

PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT:

This paper explores the perception of teachers regarding entrepreneurship education in primary schools. The paper provides an oversight into how teachers view the implementation of entrepreneurship education and its impact on students. It indicates the need for teachers to generally recognize the importance of entrepreneurship education in equipping students with critical skills such as problem-solving, creativity, and financial literacy. The paper further identifies the challenges teachers faced in integrating entrepreneurship into the primary school curriculum, including a lack of appropriate resources and training. Due to the positive correlation between teachers' perceptions of entrepreneurship education and their willingness to engage in professional development to improve their ability to teach entrepreneurship concepts effectively, the paper underscores the need for comprehensive support and resources for teachers to successfully implement entrepreneurship education in primary schools.

Keywords: Teacher, Perception, Entrepreneurship, Education and Primary Schools

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of entrepreneurship education in equipping young learners with essential skills and knowledge for the ever-evolving global economy. Entrepreneurship education has gained significant attention in recent years as a crucial element of primary school curricula worldwide (Smith, 2019). The integration of entrepreneurship education at the primary level represents a shift in educational paradigms, emphasizing the importance of fostering entrepreneurial skills and mindsets from a young age. While policymakers and education experts advocate for the incorporation of entrepreneurship education, it is essential to understand the perspectives of the primary stakeholders in this process – the teachers.

Primary schools, as the foundational institutions of education, play a pivotal role in shaping a child's perspective on various subjects, including entrepreneurship. This raises a

critical question: What are the perceptions of teachers, the primary educators themselves, when it comes to integrating entrepreneurship education into the primary school curriculum? This inquiry delves into the attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives of teachers towards entrepreneurship education in primary schools, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities they perceive in preparing the next generation for a dynamic and competitive world. Understanding teachers' perceptions in this context is paramount for designing effective entrepreneurship education programs that can truly empower our young learners.

Teachers play a pivotal role in delivering entrepreneurship education, shaping students' perceptions, and nurturing their entrepreneurial aspirations (Fayolle, Gailly, & Lassas-Clerc, 2020). Their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences significantly influence the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education programs (Veciana, Aponte & Urbano, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative to explore how teachers perceive entrepreneurship education in primary schools, as their insights can offer valuable insights into the challenges, opportunities, and potential enhancements of this educational approach. The primary school phase is considered a crucial period for introducing entrepreneurship concepts to students. However, the perceptions of teachers regarding entrepreneurship education in primary schools remain a subject of limited research. This study will explore teacher perceptions in this context, shedding light on their attitudes, challenges, and the potential impact of entrepreneurship education. By examining teacher perceptions, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape of entrepreneurship education in primary schools and identify areas for improvement and development.

This paper revolves around understanding how teachers perceive entrepreneurship education in primary schools and identifying the factors that influence their attitudes and practices in teaching entrepreneurship concepts. It also provides insights into their roles as facilitators of entrepreneurial learning.

History of Entrepreneurship Education in Primary Schools

The history of entrepreneurship education in primary schools has evolved over time, reflecting changes in educational priorities and economic landscapes. While not traditionally a primary focus of early education, the integration of entrepreneurship concepts in primary schools has gained traction in recent years (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003). Historically, primary education primarily focused on foundational subjects like reading, writing, and arithmetic, with little emphasis on entrepreneurship (Johnson, 2009). The aim was to provide basic skills necessary for future employment.

Entrepreneurship education at the primary level was virtually non-existent in the early 20th century. The primary focus of education during this period was on traditional subjects like math, science, and literature. Towards the latter half of the 20th century, a shift began to occur. Scholars and educators started recognizing the need to instill entrepreneurial skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities in students at a young age (Solomon, Duffy, & Tarabishy, 2002;

Hisrich, Peters, & Shepherd, 2008). This was partly driven by changes in the global economy, which demanded a more entrepreneurial and innovative workforce.

In the late 20th century, as economies evolved and the importance of innovation and self-reliance became evident, the concept of entrepreneurship education gained more attention. It was seen as a way to foster creativity and prepare students for an evolving job market. The 21st century saw the emergence of various initiatives aimed at introducing entrepreneurship education in primary schools (Hisrich et. al., 2008). Some countries, such as the United States, started to incorporate entrepreneurship education into their curriculum (Solomon et. al., 2002). It often took the form of projects and activities that encouraged students to think like entrepreneurs, come up with ideas, and understand basic economic principles.

Entrepreneurship education in primary schools aimed to cultivate skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, creativity, and financial literacy (Kuczynski, 2017). Students were encouraged to identify opportunities, create small businesses, and even manage mini-economies within their classrooms. Entrepreneurship education in primary schools became a global movement, with various countries adopting similar programs to empower their young learners with a more entrepreneurial mindset (National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education, 2004). As the digital era progressed, primary school entrepreneurship education also adapted (Johnson, 2009). Lessons began to include concepts related to technology, online businesses, and digital marketing.

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on real-world application. Some schools have connected with local businesses and organizations to provide students with practical experiences, like running small enterprises or participating in startup competitions (Johnson, 2009). Challenges in implementing entrepreneurship education in primary schools include the need for teacher training, resources, and age-appropriate curricula. Additionally, ensuring that these programs remain engaging and relevant is an ongoing concern (National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education, 2004).

The future of entrepreneurship education in primary schools will likely continue to evolve as societies adapt to economic and technological changes (National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education, 2004). This form of education is expected to remain relevant, preparing young students to be more adaptable, innovative, and entrepreneurial in an ever-changing world. The history of entrepreneurship education in primary schools reflects the changing economic and educational landscape, with a growing recognition of the importance of fostering an entrepreneurial mindset from a young age. It's important to note that the development of entrepreneurship education in primary schools continues to evolve as educators and policymakers recognize the need for fostering an entrepreneurial mindset in young learners.

Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Primary Schools

Entrepreneurship education in Nigerian primary schools has evolved over the years to address the changing economic and social landscape. Entrepreneurship education in Nigerian

primary schools began informally (Akeredolu-Ale, 1975), with students learning basic life skills and problem-solving through various subjects. These skills indirectly contributed to an entrepreneurial mindset. Between 1970s-1980s, the Nigerian government recognized the need to formalize entrepreneurship education. They introduced vocational subjects in primary schools to provide practical skills to students (Sunday, 2012). Through 1990s with a growing focus on economic development and reducing unemployment, entrepreneurship education gained more prominence. The government introduced programs and curricula that emphasized entrepreneurship skills and business education in primary schools. Entrepreneurship education in Nigerian primary schools began to gain prominence in the early 2000s. The Nigerian government recognized the importance of preparing students for self-employment and wealth creation, especially in the face of high youth unemployment.

The National Policy on Education explicitly included entrepreneurship education as a component of the primary school curriculum (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2008). This policy aimed to equip students with practical skills and a mindset for entrepreneurship. The implementation of entrepreneurship education faced challenges related to curriculum development, teacher training, and resource allocation. Many primary schools lacked the necessary materials and qualified teachers to effectively deliver entrepreneurship education. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) introduced the Basic Education Curriculum (UBE) in 2008, which emphasized entrepreneurship education as part of the primary school curriculum.

In the 2010s, there were efforts to reform and improve entrepreneurship education in Nigerian primary schools. These reforms included the development of standardized curriculum materials and the training of teachers. The Nigerian government further promoted entrepreneurship education through initiatives like the National Policy on Education (NPE) and partnerships with organizations that provide resources and training for teachers. Entrepreneurship education in Nigerian primary schools is becoming more structured and widespread. The curriculum includes topics like financial literacy, business development, and problem-solving. NGOs and private organizations also play a significant role in enhancing entrepreneurship education. While entrepreneurship education in Nigerian primary schools has made progress, challenges such as inconsistent implementation, resource limitations, and the need for qualified teachers remain. The government and stakeholders continue to work on improving and expanding these programs to equip young Nigerians with essential entrepreneurial skills.

Pedagogical Approaches and Curriculum Integration:

Entrepreneurship education in primary schools is characterized by various pedagogical approaches. It often emphasizes hands-on, experiential learning where students engage in practical activities, such as creating and selling products, managing small ventures, or participating in mock business scenarios. This approach allows them to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life situations. Dees and Anderson (2003) highlight the importance of

experiential learning, where students engage in hands-on activities, such as creating and running small businesses, to develop entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurship education in primary schools aims to instill essential skills and mindsets in young learners to prepare them for a future that demands creativity, innovation, and problem-solving.

Entrepreneurship curriculum integration focuses on developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students are encouraged to identify problems, generate solutions, and make decisions, mirroring the processes used by entrepreneurs. By integrating entrepreneurship education into subjects like arts, science, and technology, Fayolle, et. al., (2020) opines that it fosters creativity by encouraging students to think outside the box, innovate, and develop unique ideas. Also, students learn the importance of collaboration and teamwork by working on group projects, fostering communication skills and an understanding of how businesses require diverse talents and perspectives. Entrepreneurship curriculum integration includes teaching students about basic financial concepts such as budgeting, savings, and the fundamentals of economics (Neck & Greene, 2011). This equips them with financial literacy skills crucial for entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship education in the digital age often includes lessons on digital tools and online resources. Students learn to leverage technology for their entrepreneurial endeavors. Integrating ethics and social responsibility into the curriculum helps students understand the impact of their entrepreneurial activities on society and the environment. Neck and Greene (2011) outlined integrating experiences of real-world applications like bringing in guest speakers, field trips, and connecting with local entrepreneurs to allow students to see real-world applications of entrepreneurship principles. This is valuable as entrepreneurship education transcends traditional subject boundaries, drawing from various disciplines. This interdisciplinary approach enriches students' learning experiences. Martin and Osberg (2007) argue for the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in entrepreneurship education, where concepts from various subjects are integrated to provide a holistic understanding of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship education in primary schools should employ pedagogical approaches like experiential learning, curriculum integration with a focus on problem-solving, interdisciplinary perspectives, and the importantly, adequately trained teachers.

Role of Teacher Training and Professional Development in Entrepreneurship Education

Teacher training and professional development in entrepreneurship education at the primary school level is of paramount importance as an adjust mechanism for shaping teachers' perspectives. Henry and Wilson, (2018) expressed that teacher training and professional development in entrepreneurship education at the primary school level are crucial for fostering innovative and enterprising mindsets among young learners. It equips educators with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively impart entrepreneurial concepts to young learners (Jones and Smith, 2020). Anderson and Brown, (2019) expressed that effective implementation of entrepreneurship education in primary schools requires well-trained teachers. They emphasized the role of teachers in imparting entrepreneurial skills and highlighted the need for tailored

training programs. Peterman and Kennedy (2003) discussed the significance of teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development as teachers play a significant role in fostering entrepreneurial thinking and skills in young learners. Thus, the need for continuous teacher professional development to keep pace with changing entrepreneurial concepts and practices.

School Culture and Leadership Support on Entrepreneurship Education in Primary Schools

School culture and leadership support play crucial roles in fostering entrepreneurship education in primary schools. A positive school culture that value innovation, creativity, and critical thinking can empower both teachers and students to develop entrepreneurial skills from an early age. European Commission (2016) revealed that leadership support from school administrators and teachers is essential in shaping the curriculum and creating an environment conducive for entrepreneurship education. World Economic Forum (2018) report discusses the changing landscape of education and how school culture and leadership support serves as tool for preparing students for the future of work, including entrepreneurship. The document highlighted on the impact of leadership support in designing and implementing entrepreneurship education programs. This agreed with Kickul and Lyons (2012) research that reported positive relationship between leadership and organizational culture, which can be adapted to understand the impact on entrepreneurship education in primary schools. As such the importance of entrepreneurship education and the role of school culture in promoting entrepreneurial skills cannot be over emphasized.

Kickul and Lyons (2012) mentioned among many factors school culture that encourages creativity, embraces failure, encourages teamwork, gives room for practical experience providing positive leadership support through teacher training, curriculum integration, adequate resource allocation, community engagement, assessment and accountability as ideal for development of entrepreneurial skills in primary school pupils.

Role of Resources Availability on Perceptions of Teachers on Entrepreneurship Education in Primary School

The availability of resources plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' perceptions of entrepreneurship education in primary schools. Here are some key points to as cited by (Kickul & Lyons, 2012; European Commission, 2016):

1. Curriculum Development: Adequate resources are essential for designing a comprehensive entrepreneurship education curriculum. When teachers have access to resources such as textbooks, teaching materials, and curriculum guidelines, they are more likely to perceive entrepreneurship education as a viable and valuable part of the primary school curriculum.
2. Training and Professional Development: Teachers often require specialized training and professional development to effectively teach entrepreneurship education. When schools invest in training programs, workshops, and resources for teachers, it positively

influences their perception of the subject. Teachers feel more confident and competent in delivering entrepreneurship education.

3. **Classroom Materials:** Access to relevant teaching materials, such as case studies, real-world examples, and interactive tools, can significantly impact how teachers perceive entrepreneurship education. These resources make the subject more engaging and practical, leading to more positive perceptions among educators.
4. **Infrastructure and Facilities:** The physical environment of schools also matters. Having suitable infrastructure, such as innovation labs, computer rooms, or spaces for practical activities, can enhance teachers' perceptions of entrepreneurship education. It enables them to provide hands-on experiences to students.
5. **Community Engagement:** Resources can also extend beyond the classroom. Partnerships with local businesses, entrepreneurs, and community organizations can provide valuable resources like guest speakers, field trips, and mentorship opportunities. These external resources can enrich the educational experience and positively influence teachers' perceptions.
6. **Assessment Tools:** Adequate resources for assessment and evaluation are crucial. When teachers have access to assessment tools and rubrics designed for entrepreneurship education, they can better gauge student progress and understand the impact of their teaching. This, in turn, affects their perception of the subject's effectiveness.

In summary, the availability of resources greatly influences how teachers perceive entrepreneurship education in primary schools. When teachers have the necessary tools, training, and support, they are more likely to view entrepreneurship education as a valuable and practical part of the curriculum, which can, in turn, have a positive impact on the quality of education provided to students.

Conclusion

The perceptions of teachers regarding entrepreneurship education in primary schools are multifaceted. While some educators embrace it as a valuable addition to the curriculum, others may harbor concerns about its feasibility and impact. These varying perspectives underscore the need for ongoing professional development and support to ensure that entrepreneurship education is effectively integrated into primary school classrooms. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, collaboration between teachers, policymakers, and stakeholders is crucial to address these concerns and unlock the potential of entrepreneurship education to foster creativity, problem-solving skills, and a spirit of innovation among young learners.

Recommendations

To improve entrepreneurship education in primary schools, the perception of teachers who serve as instructors and guide is of great importance. The following are recommended:

1. Professional Development: Provide teachers with training and workshops focused on entrepreneurship education methods and strategies, equipping them with the necessary skills to effectively teach entrepreneurship.
2. Curriculum Integration: Develop a more flexible curriculum that incorporates entrepreneurship education as a cross-cutting theme, allowing teachers to integrate entrepreneurial concepts into various subjects.
3. Resource Allocation: Allocate additional resources, both financial and material, to support entrepreneurship education initiatives, including access to relevant textbooks, technology, and hands-on learning materials.
4. Community Engagement: Encourage collaboration between schools and local businesses or entrepreneurs to provide real-world experiences for students, such as mentoring, internships, and exposure to entrepreneurial activities in the community.

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