
ENHANCING THE ACQUISITION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS AMONG THE YOUTHS THROUGH EFFECTIVE COUNSELLING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study was carried out to enhance the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills among the youths through effective counselling in Nigeria. Two research questions were answered. The descriptive survey design was used and the target population for this study was made up of 67 respondents comprising 11 counsellors and 56 entrepreneurs. 33 item-questionnaires were used as instruments for data collection, which were analyzed according to the research questions. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using mean. The findings of the study include among others; the youths must be equipped with such as technical, management and personal entrepreneurial skills; access to finance and the use of counselling are the challenges affecting the needed entrepreneurship skill and ways of enhancing the needed skills. It was recommended that Government should formulate policies and programmes to encourage entrepreneurs to sail smoothly in their investment, such encouragement should include an interest-free loan.

Keywords: Counselling, Entrepreneurship, Skills and Youths

Introduction

The global economic crisis has increased the urgency for countries, especially Nigeria to identify new sources of growth and develop a sustainable path to national development. Nigeria needs an accelerating system overhaul in order to carry along the majority of its population out of unemployment. The alarming rate of unemployment among the Nigerian populace, in particular, the youths can be due, to the dearth of entrepreneurs. The existence and/ or non-existence of these entrepreneurs in any given society marks the disparity between economic development or otherwise. For this reason, the entrepreneur is an adventurous and visionary individual who stimulate economic development by finding new and better ways of doing things to make something better or less expensively to satisfy a unique need which is profitable (Egbe-Okpenge & Igbo, 2013).

Generally, entrepreneurship like many other concepts has no generally accepted definition. Many authorities have defined it in different ways. According to Brockman (2011), entrepreneurship is the willingness to seek out for investment opportunities in an environment

and be able to establish and run a business successfully based on identified opportunities. Taiwo, Falohun and Agwu, (2016) considered the concept very important for enhancing economic growth of the country. The ability, knowledge, experiences and process required for effective utilization of available resources in the economy for sustainable development are known as entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurial skills are all about the possession of skills and knowledge that will assist an individual becoming self-reliant and/ or employer of labour. Entrepreneurial skills acquisition also helps entrepreneurs to acquire self-confidence, self-esteem and participate in decision-making at household and community levels (Rufai, Abdulkadir & Abdul, 2013). Thus, Entrepreneurial skills involves the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competencies that will enable learners to maximize the use of existing resources for firm career commitments such as setting up businesses, marketing service or being productive employees of organizations.

As the 20th century draws to a close, the general state of entrepreneurship activity in the 21st century has revealed several and diversified schemes to enhance entrepreneurship skills. Among the pertinent schemes geared towards this enhancement according to Mustapha, Idris, Musa, Ajah, Gabriel and Kolo (2017) and Mahmud, Mustapha and Saba (2015) include among others, the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Private-public Partnerships (PPP) and Life-Long Career Guidance for All (LLCG), Agricultural Development Project (ADP), Better Life Programmes/ Family Supports programme (BLP/ FSP), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Empowerment and Economic Development Strategy (NEEDS) and Youth Enterprise with Innovation (YOUWIN). However, it is lamentable that even with the huge human and material resources put in these schemes; they have abysmally futile to yield the desired outcomes as a result of poor implementation. Besides these schemes, counselling is looked as an alternative to enhance the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills among youths in Nigeria.

Counselling in different forms and with different interpretations has existed in societies for a long time. For this reason, counselling has now become institutionalized and defined by different authors such as Bicknell-Hentges and Lynch (2009) defined counselling as a form of talk therapy that assists individuals with psychological and emotional difficulties. Similarly, the National Career Development Association (NCDA) (2010) defines counselling as a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, family groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education and career goals. Seeing the concept from a more dynamic perspective, the American Counseling Association conference of 2010 agreed that the unified definition of counselling is as follows: "Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals" (ACA, 2010)

This study provides an overview into the global dome and gives explicit proof of the importance of counselling to entrepreneurship skill development in raising awareness; securing technical and managerial by experts and professionals from different backgrounds of study and integrating counselling into a wider entrepreneurship promotion programme.

The conceptual framework is the skilled connection between the concepts and how each concept turns to one another in enhancing the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills among the youths through effective counselling in Nigeria. Therefore, the conceptual framework for the study is schematically illustrated in figure 1:

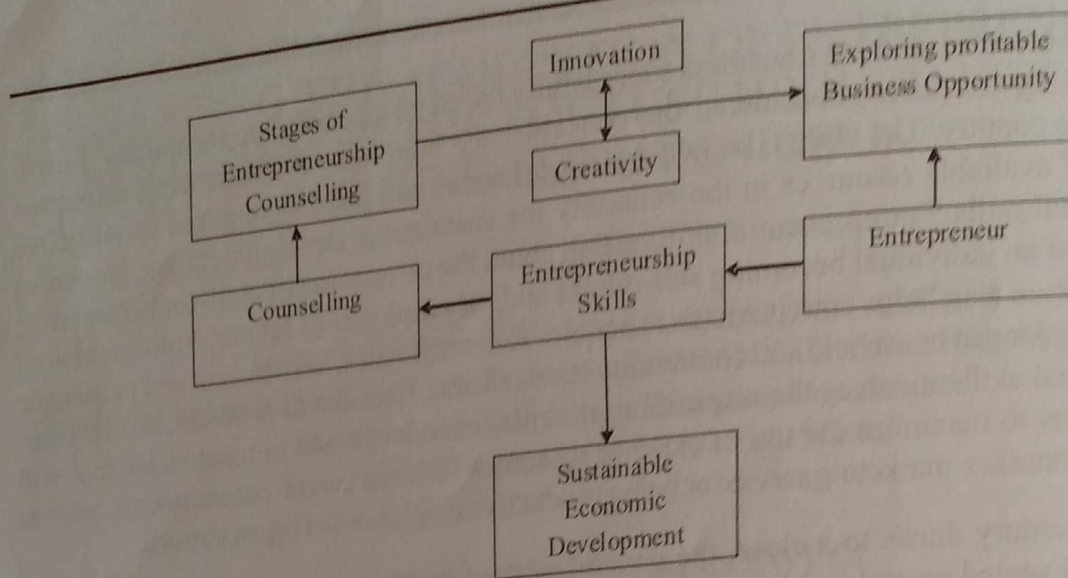


Figure 1: Schematic diagram for enhancing the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills among the youths through effective counselling in Nigeria

The schema above reveals that an entrepreneur is a visionary person who starts a business with a fresh idea to make something better or less expensively to satisfy a unique need which is profitable. The ability, knowledge, experiences and process required for effective utilization of available resources in the economy for sustainable development are known as entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurial skills involve the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competencies that will enable learners to maximize the use of existing resources for firm career commitments such as setting up businesses, marketing service or being productive employees of organizations (Ogundele, Sofoluwe, & Kayode, 2012). These skills are learned or inborn traits such as agility, business consciousness, courage, enterprising, initiative, judgment, knowledge of the market, leadership, risk takings, organizing ability, responsibility are essential for individuals who wish to take entrepreneurial challenges. Through counselling, entrepreneurship skills are all about the possession of skills and knowledge that will assist an individual becoming self-reliant and employer of labour. According to Olatunji (2012), the following stages serve as a guide for entrepreneurs counselling:

- i. **Call for Participation:** In Nigeria, most empowerment policies are often politicized. Most often, the empowerment officials are often the ruling party representatives with virtually no entrepreneurial experience. This fundamental problem often leads to a situation whereby such individuals put interest in empowering the party loyalists even if such individuals have no entrepreneurial intention. This background failure often leads to general failure of the empowerment programmes. In order to overcome this problem, the whole empowerment process should be objectively made open by making a public call to all and sundry that has interest in entrepreneurship. After getting such interested individuals, the next step should be induction service.
- ii. **Induction Service:** Observing from the management perspective, Yahaya (2002), defined induction as an organized activity designed to assist newly recruited employees to adjust to the organizational environment. Applying this logic to the entrepreneurial empowerment process, induction service is organised for such interested participants in order to introduce and make them familiar with the intents and contents of the empowerment programme. Similarly, during induction, counsellors with proven practical entrepreneurial experience test the ability and potential of the individual participants in order to know the area of entrepreneurship that will be appropriate and the

possible financial commitments that will be necessarily involved. This is very necessary because a closer look at the empowerment process in Nigeria will reveal a situation whereby the government will empower a carpenter with motorcycle thereby making him abandon his previous job to become an "Okadaman". Such situations have made lots of youths to abandon their original significant vocation to become an ordinary unskilled labourer.

iii. Entrepreneurial Training and Counselling: After the interested applicants have been inducted into the programme and the potentials have been discovered, there should be the empowerment of the mind before monetary empowerment. This could be achieved by inviting entrepreneurial motivational speakers to charge and ignite the entrepreneurial spirits in the individuals and motivate them for entrepreneurial action, make them know the importance of being a self-employed person, make them develop an entrepreneurial mindset and prepare them for the challenges ahead of them in the entrepreneurial world. In an instance, where the entrepreneurs are literate, the counsellor should be able to introduce them to entrepreneurial motivational textbooks and entrepreneurial journals in order to develop their entrepreneurial intellect. At this stage, the role of the counsellor is not only to feed client with information but also to guide the client to evaluate the available resources critically before taking a decision.

iv. Follow-up services: After the empowerment proper, the empowered individuals should not be left on their own

- i. They should be attached to an experienced person in the field to serve as a guard for such individual or individuals when taking a decision.
- ii. There should be periodic evaluation and progress report analysis of every individual in order to know the problems or progress of the empowered individuals. As noted, Yahaya (2002) some of the reasons for individual analysis appraisal are:
 - a. to minimise a person to company mismatch: this will enable the supervisor to know how much the individual is improving in the business
 - b. to capitalize on the strengths and minimise the effects of the weaknesses of a person on the business and help the individual entrepreneur realise their maximum potential.
- iii. Lastly, there should be periodic entrepreneurial seminars, talk shows and symposiums organised to the educational level of the affected entrepreneurs. For example, symposium or seminars organised for local artisans such as carpenters, iron fabricators, or local farmers should be organised in local languages so as to avoid language barriers in the communication process.

The entire stages of entrepreneurial counselling are verified to get back opinions, showing on what becomes obvious in the scheme; pointing out the area that needs to be enhanced, so as to adjust the scheme in the accordance to has been revealed and going over the stages in anticipation of a satisfactory result is accomplished.

The aim of this study is to enhance the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills through effective counselling in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. Entrepreneurship skills needed by the youths for self-employment
2. The challenges affecting the acquisition of the needed entrepreneurship skills by the youths for self-employment
3. The ways of enhancing the needed entrepreneurship skills by the youths for self-employment

Research Questions

The study provides answers to the following questions:

1. What are the entrepreneurship skills needed by the youths for self-employment?
2. What are the challenges affecting the acquisition of the needed entrepreneurship skills by the youths for self-employment?
3. What are the ways of enhancing the needed entrepreneurship skills by the youths for self-employment?

Methodology

A descriptive survey research was adopted for this study. A total of 67 respondents comprising 11 counsellors and 56 entrepreneurs formed the population for this study and the entire population was studied; since the population is manageable, no sampling was adopted. A structured questionnaire used for data collected for this study was developed by the researchers and validated by three experts from Guidance and Counselling Department. The questionnaire items were assigned four points rating scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). 67 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to counsellors and MVM entrepreneurs and 54 copies were duly filled by the respondents and returned representing 80.60%. Mean was used to analyze the data for answering research questions. The items on the instrument with a mean score of 3.50-4.00, 2.50-3.49, 1.50-2.49 and 1.00-1.49 are tag Strongly Agreed (SA), agreed (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) respectively.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the entrepreneurship skills needed by the youths for self-employment?

Table 1: Mean responses of the Respondents on the entrepreneurship skills needed by the youths for self-employment

S/N	ITEMS	$N_1=9$ \bar{X}_1	$N_2=45$ \bar{X}_2	\bar{X}_t	REMARK
TECHNICAL SKILLS					
1	Innovativeness	2.55	2.58	2.57	Agreed
2	Seeking opportunity	2.57	2.75	2.66	Agreed
3	Risk-taking	2.52	2.67	2.60	Agreed
4	Change orientation	2.59	2.50	2.55	Agreed
	\bar{X}_g			2.60	Agreed
MANAGEMENT SKILLS					
5	Decision making	3.21	3.34	3.28	Agreed
6	Knowledge in finance	3.16	2.98	3.07	Agreed
7	Knowledge in marketing	3.76	3.60	3.68	Strongly Agreed
8	Ability to plan	2.97	2.85	2.91	Agreed
9	Ability to set goals	2.94	3.03	2.99	Agreed
10	Ability to analyse	2.67	2.83	2.75	Agreed
11	Ability to evaluate	2.75	2.67	2.71	Agreed
	\bar{X}_g			3.06	Agreed
PERSONAL SKILLS					
12	Effective interaction	3.27	3.32	3.30	Agreed
13	Ability to organize	2.99	3.12	3.06	Agreed
14	Ability to negotiate	3.32	3.33	3.33	Agreed
15	Network building	2.54	2.87	2.71	Agreed
16	self esteem	3.43	3.33	2.88	Agreed
17	Sociability	3.65	3.51	3.58	Strongly Agreed
18	self management	2.98	2.78	2.88	Agreed
19	integrity/ honesty	3.43	3.12	3.28	Agreed
20	Consciousness	2.95	2.89	2.92	Agreed
21	ability to work without supervision	3.54	3.23	3.39	Agreed
	\bar{X}_g			3.13	Agreed

Keys: N_1 = Counsellors, N_2 = entrepreneurs, \bar{X}_t = Average mean of respondents and \bar{X}_g = Grand Average Mean

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The data presented in table 1 revealed that the Grand Mean (\bar{X}_g) value (3.13) of the items is within the range value of 2.50- 3.49. Therefore, all the respondents agreed to the entrepreneurship skills needed by the youths for self-employment

Research Question 2

What are the challenges affecting the acquisition of the needed entrepreneurship skills by the youths for self-employment?

Table 2: Mean responses of the challenges affecting the acquisition of the needed entrepreneurship skills by the youths for self employment

S/N	ITEMS	$N_1=9$ \bar{X}_1	$N_1=45$ \bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_t	REMARK
1	Multiple taxation	2.55	2.58	2.57	Agreed
2	Government policies	2.57	2.75	2.66	Agreed
3	Political instability	2.52	2.67	2.60	Agreed
4	Low standard of education	2.59	2.50	2.55	Agreed
5	lack of enforcement of Nigerian patent laws	2.65	2.87	2.76	Agreed
6	venture capital	2.75	2.67	2.71	Agreed
7	Access to finance	3.65	3.76	3.71	Agreed
8	Security Issues	3.21	3.45	3.33	Agreed
9	Poor State of the Country's Infrastructure	3.23	3.59	3.41	Agreed
10	Corruption	3.65	3.81	3.73	Agreed
	\bar{X}_g			3.27	Agreed

The data presented in table 2 revealed that the Grand Mean (\bar{X}_g) value (3.27) of the items is within the range value of 2.50- 3.49. Therefore, all the respondents agreed to the challenges affecting the acquisition of the needed entrepreneurship skills by the youths for self-employment.

Research Question 3

What are the ways of enhancing the needed entrepreneurship skills by the youths for self-employment?

Table 3: Mean responses of the Respondents on the ways of enhancing the needed entrepreneurship skills by the youths for self-employment

S/N	ITEMS	$N_1=9$ \bar{X}_1	$N_1=45$ \bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_t	REMARK
1	Counselling	3.65	3.72	3.69	Strongly Agreed
2	School- industrial link	3.23	3.45	3.34	Agreed
3	Technology	3.75	3.61	3.68	Strongly Agreed
	\bar{X}_g			3.57	Strongly Agreed

The data presented in table 3 revealed that the Grand Mean (\bar{X}_g) value (3.57) of the items is within the range of 3.50- 4.00. Therefore, all the respondents strongly agreed on ways of enhancing the needed entrepreneurship skills by the youths for self-employment

Discussion of Findings

In order to achieve the abovementioned purposes, and for the youths (counselees) to have a satisfying work life, they must be equipped with entrepreneurial skills (Ikeanyionum, 2006). In the view of Ahwiring (2011) the skills connected with entrepreneurship include technical skills, communication, interpersonal relations, presentation and assertiveness. The respondents generally agreed on all the technical, management and personal skills needed by the youths for self-employment. The result on the technical skills revealed that the respondents agreed on the technical skills needed by entrepreneurs for self-employment. This concurs with Okwori (2004) risk is ever present in all human affairs, be they economic, political, social or personal. Human activities are full of risk and uncertainty. The fact that the future cannot be predicted with certainty underlies the pervasiveness of risk. Similarly, Mustapha and Abubakar (2014) stated that one of the major challenges affecting entrepreneurs in Nigerian is lack of understanding and the application of marketing concept. Most Nigerian small business owners equate 'marketing' to 'selling' and this is reflected in their various dysfunctional business behaviours against customer satisfaction and good business orientation. They lack the knowledge and skills of basic marketing ingredients such as marketing research, market segmentation and marketing planning and control. The result of the personal skills revealed that the ability to adapt to the working environment is an essential in occupations, especially in the industry as it involves many employees. Charles and Yongsun (2014), clarified that employers need flexible workers who are able to face any challenges in workplace besides able to motivate themselves to get through those challenges. Daft and Marcic (2013) mentioned that working with various races, cultures and languages is challenging as employees must be willing to cooperate.

On the challenges faced by the entrepreneurs, the result revealed that potential Nigerian entrepreneurs go through many hardships when trying to access credit funds. This result concurs with Mustapha and Abubakar (2014) that 90% of industries are either ailing or have closed down due to constrained access to finance, owing to a number of reasons some of which are; difficulty in accessing funds from banks because they are seen as high-risk enterprises with low capital base in the case of bank loans and a host of others. The result also revealed that government inconsistency in policy is really a challenge an entrepreneur will have to tackle. This finding is in line with Okezie and Asoluka (2013) that governance is something entrepreneurs have no control over; all entrepreneurs can do is to influence government's policy with respect to enacting favourable business laws. One other challenge revealed from the study is multiple taxations. Olugboyega (2017) corroborated that entrepreneurs in a country have a responsibility of funding the government through paying taxes, most of the taxes charged on entrepreneurs are mostly duplicated and this has the effect of increasing the cost of doing business. The result also indicated that low level of

education also affects entrepreneurial skills. This is in line with Halliru, Musa and Nasiru (2018) that there is no gainsaying the fact that education is the key to knowledge and that it plays a strong role in forming the burgeoning entrepreneur. The world today is a global village and since an intending entrepreneur must be conversant and in tune with events around and about him, education becomes a critical factor in preparing and empowering the entrepreneur with the qualities required of him. Security issues also affect entrepreneurial skills. When there is no guarantee of security of lives and properties, it is difficult to run a successful venture. The result revealed that getting venture capital to finance entrepreneurial endeavour in Nigeria is very difficult because of the political and economic instability.

On the ways of enhancing the needed entrepreneurship skills by the youths for self-employment is counselling. This result coincides with Owalla (2017) that counselling change the attitudes and perceptions of people about entrepreneurship. Malik (2013) also asserted that counselling encourage more people from all backgrounds to take the first step and think positively about establishing an enterprise. In support of this, Trump and Kiyosaki (2006) stated that no matter how good or interesting an entrepreneurial policy is, if entrepreneurial guidance and counselling is not given adequate priority and attention by making it an integral part of the empowerment process, the whole empowerment exercise is most likely to be an exercise in futility. This is because empowerment comes with enlightenment. Use electronic media to disseminate information, advice and best practice and to ensure effective tracking of business proposals as part of an enhanced speed of response for entrepreneurs seeking support such as advice, information, guidance, and signposting and chat-room environment for entrepreneurs. It will supplement and not replace one to one advice. In support to this finding, DeJaeghere (2017) affirmed that the electronic media is, therefore, designed to meet the needs of a diverse group of individuals and organizations with an interest either in developing their understanding of entrepreneurship skills or in taking the first steps to establish an enterprise.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Preparing the graduates for the competitive world of work has been the sole aim of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship and counselling are considered indispensable towards self-reliance and sustainable development of the nation. Studies related to this dimension will help in better understanding of entrepreneurship skills through counselling in the development of frameworks and policies in the future so as to promote entrepreneurship skill development. Therefore, to comply with the directives to the effect of entrepreneurship and counseling, the duos should be made compulsory for all students in Nigeria in all facets of education irrespective of their areas of specialization. Stakeholders, government and other related/concerned bodies should encourage the employees by providing the necessary guidance and counselling services. Once the above recommendations are strictly followed, it would go a long way in enhancing the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills through effective counselling in Nigeria.

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