

Entrepreneurial Skills Needed to Operate Vocational and Technical Enterprises in Nigeria



Education

KEYWORDS : Entrepreneur, Skills, Vocational and Technical enterprises.

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ABSTRACT

The study was a survey research designed to determine the entrepreneurial skills (personality and general) needed by operators of vocational and technical establishments. The study was conducted in South-east, South-south and North-west zones of Nigeria. Out of a population of 557 vocational and technical establishments, 459 with minimum of seven employees were purposively sampled and their owners or managers were involved in the study. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. It was validated by experts in Business and Technical Education from the Department of Vocational Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Kastina and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88. A total of 28 personality skills and 12 general skills were identified as well as eight techniques for enhancing the learning of the skills. The findings of the study include: demonstrate the drive to achieve, be honest, sincere and trustworthy. It was recommended among others that long vacation and special programs for existing and growth oriented entrepreneurs be designed to meet the specific needs of self-employed individuals.

1. Introduction

The unemployment problem in Nigeria has given rise to poverty, hunger, accompanied by stress to many individuals and families. The Federal, State and Local Governments have not been able to provide employment for thousands of school leavers both secondary and tertiary. Companies and industries are no longer employing and have continued to reduce the employees in their payroll due to the fact that they are operating below installed capacity as a result of hard economic situation in Nigeria occasioned partly by epileptic power supply. Many banks have been distressed and liquidated due to poor capital base before capitalization of banks was introduced. The situation, according to Akpotohwo (2006), Anyakoha (2009) has occasioned increased awareness in Nigerians of the need for self-employment and self-reliance, thereby helping individuals to learn to make a living and to learn to live improved quality life.

1.1a Definition of Variables- Vocational and Technical Enterprises

However, there are many areas skills can be acquired by individuals with a view to enhancing their self-employment capabilities in Vocational and Technical enterprises. Areas that offer innumerable occupational opportunities include brick/block laying, carpentry and joinery, electrical installation, electronics servicing and repairs, motor vehicle mechanic works, automobile body repairs, sheet metal works, plumbing, welding and fabrication, painting and decoration, typing, bookbinding, clothing and textiles, food and nutrition, home management and consumer education, equipment and housing maintenance, computer/printer servicing and repairs, cell phone servicing and repairs, digital camera servicing and repairs. (Anele, 1997). The availability of these occupational areas has resulted in the establishment of various forms of private enterprises that offer various forms of goods and services. These enterprises are owned and managed by entrepreneurs.

1.1b Entrepreneur/Operator

The entrepreneur is the quintessence capitalist individual who recognizes a money making opportunity and sets up a business to exploit it (Hisrich and Peters, 2002). Steinhoff and Burgess (1993), Longenecker, Petty and Moore (2006) defined an entrepreneur as a person who organizes, manages and assumes the risk of a business enterprise. According to Gana (2001), a distinguishing mark of entrepreneurs is that they tend to be independent and self-sufficient. Entrepreneurs therefore have the ability to spark new ideas and new products that create businesses, which in turn create the need for new jobs. According to Osuala (2000) and Anyakoha (2009), small business enterprises play crucial role in the operation of the national economy.

The entrepreneurs who are owners and managers of these enterprises take calculated risks in order to build their businesses which are aimed at making profits.

The entrepreneurs create most of the new jobs each year, and it is new ventures that produce many of the new products that come on the market each year (Anele, 1997; Ore, 2006). According to Steinhoff and Burgess (1993), Nwachukwu (2005) many new inventions come from entrepreneurs, and very often it is the entrepreneur who comes up with effective new ways of combating international competition. Entrepreneurs are responsible for the success and failure of their businesses. Entrepreneurs work hard and put their talents to use while seeking the satisfaction that comes from being their own boss and being responsible for their own successes. Entrepreneurs realize that they cannot exist without making profit from their efforts, and as a result, they work hard to sell enough of their products or services to pay for all the costs of running the business and to reach the ultimate business objective of making profit. In order to succeed, the entrepreneur needs special skills in addition to the technical skill required for the production of goods and services (Onah, 2004).

1.1c Skill

Skill is the ability to do something well because it has been learnt and practiced. According to Osuala (2004), skill is the capability of accomplishing a job with precision of certainty, practical knowledge in combination with cleverness and expertise. Okorie (2002), described skill as a well established habit of doing something, manual dexterity acquired through repetitive performance of an operation. Skill is the tact, dexterity and practice ability one has to develop in order to accomplish work especially in vocational and technical occupations (Jibril, 2012). This implies that skill is a sequential organized proficiency action executed in a flexible but systematic pattern. It further implies that to possess a skill is to demonstrate the habit of acting, thinking and behaving in a specific activity in such a way that the process becomes natural to an individual through repetition or practice.

Therefore, for entrepreneurs to succeed, they need in addition to technical skills, those special entrepreneurial skills that promote success in business. The skills are non-technical work skills which involve personality and general entrepreneurial skills. Various studies carried out on entrepreneurial skills and attributes indicate that many entrepreneurs fail due to lack of personality and general entrepreneurial skills. In addition to skills related to risk-taking, Anele (1997) stated that communication, directing and controlling the affairs of business, organ-

izing human and material resources, accounting and marketing skills are also essential. Obi (2009) observed that successful entrepreneurs have personality attributes that made them to succeed. Jimngang (2004) and Ejiofor (2008) equally stated that general skills are important for entrepreneurs to succeed.

However, to forestall business failure, entrepreneurship education must be well articulated by educational institutions especially vocational and technical education. Therefore, entrepreneurs either succeed or make a developmental contribution or they fail and disappear from the market because the market within which entrepreneurs operate has little tolerance for miscalculations about business opportunities (United Nations, 2000). Thus, for vocational and technical education to produce successful entrepreneurs, it must seek for ways and means of equipping the students with the technical skills as well as other relevant skills in the various areas of the programme. This will ultimately reduce business failure associated with lack of skills needed to operate a business enterprise. Therefore, it becomes necessary to determine the personality and general entrepreneurial skills needed by operators of vocational and technical establishments.

2. State of the Problem

The high rate of unemployment in Nigeria has resulted to poverty, hunger, armed robbery, kidnapping, human trafficking among other social vices. The various levels of government have not been able to provide employment for thousands of secondary and tertiary school leavers. Industries have trimmed down their labour force due to hard economic situation occasioned by frequent power outages. The study is therefore designed to determine the personality and general entrepreneurial skills needed to operate vocational and technical enterprises in Nigeria.

Research Questions

This research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the personality skills needed to operate vocational and technical establishments?
2. What are the general skills needed to operate vocational and technical establishments?
3. What techniques could be employed to enhance the learning of these skills?

3. Method

The study was conducted in South-east, South-south and North-west geo-political zones of Nigeria. The population was made up of entrepreneurs in vocational and technical establishments in the zones. The vocational and technical establishments included those in Auto mechanic/Metalwork trades, Building/Woodwork trades, Electrical/Electronic trades, catering services, clothing and textile, handicrafts, computer/business centers, as well as beauty care services.

The population comprised 557 entrepreneurs in vocational and technical establishments. Through purposive sampling technique, vocational and technical establishments with a minimum of seven employees/workers in the zones were purposively sampled and the owners or managers took part in the study. This gave a total of 459 entrepreneurs who responded to the questionnaire.

3.1 Instrument for Data collection

An entrepreneurial skill questionnaire (ENSQ) was the instrument used for data collection. It was developed through extensive review of literature on entrepreneurship and self-employment and also based on the research questions formulated to guide the study. The instrument was divided into three sections A, B and C. Section A contains 28 items, B has 12 items and C has 11 items. The instrument was validated by three experts in Technical Education and three experts in Business Education. The experts' suggestions were taken into consideration in the final draft of the instrument. Cronbach alpha was used to establish the reliability of the instrument which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88.

Out of the 459 copies of the questionnaire distributed by the researchers, the number of copies correctly completed, returned and used for data analysis was 378. This represented 88.35 per cent return rate.

The data collected on the research questions were analyzed using mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation. Based on the five-point Likert scale, a mean (\bar{X}) of 3.50 was the minimum score an item would obtain to be considered as important. Therefore, any item with a mean (\bar{X}) of 3.50 and above was considered important while any item with mean (\bar{X}) below 3.50 was considered as unimportant.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Respondents' Responses on Personality Skills

	Personality Skills	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1	Take reasonable risks	4.11	0.99	Important
2	Be a leader and in charge	4.04	0.89	Important
3	Get along well with others	4.34	0.69	Important
4	Take appropriate decisions	4.35	0.68	Important
5	Accept responsibility for one's action	4.11	0.88	Important
6	Accept competition and competitive situations	4.16	0.78	Important
7	Assume full responsibility for success or failure	4.22	0.82	Important
8	Demonstrate self-confidence	4.49	0.61	Important
9	Be able to endure losses	4.49	0.62	Important
10	Be able to cope with changing situations	4.48	0.62	Important
11	Be innovative (do things in new ways)	4.50	0.77	Important
12	Judge the abilities and skills of others	4.05	0.85	Important
13	Ready to lower standard of living in order to succeed.	3.98	0.93	Important
14	Take independent actions	3.98	0.86	Important
15	Demonstrate the drive to achieve	4.28	0.65	Important
16	Motivate others to achieve	4.32	0.72	Important
17	Will-power and self-discipline	4.37	0.67	Important
18	Demonstrate resourcefulness in business	4.50	0.65	Important
19	Be truthful	4.65	0.58	Important
20	Be honest	4.68	0.51	Important
21	Be sincere	4.64	0.61	Important
22	Be trustworthy	4.52	0.74	Important
23	Work under pressure	3.82	0.64	Important
24	Be future oriented	4.41	0.83	Important
25	Be hard working	4.46	0.68	Important
26	Accept the challenge of working alone	4.12	0.86	Important
27	Put in extra hours where necessary	4.33	0.63	Important
28	Be imaginative and creative	4.49	0.58	Important

The mean of the personality skills are presented in Table 1. The means revealed that 28 personality skills are important for self-employment. Skill number 20 (be honest) has the highest mean of 4.68 while number 23 (work under pressure) has the lowest mean of 3.82. The standard Deviation ranges from 0.51 to 0.99 showing that the respondents are not far apart from their responses.

Table 2: Mean and standard Deviation of Respondents' Responses on General Skills

General Skills		\bar{X}		Remark
1	Be familiar with business to be started	4.60	0.55	Important
2	Exhibit understanding of the basic steps involved in starting a business	4.54	0.62	Important
3	Exhibit knowledge of facilities for supplying information on starting a business	4.18	0.88	Important
4	Be familiar with organizational structure	4.03	0.84	Important
5	Determine causes of business failure	4.30	0.74	Important
6	Determine facilities, equipment, tools and materials required	4.41	0.63	Important
7	Determine sources of capital	4.44	0.71	Important
8	Determine factors involved in granting credit	4.11	0.83	Important
9	Be familiar with various types of ownership e.g proprietorship, corporation	4.04	0.56	Important
10	Determine various types of insurance and the application of each.	3.87	0.94	Important
11	Use professionals like lawyers, bankers, accountants, insurance and advertising agents.	3.98	0.89	Important
12	Be familiar with business registration procedure.	4.20	0.79	Important

Table 2 indicates that 12 general skills are important for self-employment as revealed by the means. The minimum mean of 3.87 was recorded by skill number 10 which is on types of insurance and the application of each, while skill number 1 (Be familiar with business to be started) and number 2 (Exhibit understanding of the basic steps involved in starting a business) have means of 4.60 and 4.54 respectively. The Standard Deviation (0.55-0.89) shows that the respondents are close to each other in their responses.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents' Responses on the Techniques for Enhancing the Learning of Personality and General Skills

Items		\bar{X}		Remark
1	Vocational and Technical Education organizing visits for the self-employed in form of trips to very successful entrepreneurs	4.24	0.27	Agree
2	Vocational and Technical Education organizing entrepreneurial lessons for operators of vocational and technical establishments.	3.92	0.19	Agree
3	Resource persons in entrepreneurship education be invited by Vocational and technical education regularly to encourage operators on the benefits of being self-employed.	4.09	0.27	Agree
4	Vocational and technical Education motivating operators to learn the entrepreneurial skills by assuring them that they would be aided by the government financially	4.18	0.97	agree
5	Operators interest enhanced through rewards, incentives and values statements.	4.17	0.75	Agree
6	Study of biography of successful entrepreneur as an aspect of entrepreneurship education for the operators of Vocational and Technical enterprises.	3.94	0.78	Agree
7	Organizing seminars and workshops on entrepreneurial skills every three months for the operators of Vocational and technical enterprises.	4.47	0.98	Agree

8	Learning the entrepreneurial skills through simulation exercises.	2.09	0.91	Disagree
9	Vocational and technical education making textbooks and other instructional materials on entrepreneurship available for learning the entrepreneurial skills.	4.51	0.97	Agree
10	Learning the entrepreneurial skills through formation of business clubs and fraternities by the operators.	2.45	0.19	Disagree
11	Sending operators to school to learn the entrepreneurial skills	2.46	0.31	Disagree

Table 3 shows that the respondents agree on eight items as techniques for enhancing the learning of entrepreneurial skills with mean between 3.92 and 4.51 and disagree on three items with mean of 2.07 to 2.46. The standard Deviation which ranges from 0.31 to 0.98 confirms the responses of the respondents.

4.1 Discussion

The study identified 28 personality and 12 general entrepreneurial skills important for self-employment and eight techniques for enhancing the learning of the identified skills by operators of vocational and technical enterprises. Table 1 shows that the personality skills are important for self-employment. The qualities that make up an individual's character are those relevant and essential for entrepreneurship which involves taking reasonable risks. Skill number 20 (Be honest) recorded the highest mean of 4.68. This is an indication of the level of importance which the respondents placed on honesty in the work environment and in the business world, and the emphasis which they feel should be laid on it by entrepreneurs and those intending to go into entrepreneurship. Despite the scourge of 419 (obtaining by trick) and corruption that has plagued Nigeria as a nation, the response here may have been influenced by their awareness that honesty is still the best policy, and that success in entrepreneurship begins with honesty. This is in agreement with the findings of Anaele (1997); Sexton, Donald and Bowman (1999) that honesty enhances business success. The development of honesty by entrepreneurs will go a long way in producing the type of behaviour needed in the entrepreneurship world.

Another entrepreneurial skill considered important (\bar{X} = 4.50) is that concerned with innovation (Table 1, no.11). Thus, people in the technological world are expected to be conscious of the fact that changes in their field are inevitable and have to be willing to adapt effectively and readily to changes in the technological world with regard to equipment, methods and materials used in the production of technical goods and services.

The means of the general skills presented in Table 2 show that they are all important for self-employment. This implies that one contemplating to go into entrepreneurship should possess a general knowledge of the business to be started, business registration procedure, facilities needed, capital, types of ownership, insurance and use of professionals. This agrees with the findings of Akpotohwo (2005), Anyakoha (2009) that would-be entrepreneurs ought to have knowledge of the business before attempting to go into it. The personality and general skills identified are necessary for the entrepreneurs to be able to succeed in the entrepreneurship world (Gerald, 2007, Jibril, 2012).

The study revealed that the respondents agreed on eight techniques that could be used to enhance learning of the skills and this shows the importance of varying teaching techniques to enable learning take place. This agrees with authors like Ferrant (1980), Bello and Willey (1991), Erickson and Andrews (1996), Clotfelter, Ladd and Vigdor (2004), that teaching is not to be confined to the use of one method and technique, but varied so that learning can take place effectively.

4.2 Conclusions and Recommendations

The personality and general entrepreneurial skills identified by the study represent what the entrepreneurs involved in the study considered as important for self-employment. Further-

more, the techniques determined in the study are considered as what would enhance learning of the skills. Adequately planned and implemented entrepreneurship education programme that is based on the findings of this study will equip entrepreneurs and those intending to go into self-employment with skills that would enable them succeed in self-employment.

Long vacation/special programme for existing and growth oriented entrepreneurs should be designed by Vocational and Technical Education to meet the specific needs of self-employed individuals.

New methods and concepts of delivering instruction should be explored with appropriate practical approaches, flexible scheduling and instruction tailored to meet specific needs by Vocational and Technical Education.

There should be resource material development and effective utilization of necessary instructional materials for effective instruction in entrepreneurship education by Vocational and Technical Education.

Entrepreneurship education instructional programmes should utilize successful small business entrepreneurs to capitalize on their practical business experiences and on the pedagogic strength of Vocational and Technical Educators.

Various ways of working with other agencies, institutions and organizations which are attempting to provide training to small businesses, such as National Directorate of Employment, Nigeria Vocational Association, Home Economics Research Association of Nigeria, and Association of Business Educators, association of computer Educators of Nigeria should be developed.

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