

**MECHANISM FOR IMPROVING ENTRAPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES
NEEDED BY STUDENTS OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AT TERTIARY LEVEL FOR EMPLOYMENT.**

BY

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Abstract

This study is on mechanism for improving entrepreneurial competencies needed by students of technical and vocational education for employment. The design of the study was a survey. The population of the study included all the 293 final year students of tertiary institutions in Enugu State offering technical education (electrical/electronic option). A total of 293 students formed the respondents to the questionnaire. Three research questions were raised for the study. A structured twenty (20) questionnaire items divided into three sections were used to elicit information from the respondents. Frequency, means and standard deviation were used to analysed the data collected. The findings of the study include: team Leadership skills are the highest possessed followed by Perceptions of Trustworthiness skills by the students, Acquisition of skills through apprenticeship system, industrial training programme and career club are mechanism for improving entrepreneurial competencies. It was also deduced that inadequate number of qualified teachers, portfolio of knowledge of many entrepreneur trainers is relatively narrow, core competencies needed by the students are not taught, the paradigm behind the education and training of entrepreneurs is still basically of a technical nature. It was recommended that Students should learn to trust and be trusted as an intending entrepreneur, should readily accept suggestions and corrections to allow improvement on themselves and students should try to acquire the qualities of a good leader to be able to lead others.

Keyword: Mechanism, improving, entrepreneur, competencies and employment.

Introduction

The changing economies in many developing countries have forced governments and educators to place a high

priority on entrepreneurial training and development. (Raymond, Ronald, Danny and Rodney 2011). A developing country like Nigeria must empower her youths to be

gainfully employed. Inadequate training of the youth entrepreneurs can cause high dependence on foreign goods and services which can wreck havoc on the economy of a country. A set of general guidelines has been made available to teachers and school leaders to assist young people to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to respond to the demands of a rapidly changing world and build on a universal philosophy of self-reliance and resourcefulness (NBTE, 2014). To manage their futures successfully, young people need a clear purpose and a 'can do' attitude that will allow them to take advantage of opportunities, whether they in a personal, business, work, self-employment or community setting.

Demands by business and industry for more relevant skills and knowledge have increased the need for schools to develop enterprising attributes through their teaching and learning. People in both their working and personal lives need to be self-motivated, creative, flexible, resourceful and prepared to take initiative. By fostering positive personal attributes such as responsibility, commitment, integrity and initiative, and skills in negotiating and networking, teachers enhance the ability of young people to participate more fully in their local community both now and in the future. The Teachers' Guide and Training Manual in Entrepreneurship Education for Polytechnics and Monotechnics have been developed by practicing teachers and entrepreneurs. They are a valuable addition to your school's teaching resources. There

is an increasing need for a highly skilled and innovative workforce in the new business environment. School leavers must have the skills to meet modern business needs and be able to function in an information economy and a knowledge-based society. Raising the skill level of the workforce is central to improving competitiveness in a global economy. We must, therefore, have better training on and off the job, improved and more relevant education. Entrepreneurship education and training is more than the acquisition of knowledge. It must help develop core competencies. It also helps develop an inquiring mind and promotes innovation, creativity, enterprising attributes and the capacity for further learning. Schools must prepare students to be proactive, flexible and able to adapt to the changing demands of the modern economy. This new programme has been developed by NBTE to assist institutions, under its control, in responding to above challenges.

Ojeifor (2011), in Akinbuni (2005), and Aadekomo (2004), that the history of policies that relate to education, employment and labour in Nigeria dating back to colonial era reports that our educational institutions few as they were remained factories for production of white collar jobbers with no professional or entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability to seek for investment opportunities, to establish and to run as an enterprise successfully (Suleiman, 2006). It is the ability of an individual to initiate and create something

new, According to Ikeme, Alex and Onu (2007), entrepreneurship has simply been captured as the use of human courage to seek investment opportunities and establish a profit-oriented enterprise Gana (2001), defined entrepreneurship as willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on identified opportunities. Therefore, for an individual to successfully run an enterprise he has to acquire some competencies. Onstenk (2003), maintained that proper entrepreneurial competencies are required to successfully start, operate and ensure the survival of a new business in the market place. Competence is the ability and skill possessed by an entrepreneur to be successful in his enterprise.

Entrepreneurial competency refers to the sum of the entrepreneur's requisite attributes for successful and sustainable entrepreneurship (Kiggundy, 2002). According to Kiggundy, these attributes include attitudes, values, beliefs, knowledge, skills, abilities, personality, wisdom, expertise (social, technical, and managerial), mindset, and behavioral tendencies. These competencies are also referred to as skills. Skill is an ability that has been acquired by training. There are competencies that are general to every entrepreneur, such as managerial competency, marketing strategies, communication, writing, inter-relationship, trustworthiness, planning and organizational skills, basic business skills,

etc. There are also some competencies that are peculiar to trades or professions. In electrical/electronic education there are competencies or skills required of students. These competencies include: workshop safety rules, machine operation, selection of tools for job, practical knowledge, general machine maintenance/routine maintenance, job assessment, dictation of faults etc. Cunningham and Lscheron (1991), identified six schools of thought on entrepreneurship that explain what constitutes an entrepreneur. Of the six schools, three assert that entrepreneurial traits are innate and cannot be developed or trained in the classroom. The other three schools of thought hold that entrepreneurial skills and competencies can be acquired through formal training. These abilities include physical, manipulative, intellectual and organizational abilities. These abilities assist the entrepreneur to reason out solutions to technical problems involving production, processing or marketing. According to Ihekwoaba (2007), an office worker could be skilled as a factory worker, because two of them have superior ability, knowledge, experience, and intelligence which make them the bride of the employers and entrepreneurs. Ihekwoaba further identified three classes of skill needed by an entrepreneur. These skills include: personal, technical and professional skills.

Other skills: Self confidence is the ability to believe in one-self, do what is right and continuing doing it to achieve results. It is the ability to trust in one's efforts as he

takes risks in his endeavours in midst of all odds. These competencies and skills are developed during formal education, apprenticeship, short-services, conferences, workshops, in-service training, and part-time training programmes.

Motivational skills are the psychological feature that arouses an entrepreneur to action toward a desired goal; the reason for the action; that which gives purpose and direction for involvement in an enterprise. The entrepreneur can build motivational skills for himself or acquire the skills through the encouragement of others, hard-work, proceeds from his ventures, and competition with others. Team Leadership skills are the abilities to harness the efforts of group of people to achieve a goal. It is the ability to create harmony among people of common interest for the purpose of achieving goal. A leader plans, organizes, recruits workers, directs, coordinates, and budgets. The leader can improve his leadership qualities through understanding his workers, having regular meetings with them, operating an open door policy in his or leadership, accepting and critically examining every suggestion. Hunt for information as regards his business and implementation of result oriented strategies.

Communication skills involve the exchange of information with another. In a formal sector there is a line of communication. The communication when broken can cause havoc in a system. Communication can be improved through creating information unit

or a means of disseminating information within the system. The leader must ensure there is no communication gap. To carry everybody along there must be an information flow commitment skills. These are the ability to meet deadline, commitment to work, accountability, observing health and safety regulations, proactive in business, quick to correct negative situation and impressions, understands what processes add value and demonstrates good supervisory skills, Business skills can be improved through experience acquired over a period of time. The skills can also be improved through interactions with successful entrepreneurs. Commitments skills are the ability to take risks, agile in thinking and planning, not afraid of mistakes possesses good organizational skills, a good planner and prioritize and manage risks.

Perceptions of trustworthiness skills are concerned with dependable, integrity, loyalty and commitment, trustworthy, and responsible. These skills have to do with actions and attitude of an entrepreneur. The personality of the entrepreneur has a great effect on his ventures. Therefore, the success of the business rests on the personality of the entrepreneur. For the entrepreneur to improve on his competence he has to work on his personality to reflect business minded personality?

Statement of the Problem

The issue of massive job seekers in the country, Nigeria pursuing limited job

opportunities has triggered the introduction of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian education system at both the basic and post-basic levels. It is hoped that at the end of their studies at both levels of education they must have acquired enough skills and competencies to be self-reliant. The effort of government to reduce the number of job seekers roaming the streets has not yielded appreciable result. It appears that the menace is on the increase. Majorly this could be attributed to incompetency among the young school-leavers. These young school-leavers claiming to have acquired enough skills are unable to start businesses. The reason being that most of them are not competent in their field of specialization. Therefore, it is the intention of this study to address the issue of mechanism for improving their entrepreneurial competencies.

Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to:

1. Find out the extent of possession of the generic competencies.
2. Find out mechanism for improving the competencies acquired.
3. Find out challenges encountered in the process of entrepreneurship training.

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of possession of the generic competencies?
2. What are the mechanisms for improving the competencies acquired?
3. What are the challenges encountered in the process of entrepreneurship training?

Methodology

The design adopted in this study is survey. The population of the study included all the 293 final year students of tertiary institutions in Enugu State offering technical education (electrical/electronic option). There are three tertiary institutions in Enugu State offering technical education. These institutions are University of Nigeria, Nsukka (115 students); Enugu State University of Technology (ESUT) (78 students); Enugu State College of Education (Technical) (46 students); and Institute of Management and Technology (54), Enugu. The total respondents were 293 students. There was no sampling as all the final year students of technical education were used. A structured questionnaire with 20 items divided into three sections was used to elicit information from the respondents.

Validation and Reliability of the Instrument

The developed instruments were subjected to face validation after which the final copies were given to the respondents. To determine the reliability of the items, the instrument was pilot tested using split-half. The data obtained were correlated using Pearson product Moment correlation Coefficient which yielded 0.76.

Method of Data Analysis

Data for answering research question 1 was analyzed using frequency count which is presented in bar-chart. Data for answering research questions 2 and 3 were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Mean score equal to and above 2.50 were agreed

on while mean below 2.50 were disagreed on.

Results

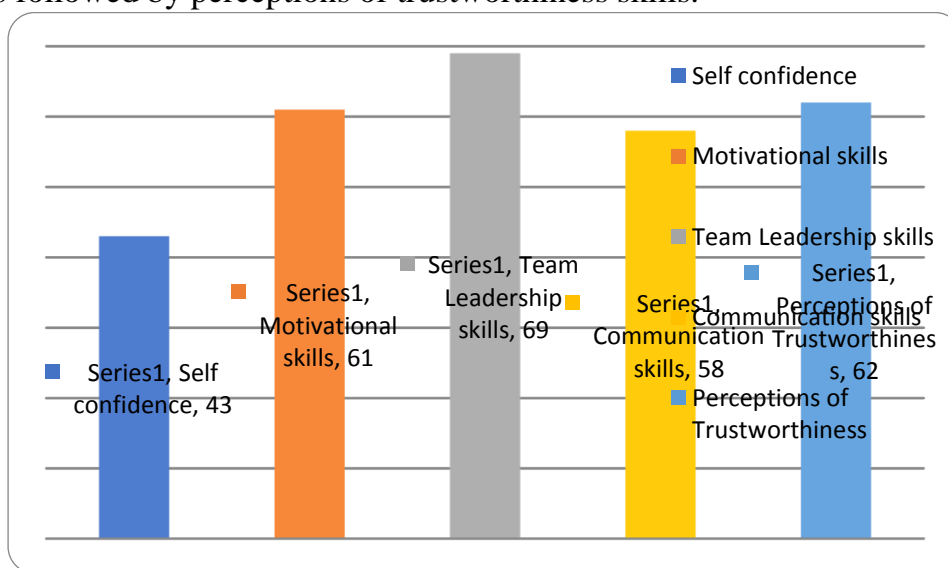
Research question 1: What is the extent of possession of the generic competencies?

Table 1

Frequency table showing the extent of possession of the generic competencies.

S/No	Skills in Cluster	Frequency	Percentage
1	Self confidence	43	14.68
2	Motivational skills	61	20.81
3	Team Leadership skills	69	23.55
4	Communication skills	58	19.80
5	Perceptions of Trustworthiness skills	62	21.16
Total		293	100

Data in the Table above revealed that team leadership skills rated highest with frequency of 69 and percentage of 23.55. This shows that team leadership skills are highly possessed than others followed by perceptions of trustworthiness skills.



Bar chart showing the skill clusters

Research Question 2: What are the mechanisms for improving the competencies acquired?

Table 2

Responses of the respondents on the mechanisms for improving the competencies required.

S/N	Items	SD	Mean	Remark
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1. Interactions with successful entrepreneurs.	0.72	2.65	Agreed
English LanguagePart-time training	0.67	2.66	Agreed
2. Conferences, workshops and seminars	0.80	2.52	Agreed
3. Through the encouragement from others.	0.86	1.88	Disagreed
4. Accepting corrections and suggestions from fellow students for improvement.	0.76	3.00	Agreed
5. Exploiting opportunities for advancement and improvement.	0.69	2.78	Agreed
6. Acquisition of skills through apprenticeship system.	0.71	2.70	Agreed
7. Through industrial training programme.	0.54	3.40	Agreed
8. Through career club.	0.68	3.07	Agreed
9. Vacation employment programme.	0.58	3.27	Agreed

Data in the Table 2 revealed that the respondents agreed with all the items except item number 4 that they are mechanisms for improving the competencies needed by students of technical and vocational education for employment. From the table it be inferred that the identified mechanisms can improve entrepreneurship competencies needed by students of technical and vocational education.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges encountered in the process of entrepreneurship training?

Table 3: Responses of the respondents on the challenges encountered in the process of entrepreneurship training.

S/N	Items	SD	Mean	Remark
1.	Inadequate number of qualified teachers.	0.61	3.02	Agreed
2.	Lack of textbooks.	0.70	2.56	Agreed
3.	Portfolio of knowledge of many entrepreneur trainers is relatively narrow.	0.68	2.76	Agreed
4.	Grouping students of various aspirations together.	0.68	2.60	Agreed
5.	Core competencies needed by the students are not taught.	0.75	2.57	Agreed
6.	The paradigm behind the education and training of entrepreneurs is still basically of a technical nature	0.51	2.90	Agreed
7.	Teaching of entrepreneurship skills takes no account of the reality that entrepreneurship has to do with management.	0.68	2.67	Agreed
8.	Using traditional education methods to develop entrepreneurs do not give adequate training.	0.81	2.01	Disagreed
9.	Education system emphasizes a set of values and abilities which is inimical to an entrepreneurial spirit	0.67	2.62	Agreed
10.	Concrete experience, reflective observation,			

abstract conceptualization and active experimentation are not used in teaching.	0.59	3.04	Agreed
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Data in the Table 3 showed that the respondents agreed with all the items as challenges encountered in the process of entrepreneurship training. This shows that all the stated items are challenges encountered in the process of entrepreneurship training.

Findings of the Study

1. Team Leadership skills are the highest possessed followed by Perceptions of Trustworthiness skills by the students.
2. Mechanisms for improving the competencies required include:
 - i. Accepting corrections and suggestions from fellow students for improvement.
 - ii. Exploiting opportunities for advancement and improvement
 - iii. Acquisition of skills through apprenticeship system.
 - iv. Through industrial training programme
 - v. Through career club.
3. The challenges encountered in the process of entrepreneurship training include:
 - i. Inadequate number of qualified teachers.
 - ii. Portfolio of knowledge of many entrepreneur trainers is relatively narrow.
 - iii. Core competencies needed by the students are not taught.

- iv. The paradigm behind the education and training of entrepreneurs is still basically of a technical nature.
- v. Teaching of entrepreneurship skills takes no account of the reality that entrepreneurship has to do with management.
- vi. Using traditional education methods to develop.
- vii. Students are not given adequate entrepreneurship training.
- viii. Education system emphasizes a set of values and abilities which is inimical to an entrepreneurial spirit.
- ix. Concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation are not used in teaching.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of the study revealed that among all the five skills in clusters, team leadership skills are the highest possessed followed by perceptions of trustworthiness skills by the students. This could be as a result of leadership roles the students are exposed to during the training period. Leadership in the students' union activities are training grounds for the students. Trustworthiness is a good quality of a leader that can attract business for him. This involves fulfilling promises to customers, maintenance of agreement or terms of contract. An entrepreneur according to Howell (2005) must be dependable, has

integrity, committed, and possesses loyalty and commitment, and honesty.

It was deduced from the study that there are various ways for improving competencies of an entrepreneur. These include: accepting corrections and suggestions from fellow students for improvement, exploiting opportunities for advancement and improvement on the acquisition of skills through apprenticeship system. These competencies are not taught in the classroom but can be acquired in process of training. The avenues for acquiring these competencies could be through workshops, seminar, and students work experience scheme (SWES). It is there that students are exposed to work ethics and also meet with people of varying backgrounds. An entrepreneur with a strong willingness to learn often pursues opportunities that allow him or her to acquire new skills and expertise. These entrepreneurs initiate personal career development and often employ the feedback of others to help them make shrewd career decisions.

Source: McLeod, S.A. (2013),

It is therefore, very necessary that students be acquainted with the competencies needed for entrepreneur if they are expected to establish businesses and manage them.

Conclusion

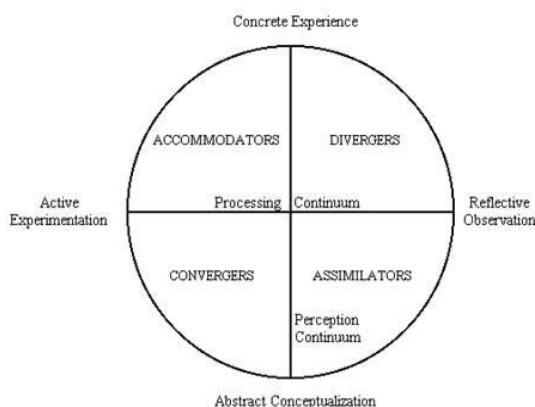
The role of an entrepreneur’s competency is highly a critical factor in achieving excellence in performance to ensure a sustainable growth and success of a venture amidst a competitive business environment. Therefore the importance of entrepreneurial competency has been increased during the past few

The findings of the study further revealed that there are a number of challenges facing proper training of entrepreneur. These challenges include: inadequate number of qualified teachers, portfolio of knowledge of many entrepreneur trainers is relatively narrow and core competencies needed by the students are not taught. There is dearth of qualified personnel to teach entrepreneurship education in technical college in Enugu State. The available teachers can handle the technical skills but cannot effectively teach the entrepreneurship aspect. Students pass out only efficient in the technical skills knowing little or nothing in the core entrepreneurial skills. They may not become professional managers because they did not receive professional or managerial training. These core competencies or skills are what are needed to start business and effectively manage it. Ifeanyichukwu (2000), opined a trained entrepreneur should be able to identify business opportunities, mobilize and organizes the resources, gather men, materials and machines, implement business plans, marketing of the products, services or ideas, land, monitoring the happenings in his environment. So as to respond appropriately to changes, threats and opportunities.

There are a set of values and abilities which is inimical to an entrepreneurial spirit. Financial management is an issue identified critical factor in business. It was deduced that the students are not taught financial management strategies. Poor finance can cripple an enterprise. Concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation are not also used in teaching the students. According to Kolb (2013), learners perceive and process information in a continuum from concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation:

1. **Concrete experience:** being involved in a new experience.
2. **Reflective observation:** watching others or developing observations about one’s own experience.
3. **Abstract conceptualization:** creating theories to explain observations.
4. **Active experimentation:** using theories to solve problems make decisions.

It is therefore, pertinent that teachers adopt this method in teaching students entrepreneurial competencies.



Kolb's Learning Styles

Kolb-learning Styles.Retrieved from www.simplepsychology.org/learning

decades due to the strategic role played by the human factor particularly the entrepreneur of a business enterprise.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made.

1. Students should learn to trust and be trusted as an intending entrepreneur.
2. Students should readily accept suggestions and corrections to allow improvement on themselves.
3. Students should try to acquire the qualities of a good leader to be able to lead others.

4. Opportunities for advancement in acquiring competencies should be exploited.
5. Students should be encouraged to patronise apprenticeship system, Students work experience scheme, and Career club, to help improve their competencies.
6. Teachers should involve varying teaching methods especial that which will promote acquisition of practical skills.

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