivation	Attitudes and actions are always looking for the best solution for success

Source: Agus (2021:35)

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Concept of Self-Reliance

Self-reliance denotes confidence, trust and a state of being dependent on oneself. To rely means to need or depend on; to trust or to have confidence in. Self-reliance therefore would mean depending on oneself for all what one would need, having trust in oneself and a high self- esteem. Self-reliance is said to be a precursor of independence and creativity. During the preschool years, parents and caregivers are normally very careful of the child's nutrition, health and association. Extra care is normally given to the child that when unbiased people assess, it may be said that the child is overindulged. This is normally the case with only, first and sometimes last children. When the child is of school age, parents investigate and over pressurize the school authority to the extent that the child is not given any physical work to do. Schools where labourers and cleaners are employed are socially judged as the best for children. Where and when will the child learn to do things for himself which is the whole essence of self-reliance? Where and when will the child assess his capability so that he learns to have confidence in himself? Starting from birth, rudiments of self-reliance should be laid in the child depending of course on the developmental tasks of the age grade. According to Sigmund Freud (1931) in Faw (2020), the child at the oral stage (0-2yrs) has the libidinal energy centred around the mouth. He gains gratification through the mouth. If he is taught (education) how to lift his bottle by himself towards his mouth, empty it and gain satisfaction there from, this will surely be laying a good foundation for self-reliance. By age 2-3yrs, he (Freud) x-rays that the libidinal energy is centred around the anus and the child gains gratification from toilet training. At this stage, a child can be taught how to be clean by proper toilet training. Cleanliness they say is next to godliness. Cleanliness in body lays a foundation for an upright character. At the phallic stage, he loves and cares for himself and his belongings while he can be taught to care for the elderly around him at the Oedipus/electral stage. He can learn to reduce selfishness/egocentricism at this and the next stages (latency stage). By the last stage (age 11+), a stable personality who has self-confidence which can be harnessed and enhanced has emerged. Going by the above paradigm, the pre-primary child should be able to do a few things for himself. He should be able to dress and undress himself with minimal assistance; he should be able to wash some little bits of clothing like socks, pants and handkerchief. He should be able to run some errands. Especially as he approaches the Oedipus/electral complex stage, he should be able to pound pepper for mummy, take daddy's shoes to his room, and fetch water to wash some plates. He should be able to do these with ease, pride and confidence. In many homes, children of this age normally have a younger sibling. He would be happy to play a significant role in taking care of the sibling. "Bring me baby's powder". "Put this in baby's drawer" and the like. All these errands build in the child confidence, initiative and autonomy especially when praise and encouragement are applied. By the early primary classes, the child who is raised in the positive line of Erikson's psychosocial stages would grow towards knowing what he can do and having sufficient confidence in trying even challenging tasks (Ndifon, F.O., Bassey, E.O. and Ewa, G.M. 2022). By mid-primary age and even before end of primary education, we would have a child who is confident, knowledgeable about what he is able to do and what he may consider challenging. He would use this attitude to approach every other aspect of life. Here, we can say that the foundation to self-reliance has been laid. Hence, entrepreneurship can aid in fostering self-reliance.

Entrepreneur for Early childhood

Entrepreneurial education in schools is not just about motivations and skills needed to start-up a business or a new venture, it is about nurturing the ability and willingness of individuals to create value for themselves, for others and for society. Initiative and entrepreneurship form a key transversal competence, which can be effectively promoted through education. The idea of promoting entrepreneurship through education has spurred much enthusiasm in the last few decades in expectance of a wide range of outcomes, such as individual development, increased school engagement and performance, enhanced courage to contribute to societal development, improved equality, as well as job creation, economic growth and increased societal resilience. Turning this into educational practice, is, however, posing significant challenges to teachers, and school management and external partners in creating creative and open learning environments. Key enablers and barriers lie in teaching and learning environments. Lack of time, learning materials and financial resources, the fear of teachers and parents of "commercialism", rigid institutional frameworks, and challenges to assess learning outcomes of entrepreneurial education are some of the challenges practitioners are encountering. Effective environments are constituted by the right combination of leadership and flexibility, resources, incentives and professional development opportunities for teachers, innovative pedagogies and constructive involvement of pupils into education, as well as community engagement,

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involvement of businesses and entrepreneurs in teaching and learning, authentic learning and local curricula. Introducing entrepreneurship in school could affect children's views on entrepreneurship, and childhood is considered the ideal stage to educate and develop a positive attitude towards it. Additionally, preschool constitutes the take-off for the evolution of the entrepreneurial self, and childhood has been considered to be the most appropriate age group to acquire positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship and to adopt an entrepreneurial approach (Axelsson, 2015). Growing the entrepreneurial spirit in early childhood is basically more on building the traits and characters of being independent, responsible, optimistic, and not easily giving up. Therefore, entrepreneurship learning in early childhood can be integrated into the curriculum through programmes or activities designed by schools which the implementation involves not only principals, teachers and children but also involving parents.

To cultivate strong traits and characters as expected, according to Mursid (2015) learning for early childhood should take into account the following principles:

1. Children as active learners: Education should lead children to become active learners. Creatively designed education will produce an active learner. The process of education like this is a form of learning that relies on active learning activities or known as the Student Active Learning (CBSA = Student Active Learning)
2. Children learn through sensory and senses: Children gain their knowledge with their sensory, they can see with their eyes, they can hear the sound with their ears, they can feel hot and cold with their touch, they can distinguish the smell with their nose and they know the different tastes with their tongue. Therefore, learning in children should lead children to the various abilities that can be performed by all senses.
3. Children build their own knowledge: Children are allowed to learn through their experiences and their knowledge that they have experienced since they were born and they have gained during their life.
4. Children think through concrete objects: Children need to learn with real objects so that they are not confused. It means they are stimulated to think with learning methods that use real objects as examples of learning materials.
5. Children learn from the environment: Education is a conscious effort which is done deliberately and planned to help children develop their potential optimally so that they are able to adapt to the environment.

The establishment of the entrepreneurial spirit especially in children does not occur in a short time, but it takes time as the child's development process. They can be directed to form their entrepreneurial spirit. The formation of the entrepreneurial spirit is not an activity to form a child to become an entrepreneur directly, but it can be directly or indirectly internalized to the child. The internalization of entrepreneurial spirit at the stage of preschool can be conducted with various methods of games. The purpose of this game is not shaping the skills of the child's business directly but forming the specific character needed to become a successful entrepreneur later. For example, children are asked to sing while crossing the wooden bridge. This stimulates the courage of children to take risks for the purpose to be achieved. Similarly, when they are grown-up, an entrepreneur should be able to take risks for the development of his business (Muhamad and Wirawan, 2024).

Promoting Entrepreneurial Skills Development for Self-Reliance Among Primary School Pupils

In order to realize the goals of self-reliance among primary school pupils in Nigeria teachers and parents must develop various programmes. The entrepreneur-based programmes that aim to direct and introduce entrepreneurial values are as follows according to (Muhamad and Wirawan, 2024):

Entrepreneur Stimuli:

Entrepreneur stimuli are activities that stimulate the mindset of children to become entrepreneurs Bassey, Ndifon, and Diwa, (2025). The activities are daily given to the children through daily learning activities such as building blocks that is making high and luxurious apartment buildings so that later they become an apartment businessman or any other building that children want according to their ideas. Also, children are invited to elaborate their ideas, projects, interests or goals, within a context were they experience total freedom and confidence. Children's initial statements are crucial to build communities based on common interests. It is also intention that children are introduced to a culture in which the public presentation of interests and the sharing with others with similar interests are opportunities for work development. For example (task for children 3-6 years old) - A story about a child who loves drawing and how he/she took part in doing an

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exhibition of his/her drawings. Afterwards the teacher talks to the children about what they love to do. The teacher writes the children's statements on the board and children are asked to draw their own ideas.

Visit a Farm: Visit a farm is a programme of outing or visit to the animal farms to introduce the world of entrepreneurs in children. In this activity, a lot of entrepreneurial value that can be given to children such as being brave, confident, creative to mention business opportunities, and visionary that the child can have big dream such as being a dairy businessman.

Visit to Bank: A visit to the bank is a programme that can introduce the meaning of money to children. The activity includes visiting every teller and customer service. Their children can ask what the teller and customer service do. In addition, children are also introduced ATM and how to do transactions using ATM. In this activity, the children know the use of money, kinds of money and how to use it. Besides they learn to be efficient and to love saving money.

Outing to Culinary Entrepreneurs: Outing to culinary companies is a visit activity to introduce children to culinary entrepreneurs. It starts from visiting the place, introducing the product and how to make it until participating directly to make the product. Then the children are also introduced to how the marketing process of the product runs. This visit aims to provide knowledge to children about how to be a manager of a creative and innovative culinary company instead of being a worker and a company's labor. Children can more develop ideas and business opportunities as they wish.

Cooking learning Activity: This is a set of activities that every child awaits. In this activity, the participants are taught how to cook, starting from introducing raw materials, tools used for cooking, cooking practice until how to organize and serve food.

Visit to Market: Visit to the market day is the next activity. It is a macro role-play activity that can be held at school. In this activity they act as sellers and buyers like in the market, either traditional market or modern market. This activity aims to provide experience directly to the child to become an entrepreneur or a trader. In this activity children are required to be brave, Independent, able to communicate with the public and able to promote products in the form of goods that they bring from home. With this activity they do not feel like they are learning, but they consider it as a fun activity.

Conclusion

It has therefore become apparent that entrepreneurship can be taught and that countries who seek to continuously develop most adopt entrepreneurship education. Nigeria is no exception and there is no better time than presently if the nation is to overcome its present economic woes and transition into a developed culture so as not to jeopardize the future of generations to come. Nigeria can key into the Economic survival theory which highlights that entrepreneurship is encouraged by those impacted by unpleasant circumstances in life. Learning activities to introduce and in still the values of entrepreneurship in children can be implemented through entrepreneur-based programmes, such as entrepreneur stimuli, visit to farm, bank, market, outing to culinary entrepreneurs and cooking learning activity. All learning activities from the beginning to the end are done in accordance with the principles of learning for early childhood and directed towards the achievement of learning objectives. Entrepreneurial values instilled through those activities are creative, unyielding, action-oriented, hardworking, honest, resilient, imaginative, inquisitive and communicative.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made**:**

1. This research identifies the importance of entrepreneurship in the growth and advancement of developing countries which Nigeria is one of them. It is imperative therefore that the Nigerian government should urgently provide materials and well-furnished and equipped capacity building centers for teaching in institutions of learning.
2. The Nigerian Government and other relevant stakeholders must ensure that educational programme across all levels of education are relevant so as to provide children, youths and graduate with the necessary skills to go into entrepreneurship.
3. The school should pay attention and organize the existing infrastructure of the school so that the learning process through the activity programmes that have been made can be more optimized.
4. Teachers should develop self-capacity with an additional set of knowledge and skills through seminars and workshops

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