

SKILLS REQUIRED BY TECHNICAL COLLEGE GRADUATES IN PLANNING AND MARKETING OF UPHOLSTERY PRODUCTS FOR EFFECTIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NIGER STATE

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Abstract

This study is identified the skills required by technical college graduates in planning and marketing of upholstery products for effective entrepreneurship in Niger State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three null hypotheses were developed and answered in line with the purpose of the study. Three null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the probability of 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study was 154 respondents consisting of 37 woodwork teachers in the state technical colleges and 117 technical college graduates. There was no sampling since the population is of manageable size. A structured questionnaire was developed researchers for the purpose of data collection. The questionnaire was faced validated by three experts from Department of Industrial and Technology Education, Federal University of Technology, Minna. The reliability co-efficient of the instrument was determined using product moment correlation co-efficient and the reliability of 0.89 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while t-test statistic was used in testing the null hypotheses. The findings showed that basic skills required for meaning and marketing uphosatry production for effective entrepreneurship in Niger State. It was also established that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the groups of respondents on skills required by woodwork teachers and Technical College Graduates in Planning and Marketing of Upholstery Product. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that; identified entrepreneurship skills should be integrated into technical college curriculum. Similarly, module specifications for upholstery making the graduates and teachers should be standardized and both teachers and teachers trained on how to use tools, equipment and materials for effective entrepreneurial training.

Keywords: Technical colleges, graduates, upholstery products, entrepreneurship

Introduction

Nigeria as a country is blessed with lots of natural resources amongst which are trees. Wood, an important product in Nigeria is derived from trees. The Nigeria wood production sector is useful in providing comfort for man. These functions are the areas of building industry, medicine, education, textile industry, paper mill and in production of basic domestic items like pestle and mortal, wooden turning stick etc. The major objective of Nigeria's wood production policy is to achieve self-sufficiency in wood production and processing. The development of furniture sector is very important not only because the sector produces bulk of the nation's wood products but due to the fact that majority of the nation's population live and work in this sector (Adamu, 2012). Some areas of wood work in Nigeria include cabinet making, carpentry, machine woodworking, upholstery among others.

Upholstery is the work of providing furniture, especially seats with padding, springs, webbing and fabric or leather covers. It is used in domestic, automobile, airplane and boat furniture. A person who works with upholstery is called an upholsterer. An apprentice upholsterer is sometimes called an outsider or trimmer. Traditional upholstery uses materials like coil springs, animal hair (horse, hog and cow), straw and hay, linen scrim, wadding etc. Upholstery materials are often used in making households materials like cushions, chairs etc. Akpan (2014) emphasized that upholstery serve as a major cash product which forms a major

source of wealth for the people. People meet their social and financial commitment from upholstery production which is utilized for profit making ventures. Akinduro (2016) added that planning and marketing of upholstery products increases the revenue base of the state.

There are opportunities for anyone who enters into planning and marketing of upholstery products. These products are sold to generate income by those in the business. Upholstery planning and marketing are on the increase in the neighboring states such as Kaduna, Kogi and FCT Abuja. Hence, it has formed an important commodity for trade between Niger state and her neighbours. To be competent in upholstery planning and marketing a person must be skilled. Aliyu (2009) viewed skill as well established habit of doing things by people. An individual possess a skill if he/she has acquired necessary performance ability which could lead to perfection. Skill according to Atsumbe (2012) is the habit of acting, thinking and behaving in specific activity in such a way that the process becomes natural to the individual through practice. Tabron and Yang (2009) defined skill as the ability to perform and act expertly. It is that expertness, practiced ability or proficiency displayed in the performance of a task. A person that works productively is skilled because he has acquired the habit of performing a task in an acceptable manner within his job. Skill in the context of this study can be regarded as performance activities required by Technical College graduates in Upholstery planning and marketing in Niger State. Akplu and Amankrah (2010) classified skills into technical and human skills. They highlighted technical skill as those that call for proficiency in specific activity particularly those involving methods processes, procedures or techniques for their performance.

Upholstery production is a high labour intensive venture which is produced in association with wood. It could be both a subsistence product for commercial export and industrial uses as it exists in Niger state. Skills as those involving leadership ability for working effectively in a situation to achieve efficiency in Upholstery planning and marketing individuals must work hard. Adamu (2012) explained work as a function of useful experiences which precipitate- from purposeful teaching and learning. Akplu and Amankrah (2010) defined work as a form of activity or job that has social approval and satisfies a need of the individual to be active, productive, creative, respectful and to acquire prestige. In the opinion of Jimoh (2011) work skills are activities requiring coordination and principle of performance to such an extent that it will become easy, efficient and automatic. Work skill in upholstery planning and marketing involves demonstration of certain activities, which makes performance efficient and paramount. Niger State Technical Colleges, Woodwork Technology is taught to students to equip them with planning and marketing skills of furniture products, specifically upholstery.

Technical College graduates in Niger State are youths that have completed Technical College Education. Some of them obtained admission into higher institution after graduation while many of them that graduated did not possess any work skill for some occupations. The reason is because some technical colleges were not equipped with planning and marketing skills in school and their teachers could not accomplish the objectives of the technical colleges wood work curriculum for effective entrepreneurship skills acquisition.

Entrepreneurship education is a course of study introduced to equip recipients with the skills of how to utilize whatever utility skills that they acquired to take advantage of opportunities in an environment in order to become self-reliant. Technical Education programme of colleges of education provides opportunities in entrepreneurship skill acquisition to prepare students of the programme for business entrepreneurship. According to Andrea (2010) entrepreneurial skills should consist of five basic skills namely: human resource management skills, financial management skills, innovative skills, customer skills and marketing management skills.

Entrepreneurship education aims at raising awareness of students about business skills, knowledge, promoting creativity, innovation and self-employment. This includes the acquisition

of skills in areas that would be useful in making them self-reliant and independent productive citizens of the society. Entrepreneurship is critical to the economic development of any nation. An entrepreneur is one who engages in business undertaking with an active and enterprising spirit. An entrepreneur is any person who coordinates the factors of production and bears the risk of uncertainty by investing scarce resources in business ventures. It is necessary for such an individual to acquire human resource management, marketing, customer service, financial management, creative/ innovative and risk management skills.

The major problem facing technical college graduates in Niger State today is unemployment. In today's world of work, paid employment opportunities are difficult to come by. In this respect, Ewhrudjakpor (2013) contended that the rate of poverty in Nigeria is accentuated by the increasing rate of unemployment. Unemployment in Niger state, Nigeria as in other developing countries, cannot be solved by simply providing training in vocational skills. It requires promoting relevant entrepreneurship skills for specific trades. Osinem (2010) described skill, as expertness, practiced ability or proficiency displayed in the performance of a task. Etonyeaku (2011) argued that the rate of unemployment in the society might be lack of entrepreneurship skills which might also make it difficult for technical college graduates to run their own enterprise. Interestingly, upholstery making graduates from the technical colleges are not conscious of appropriate entrepreneurship skills required for entry into their own business enterprise. Hence, there is need to identify work skills required by technical college graduates in planning and marketing of Upholstery products in Niger state, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to determined the skill required by technical college graduates in planning and marketing of upholstery products for effective entrepreneurship in Niger State. The specific purpose are to:

1. identify work skills required by technical college graduates in planning for upholstery production.
2. find out the facilities required for implementation of skills in planning for upholstery products.
3. determine the work-skills required by technical college graduates in marketing of upholstery products?

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the work-skills required by technical college graduates in planning for Upholstery production?
2. What are the facilities required for implementation of skills in planning for Upholstery products?
3. What are the work-skills required by technical college graduates in marketing of Upholstery products?

Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis were tested at the 0.05 level of significance

- H₀₁:** There is no significance difference in the mean ratings of the responses of woodwork teachers to Technical College graduates on the skill required in planning for Upholstery production in Niger State.

- Ho₂:** There is no significance difference in the mean ratings of the responses of woodwork teachers and technical College graduates on the skill required in planning for Upholstery production in Niger State.
- Ho₃:** There is no significance difference in mean ratings of the responses of woodwork teachers and technical college graduates on the work-skills required in marketing of Upholstery products in Niger State.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in Niger state which is made of seven Educational zones namely Bida, Suleja, Minna, Borgu, Rijau, Kontangora, Kutigi. The population for the study was 154 respondents consisted of 37 woodwork teachers in the state technical colleges and 117 technical college graduates. No sample was taken since population is of manageable size. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire. The questionnaire items were generated based on the information gathered from the literature review. The questionnaire was made up of two section, namely: section one and section two. Section was on personal data of the respondents while section two was structured into six areas of skills required by technical College graduates in planning and marketing of upholstery products. The questionnaire items were validated by three experts from the department of Industrial and Technology Education, Federal University of Technology, Minna. The questionnaire was personally administered by the researchers.

The reliability of the instrument was established by administering a questionnaire to respondents outside the area of the study. After two weeks, the questionnaire was collected back. The data collected was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument. The result obtained was 0.89. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation in answering the research questions and t-test statistic for testing the hypotheses at the probability of 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What are the skills required by technical College graduates in planning for upholstery product?

Table 1: Mean ratings of responses of woodwork teachers on the skills required by technical college graduates in planning for upholstery product in Niger State

S/N	Item Statements	X	SD	Remark
1	Ability to plan for enterprise goals and objectives in upholstery making	3.47	0.71	Agreed
2	Ability to Formulate specific objectives for the upholstery	3.60	0.89	Agreed
3	Ability to Revise the objective periodically	3.58	0.71	Agreed
4	Ability to Decide on construction system to adopt on the workshop	3.45	0.72	Agreed
5	Ability to Budget for the upholstery	3.68	0.53	Agreed
6	Ability to Clear around the existing special market and land productivity	3.64	0.48	Agreed
7	Ability to Plans for the procurement of wood input	3.42	0.72	Agreed
8	Ability to Specify the species of Upholstery to be produced	3.87	0.34	Agreed

9	Ability to Select appropriate equipment for specific upholstery production	3.48	0.50	Agreed
10	Ability to schedule or timing for getting the upholstery produce to market during the highest price period	3.44	0.71	Agreed

Keys: X = Mean SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 1 shows that all the 10 planning skills items had mean values ranging from 3.42 to 3.87. This implies that 10 planning skills were required by technical college graduates for entry into upholstery making enterprise in Niger State.

Research Question Two: What are the facilities required for implementation of skills in planning for Upholstery products?

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Responses of Woodwork Teachers on the skills required by Technical College graduates in Marketing for Upholstery product in Niger State

S/N	Item	X	SD	Remark
12	By ensuring appropriate facilities for upholstery making	3.19	0.19	Agreed
12	By providing business plan goals attainment in upholstery making	3.32	0.88	Agreed
13	By providing an organize resources for goal attainment in upholstery making	3.24	1.06	Agreed
14	By ensuring direct functions of construction operations in upholstery making	3.12	1.03	Agreed
15	By ensuring a well supervised construction operations in upholstery making	3.32	1.11	Agreed
16	By ensuring that qualitative materials are provided for workers for effective operation	3.58	0.61	Agreed
17	By ensuring that adequate ventilation and lightening are provided for workers working in tight and cramped places	3.48	0.56	Agreed
18	By ensuring that workers who adhere to safety policy and regulation are highly rewarded	3.06	0.86	Agreed
19	By ensuring that machines with known faulty status are not used until they are serviced and repaired	3.19	1.03	Agreed
20	By evaluating all operations for goals attainment and upholstery making	3.15	0.77	Agreed

Keys: X= MeanSD = Standard Deviation.

Table 2 shows that all the 10 skills items had their mean value above 3.06. The study therefore, found that facilities required for implementation of skills in planning for upholstery production were the requisite requirement by technical college graduates for entry into upholstery production for effective entrepreneurship in Niger State.

Research Question 3: What are the skills required by Technical College graduate in marketing of upholstery product?

	the products to buyers							
17	Ability to Sell the products	3.36	0.83	3.13	0.93	1.46	1.96	N/S
18	Ability to keep the sales record book	3.21	1.03	3.35	1.04	-1.32	1.96	N/S
19	Ability to expand market through advertisement and sales promotion	3.48	0.05	3.43	0.62	0.94	1.96	N/S
20	Ability to organize regular market exhibitions for finished upholstery products	3.11	0.77	3.21	0.77	-1.27	1.96	NS

The data presented in table 5 showed that all the 10 required skills items has calculated value (t-cal) less than the table value (t-tab) of 1.96 (two tailed test) at 0.05 level of significance. This indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of the two groups of respondents (woodwork technology teachers and technical college graduates) on skills required by technical college graduates for required facilities for implementation of skills in planning for upholstery products.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significance difference in mean ratings of the responses of woodwork teachers to technical college graduates on the work-skills required by technical college graduates in marketing of Upholstery products in Niger State

Table 6: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of Responses of Woodwork Teachers and Technical College graduates on the work-skills required by Technical College graduates in Marketing of Upholstery products

		N ₁ =37		N ₂ =75				Remark
Skills required in planning for upholstery production		Woodwork technology teachers		Technical college graduate				
S/n		X ₁	SD ₁	X ₂	SD ₂	t cal	t-tab	
21	Ability to advertise upholstery products	3.40	0.77	3.35	0.72	-0.51	1.96	Not Sig
22	Ability to select the product line to enter into relation to market condition	3.82	0.38	3.92	0.27	-2.76	1.96	N/S
23	Ability to open inventory record book	3.49	0.50	3.85	0.36	-7.76	1.96	N/S
24	Ability to budget for the upholstery	3.66	0.47	3.72	0.60	-0.97	1.96	N/S
25	Ability to fix appropriate price to the product	3.47	0.78	3.01	0.54	1.39	1.96	N/S
26	Ability to distribute and transport the products to buyers	3.59	0.49	3.71	0.59	-2.18	1.96	N/S
27	Ability to Sell the products	3.50	0.76	3.43	0.62	-1.06	1.96	N/S
28	Ability to keep the sales record book	3.63	0.48	3.71	0.46	-1.25	1.96	N/S
29	Ability to expand market through advertisement and sales promotion	3.81	0.39	3.86	0.35	-1.22	1.96	N/S
		3.70	0.66	3.72	0.60	-2.42	1.96	NS

The data presented in table 6 showed that all the 10 required skills items has calculated value (t-cal) less than the table value (t-tab) of 1.96 (two tailed test) at 0.05 level of significance. This indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of two groups of respondents (woodwork technology teachers and technical college graduates) on work-skills required by technical college graduates in marketing of upholstery products.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that 10 planning skills were required by technical college graduates for entry into upholstery making enterprise in Niger State. The findings supported the opinion of Olagunju (2014) who observed that planning skills needed by entrepreneurs to get fund needed on favourable terms and use them effectively include ability to: plan for enterprise goals and objectives in upholstery making and clear around the existing special market and land productivity. The findings were in consonance with the views of Igbo (2015) who observed that entrepreneurs should be able to: budget for the upholstery and schedule or timing for getting the upholstery produce to market during the highest price period. These findings also agreed with the views of Richard *et al.* (2011) that financial management skills needed by entrepreneur to understand financial matters include ability to: process accounts payable and account receivable, process inventories and keep sales and purchases records.

The findings of this study revealed that 10 planning skills were required by technical college graduates for entry into upholstery making enterprise in Niger State. The findings were in line with the opinions of Etonyeaku (2011) who noted that planning skills required of technical college graduate for managing business enterprise include ability to specify the species of Upholstery to be produced, plans for the procurement wood input and formulate specific objectives for the upholstery. The findings supported the opinion of Zuzana (2016) that the basic planning skills required by business related entrepreneurs in starting, developing and managing and enterprise. This finding also agreed with the opinions of Joshua (2012) that planning skills are activities of coordinating the efforts people to accomplish desired goals and objectives using available resources efficiently and effectively. The findings and the opinions of the author above helped to justify the findings of this study on planning skill-items required for entry in upholstery making in Niger State.

The findings of this study revealed that 10 marketing skill were required by technical college graduates for entry into upholstery making enterprise in Niger State. These marketing skills include ability to direct functions of construction operations in upholstery making, choose qualitative materials are provided for workers for effective operation and business plan goals attainment in upholstery making. The findings are in consonance with the work of Ademiluyi (2017) who opined that entrepreneur should have knowledge of salesmanship; negotiation; sales record keeping; sales promotion; stock record keeping; pricing; advertising channels; advertising media; consumer behavior appreciation; and transportation. These findings also agreed with work of Stanton (2012) who argued that marketing skills that positioned entrepreneurs in contact with the people who want to buy their products and services include ability to identify marketing areas; advertise; fix prices based on cost of production & market situation; sell products and keep accurate record of products.

Conclusion

Based on the result, of the study, the work skills are needed for the improvement of technical colleges in planning and marketing of upholstery products for effective entrepreneurship for demand driven employment in contemporary Nigeria. There is need for graduates of woodwork technology to possess saleable skills which will enable them to establish themselves in

planning and marketing of upholstery products. Students should also understand that most of these skills could be acquired outside the classroom situation hence the need for the students to always attach themselves to firms that are into upholstery trade to improve on the skills they learnt in school.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Identify entrepreneurship skills should be integrated into technical college curriculum and module specifications for upholstery making graduates.
2. Government should provide adequate equipment, tools, materials and facilities required for training the students.
3. Teachers should be trained and retrained on how to use the tools, equipment and materials for effective training of the students.
4. Students should also attach their selves to upholstery making firm during their holidays so as to acquire practical skills.
5. Niger State Science and Technical Schools Board should organize seminar and workshop for woodwork technology teachers and instructors on entrepreneurship skills required by upholstery making graduates in Niger State.

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