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## EFFECT OF SKILL ACQUISITION PROGRAMMES ON ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The reason why many technicians earn fat incomes than some university graduates in advanced countries is because the technicians acquired more practical skills than the graduates who acquired theoretical knowledge while in the universities. Skills development is very crucial to Nigeria's economic growth and development and this necessitated the establishment of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) to develop positive mind-set among the youths towards self-employment after graduation. To this end, the major objective of this study is to examine the relationship between skill acquisition programmes undertaken by the ITF and entrepreneurial development in Nigeria. The study's population consisted of 250 trainee entrepreneurs undergoing training at ITF training facility in Abuja. Descriptive design was adopted with administration of questionnaire to beneficiaries of ITF training programmes. Analytical tools include the use of percentages, tabular presentation and chi-square ( $X^2$ ) for hypothesis testing. The findings indicate that some entrepreneurs have acquired technical, marketing and managerial skills, which have impacted on increased entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommends that ITF should increase its efforts in promoting entrepreneurship education by offering more skill-oriented training programmes that will benefit Nigerian economic growth and development. In conclusion, the researchers submit that adequate entrepreneurial skills are necessary for effective and efficient running of entrepreneurial business in Nigeria. **Keywords:** employment generation, skill acquisition, entrepreneurship development and economic growth.

### INTRODUCTION

Skill is very important in the life of every human being (Akintunde, 2011). The reason why many technicians earn more than some university graduates is because the technicians acquire more practical skills than the theories, unlike the graduates who were fed with theoretical experiences while in the universities. Skill acquisition is the

ability to be trained on a particular task or function and become expert in it. Similarly, Donli (2004) is of the view that skill acquisition is the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training which is geared towards instilling in individuals, the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. He stressed that if individuals are given the opportunity to acquire relevant skills needed for self-sustenance in the economy, it will promote their charisma in any work environment. He further maintains that skill acquisition increases competition and cooperation among people.

Skill acquisition is paramount in the educational sector because its contribution to the development of the nation's human capital and employment cannot be undermined. Productive capacity of any nation depends solely on the ability of that nation to recognize the ability of manpower. The development of ideas, science advancement, technological breakthrough, economic development, political stability and more is made possible by educational theories and practices. Skill, competencies, knowledge and understanding one acquires will aid the development of the individual and the nation in particular. In Nigeria today, there is a need for skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant. There is also the need for skilled people who can understand and adapt to changes in the increasing complexity of technology. People who can apply scientific knowledge to solve environmental challenges of mankind are also needed. The issue of skills acquisition should take a central position if low productivity and poor quality of products must be tackled. The increase in the number of graduates of technical institutions may have positive impact on productivity in the informal sector but the general low level of skills still affects the growth of the sector activities and impacts on income negatively. The development of relevant skills and knowledge is a major instrument for improved productivity, better working conditions, and the promotion of decent work in the informal economy (Marjo-Riitta, 2003). In addition, better educated entrepreneurs are generally more responsive to policy measures, which is important for the sector's development. Improving productivity is

essential to the survival and growth of informal sectors. The need for this study will show how skill acquisitions can drive entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. It is against this back drop that this research is embarked upon to explore the impact of skill acquisitions on entrepreneurial development in Nigeria.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### *Entrepreneurial Development*

Entrepreneurship development is a course of action that involves all functions, activities and actions associated with identifying and evaluating perceived opportunities and bringing together of resources necessary for the successful formation of a new firm to pursue and seize the said opportunities (Cornwall & Naughton, 2003). It entails a new venture that involves more than just problem solving in a typical management position. Entrepreneurship is critical for the economy. It is the engine of economic progress, job creation as well as social adjustment (Gurol & Atsan, 2006). The growing need to hasten economic development by generating new ideas and to translate into profitable ventures makes entrepreneurship an attention for the scholars as well as the policy makers (Turker & Selcuk, 2008).

Entrepreneurship development is considered as a way to tackle some of the socio-economic problems that bedevilled some countries, especially problem of high poverty and unemployment (Abubakar, 2012). The role of entrepreneurship is to promote prosperity by establishing new jobs, decreasing the level of unemployment and increase economic growth and development of a region (Kareem, 2015). Accordingly, a focus on entrepreneurship is a focus on the process involved in the initiation of a new organization, the behaviour of such organization and its performance in terms of profit made. Osuagwu (2002) defined entrepreneurship as a catalyst to increase the rate of economic growth, creating job opportunities as well as reducing the dependence on the import of manufactured products. Entrepreneurship encompasses creating innovation, promoting new sets of attitude and culture for the attainment of future challenges

(Arogunde, 2011). Entrepreneurship development refers to the process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institutional building programmes focused on individuals who wish to start or expand a business (Mwatsika, 2015). The aim of entrepreneurship development is to enlarge the base of entrepreneurs in an economy to accelerate the pace at which new ventures are created thereby speed up creation of jobs and economic growth (Aidis, 2005; Benzing et al 2009; Mwatsika, 2015)

### **Skill Acquisition**

Skill acquisition can be defined as the form of training by individuals or group of individuals that can lead to acquisition of knowledge for self-sustenance. It involves the training of people in different fields of trade under a legal agreement between the trainers and the trainees for certain duration and under certain conditions. Ochiagha (1995) defined skill acquisition as the process of demonstrating the habit of active thinking or behaviour in a specific activity. He further stated that skill acquisition is seen as the ability to do or perform an activity that is related to some meaningful exercise, work or job. He maintains that for skill to be acquired, appropriate knowledge, attitudes, habits of thought and qualities of character are learnt to enable the acquirer develop intellectual, emotional and moral character which prepares him or her for a brighter future. Similarly, Donli (2004) is of the view that skill acquisition is the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training which is geared towards instilling in individuals, the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. He stressed that if individuals are given the opportunity to acquire relevant skills needed for self-sustenance in the economy, it will promote their charisma in any work environment. He further maintains that skill acquisition increases competition and cooperation among people.

### **Skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development**

According to Igwe and Oragwu (2014) vocational skills development theories provides the strategies for the effective training of individual in various skills areas. According to these authors, vocational skills are

knowledge indices and attitudinal development of potential abilities to perform a given task according to specification. Traditionally, vocational schools have not existed to further education in the sense of liberal arts, but rather to teach only job-specific skills and as such have been better considered to be institutions devoted to training, not education. Skill development is an important tool for harnessing a nation's natural resources and for promoting economic stability. The wealth of any society determines to a large extent, the level of development of that society.

Nigeria is endowed with mineral and agricultural resources. If these are to be properly harnessed and economically utilized, there is need for emphasis to be placed on the acquisition of techno-vocational skills, in a prevailing society that is in need of development. This will enable the rural youths develop their intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual, biological, political and economic capacities and capabilities. Techno-vocational skills acquisition will provide assistance for people to learn and acquire appropriate skills to perform as functioning members in the communities. With this, the rural youths can become aware of the challenges that are associated with a worthwhile life that will boost their career, stability and fulfilment in a world of competitive industry. Further, skill development also plays pertinent roles in all forms of knowledge, learning and professional training.

According to Ogundele, Christiana, and Gana (2016), skill is termed as expertness, practiced ability, dexterity and tact. It can be seen as a sequence of organized actions, proficiency executed and usually displaying a flexible but systematic temporal patterning. That is to say, it involves the acquisition of performance capability. Skill development therefore, is the ability to do or to perform an activity that is related to some meaningful exercise, work or job. Skill acquisition requires intelligent brains. Indeed, most skill trainings poses great challenges to the learner on the integration of the practical work and theoretical studies, common sense, a good power of observation and courage.

Ogundele, Christiana, and Gana (2001) further retreated 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 the individual through repetition or practice. It means that development of skills varies with the nature, complexity and the type of activity. Hence, the individual who opt for skill training will among other things, possess qualities such as interest, ability, aptitude, patience, personality characteristics and other human/physical qualities that would enable them to succeed in it. Generally, skills comprise two components; the knowledge component and the activity component. While the latter, is made up of motor and perceptual skills. Both the knowledge and activity components combine in different proportions for different skills.

The practical components of skill relate to those areas of knowledge that is concerned with the mode of doing. It enables the individual to acquire the know-how of a variety of skills that is related to a particular trade or occupation. Theory and practice must be fully integrated into a teaching-learning process for the purpose of effectiveness and worthwhile result. All teaching should help the learners acquire a blend of theory and practical skills in order to achieve his objectives. The range of courses in the technical colleges to attain these objectives should be as wide as possible and include but not limited to mechanical trades, computer practice, electrical engineering, building trades, wood trades and construction trades. On the bases of existing literature and theoretical perspectives (Human Capital Theory) guiding the present study, the following null hypotheses emerged:

**H1:** There is no significant relationship between skill acquisition programme and entrepreneurship development.

**H2:** Skill acquisition does not promote self-reliance among entrepreneurs in Nigeria.



## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Human Capital Theory (HCT)

Human capital theory was developed in early 1964 by Gary Stanley Becker (1930–2014) and Jacob Mincer (1922–2006). The term Human capital as popularized by Becker and Mincer (1964), emphasizes the creation of higher economic productivity gained through a collaboration of economic resources such as skills, technical know-how and ingenuity. These resources are the total capacity of the people that represents a form of wealth which can be directed to accomplish the goals of the nation or state. Central to the human capital theory (HCT) is the fact that any investment in the development of the human person in advancement of his skills translates to the increase in the desired workforce needed to advance the goals and objectives of the organization. Goldin (2014) defines Human capital as the skills the labour force possesses and is regarded as a resource or asset. Of prime importance is the idea that there are investments in people in terms of education and training which desirably results in increase in the individual's output. Higher productivity is the major factor underlying the HCT and it is thought to be motivated only when workers and people see the need to raise their knowledge base by acquiring more technical knowledge and skills they may require to advance and increase their capital (financial) base (Kirzner, 1997).

## METHODS

The study's population consisted of 250 trainee entrepreneurs currently undergoing entrepreneurial training at ITF training facility in Abuja. Descriptive design was adopted with administration of questionnaires. With the help of experts in instrument validation, the researchers developed questionnaires for the present study. The present study adopted a 5-point Likert's scale ranging from 1 "Strongly disagree" to 5 "Strongly agree". A total of one hundred and seventy (170) questionnaires were administered. However, only one hundred and sixty (160) copies were returned while 150 copies were considered valid for further analysis. Analytical tools include the

statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), tabular presentation, and Chi-square for hypothesis testing.

## RESULTS

Few tables covering the key questionnaire items are presented thus:

**Table 1: ITF offers vocational skill development**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	21	14.0	14.0	14.0
Agree	108	72.0	72.0	86.0
Strongly Agree	21	14.0	14.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2021).

About 14% of the respondents disagreed that training programmes offered by the ITF include vocational skill development, 86% agreed that ITF offers vocational skill development.

**Table 2: ITF offers entrepreneurship development programmes**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	4	2.7	2.7	2.7
Undecided	5	3.3	3.3	6.0
Agree	30	20.0	20.0	26.0
Strongly Agree	111	74.0	74.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2021).

Table 2 indicates that, about 2.7% of the respondent disagree that entrepreneurship development programme is one of the training categories offered by the ITF, 3.3% undecided, 20% agree while 74% of the respondents strongly agreed that entrepreneurship development programme is among the training categories in ITF.



**Table 3: ITF provides vocational skills training for unemployed**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undecided	8	5.3	5.3	5.3
	Agree	63	42.0	42.0	47.3
	Strongly Agree	79	52.7	52.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2021).

About 42% of the respondents agreed that one of the trainings provided by ITF include vocational skills training for unemployed, 52.7% strongly agreed, while 5.3% of the respondents are inconclusive in their decision. This implies that most participants agreed that ITF offers vocational skills training.

**Table 4: ITF Provide vocational training for higher institutions**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	29	19.3	19.3	19.3
	Undecided	2	1.3	1.3	20.7
	Agree	47	31.3	31.3	52.0
	Strongly Agree	72	48.0	48.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2021).

Table 4 shows that about 19.3% of the respondents disagreed that vocational training for higher institutions is among the trainings provided by ITF, while 79% of the respondents agreed that vocational training for higher institutions is among types of training provided by the ITF.

**Table 5: ITF provides training for secondary school leavers to develop their entrepreneurial mindsets**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	18	12.0	12.0	12.0
Disagree	13	8.7	8.7	20.7
Undecided	3	2.0	2.0	22.7
Agree	23	15.3	15.3	38.0
Strongly Agree	93	62.0	62.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2021).

Results from table 5 indicate that about 12% of the respondents strongly disagreed that training for secondary school leavers is among types of training provided by ITF, while majority of the participants strongly agreed that training for secondary school leavers is among the types of training provided by ITF to develop entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

**Table 6: ITF provides training for school drop-outs**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	39	26.0	26.0	26.0
Undecided	3	2.0	2.0	28.0
Agree	66	44.0	44.0	72.0
Strongly Agree	42	28.0	28.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2021).

Table 6 indicates that ITF has a training programme for school drop-outs. The essence of this training is to minimize criminalities among the youths as idle hands are devil's workshop.

**Table 7: ITF provides training for SMEs owners/managers**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	22	14.7	14.7	14.7
	Disagree	15	10.0	10.0	24.7
	Undecided	5	3.3	3.3	28.0
	Agree	83	55.3	55.3	83.3
	Strongly Agree	25	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2021).

Most participants agreed that ITF provides training for SMEs owner/managers to enhance their performance. This training is to increase their entrepreneurial knowledge.

**Table 8: ITF organizes training to support professional artisans**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	22	14.7	14.7	14.7
	Disagree	4	2.7	2.7	17.3
	Agree	83	55.3	55.3	72.7
	Strongly Agree	41	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2021).

Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that ITF offers training programmes that are likely to enhance the performance of professional artisans. This is to improve their entrepreneurial skills.

Table 9: ITF introduces networking events through workshops, seminars, symposia, lectures and stakeholders where cross fertilization of ideas could occur.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	5	3.3	3.3	3.3
Disagree	11	7.3	7.3	10.7
Undecided	8	5.3	5.3	16.0
Agree	23	15.3	15.3	31.3
Strongly Agree	103	68.7	68.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2021).

Table 9 indicates that about 3.3% of the respondent strongly disagree that networking events through workshops, seminars, symposia, lectures and stakeholders where cross fertilization of ideas could occur is among the type of training provided by ITF, while 68.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that networking events through workshops, seminars, symposia, lectures and stakeholders where cross fertilization of ideas is possible due to the operation of ITF.

## HYPOTHESIS TESTING

### Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between skill acquisition programme and entrepreneurship development.

### Chi-Square Test

#### Frequencies

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Disagree	29	37.5	-8.5
Undecided	2	37.5	-35.5
Agree	43	37.5	5.5
Strongly Agree	76	37.5	38.5
Total	150		

**Test Statistics**

Chi-Square <sup>a</sup>	75.867
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 37.5.

**Conclusion:** Since  $p$  – value (0.000) < 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and hence conclude that there is significant relationship between skill acquisition programme and entrepreneurship development.

**Hypothesis Two**

Skill acquisitions do not promote self-reliance and innovative ideas among entrepreneurs in Nigeria

**Chi-Square Test**

**Frequencies**

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Strongly Disagree	18	30.0	-12.0
Disagree	13	30.0	-17.0
Undecided	3	30.0	-27.0
Agree	17	30.0	-13.0
Strongly Agree	99	30.0	69.0
Total	150		

**Test Statistics**

Chi-Square <sup>a</sup>	203.067
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 30.0.

**Conclusion:** Since  $p$  – value (0.000) < 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and hence conclude that skill acquisitions promote self-reliance and innovative ideas among entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION

Result of hypothesis indicates that there is a significant and positive relationship between skill acquisition programme and entrepreneurship development. This implies that the more SMEs owners/managers are equipped with the requisite skills, the more improved their performance would be. Hence, there would be employment generation, economic growth and development. Result of the second hypothesis indicates that skill acquisitions promote self-reliance and innovative ideas among entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Entrepreneurs who are innovative are likely to deliver improved firm performance and contribute to employment generation, economic growth and development. Results indicate that participants strongly agreed that categories of training offered by ITF include graduate scheme for self-employment. This means ITF has the interests of Nigerian graduates at heart. Also, the respondents strongly agreed that ITF offers entrepreneurial trainings to potential entrepreneurs to avoid pitfalls. This implies that ITF offers adequate training to potential entrepreneurs to kick-start their own businesses.

The results show that ITF has contributed to the emergence of rural employment generation and growth of small-scale enterprises in rural areas. The best development plan is the one that originates from the grass-roots. Another key finding says ITF programmes helped to provide vocational training skills to the unemployed youths. This study points out that the contributions of skills acquisition to entrepreneurship development cannot be ignored because skills acquisitions have a positive relationship on the growth of the economy. Moreover, skills acquisition programme is a major contributor to the development of entrepreneurship and economic growth and development in Nigeria, Empirically, this finding is in line with the study of Timmons and Spinelli (2003), who found that acquiring entrepreneurship skill leads to entrepreneurship development and economic growth in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

With an upward rise in population of working class and highly educated or skilled citizens, there is the need for Nigerian government and government functionaries at all levels to draft appropriate strategies that will encourage and engender greater participation of the youths in self-employment practice. Since SMEs are regarded as engine rooms for economic growth and development in most nations, the researcher believes that with proper support to SMEs operators, Nigeria will be a better place for all in the near-future.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the present study, the following are the recommendations that can increase the effectiveness of skills acquisitions programmes among entrepreneurs:

- i. That Industrial Training Fund (ITF) should increase its efforts in promoting entrepreneurship education that will be of benefit to SMEs owners/managers.
- ii. There is a need to review entrepreneurship study curriculum in Nigeria to reflect realities of Nigerian business environment and to meet the ever-growing market needs and to actualise the reality of entrepreneurial skills acquisition.
- iii. Based on the findings, it is strongly recommended that our youths should be encouraged to develop initiatives through the acquisition of entrepreneurial skill, and put into productive use numerous untapped resources in our local environment.

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