

BASIC ACCOUNTING SKILLS NEEDED BY SELF-EMPLOYED BUILDING CRAFTSMEN THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN ENUGU URBAN

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Abstract

The study was designed to identify the basic accounting skills needs that are acquirable by self-employed building craftsmen through entrepreneurship education. One research question guided the study. The area of study was Enugu Urban where 150 building craftsmen in different building trades were identified and used. The instrument used was the questionnaire with 28 items. Mean was used to answer the research question. Findings of the study showed that basic accounting skills are acquirable through entrepreneurship education. Examples include skills in keeping basic accounting records as cash payments records, cash sales, receipts of payments and supplies, goods and raw materials inventory, bargaining and purchasing skills, ability to determine effective labour costs, skills in sourcing of necessary funds, skills in simple budgeting and in displaying prudence in basic financial management, integrity and honesty in dealing with all customers and employees. Others include skills in keeping accurate-easy-to-understand records, reliable and consistent records, skills in managing working capital, skills in carrying out market surveys and sales outlets, skills in determining effective selling price and raw material costs, skills in keeping records of invoices, cheque payments, and customers' ledger cards. Conclusions were drawn that acquiring basic accounting skills by self-employed building craftsmen is more urgent now given the impact of globalization, entrepreneurship and technology education in the world of work. It was recommended that self-employed building craftsmen should necessarily acquire basic accounting skills that the government through its policies should provide the enabling environment for them to develop and grow for self-reliance.

Introduction

Creativity is the innate ability, instinct, disposition and will to initiate a goal and strategically actualize the goal. Creativity is a key quality of every entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs are all those involved in self-employed activities known as entrepreneurship. Self-employment is seizing available opportunities to generate or get involved in activities that could be realized for self-development and profit making. It is a fulfillment of a desire for an enterprise

that could afford a comfortable life, promote goodwill, enhance leadership qualities, and consolidate economic gains (Onoh, 1995). Naude (1999) observes that entrepreneurship is the unquantifiable force, which brings together labour and capital and assumes the risks of production and distribution and on which the whole success of the capitalist depends. Self-employment therefore, can be summarized to mean the promotion of free enterprise and self-sufficiency by creating and spreading

wealth to the grassroots levels as a contribution to economic growth, employment generation and social progress. Moreover, the concept of entrepreneurship has been receiving loud ovations and monumental support especially in the civilized world. In general, this creative and self-employed person is known as an entrepreneur.

To many researchers, the entrepreneur is the focal point and key to the dynamics of economic development and growth. It is the self-employed persons such as the building craftsmen that put together new combinations and whose actions have consequences on the basis of their organizational skills, creativity as decision makers, identifies distinctive opportunities, structures, settings, situations and other variables within which the decisions and choices are made. Entrepreneurs are risk bearers. Entrepreneurs are doers or action oriented, independent and always rely on their own ingenuity and energy to plan and accomplish desired results. An entrepreneur as the decision-maker in a particular cultural context, commands a range of behaviour that exploits the identified opportunities (Onoh, 2010).

In developed economies of the world, the entrepreneur functions primarily as creator of innovations in the production process. Entrepreneurial role focuses more on his or her ability to organize rather than to create. Nwachukwu (1990) noted that an entrepreneur is any person who has the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities, gather the necessary resources to take advantage of them and initiate appropriate action to ensure success. Nwachukwu posits that a typical entrepreneur is a risk taker, a person who braves uncertainty, strikes out on his own

and through native wits, devotion to duty and singleness of purpose, somehow creates a business and industrial activities where none existed before. The entrepreneur is also regarded and recognized as a person who either undertakes the responsibility of making innovations in the economy by initiating the introduction of new goods, new methods of production or distributions, opening of a new market, development of a new source of supply of raw materials or carries out a new enterprise of any industry.

A thorough treatment of accounting skills needed by self-employed building craftsmen through entrepreneurship education will include the following:

- Accounting Skills need,
- Self-employed Building Craftsmen (Entrepreneurs),
- Qualities of an Entrepreneur,
- Entrepreneurship Education and
- Mission and Commission Statements.

According to Nwachukwu (1990) an entrepreneur's success is measured by how profitable the enterprise or firm is and the growth it has recorded over the years. This is so, in taking cognizance of the fact that building craftsmen entrepreneurs are not experts in money management or financial control. In other words, building craftsmen have limited knowledge of finance and accounting, though they are technically competent. However, circumstances and situations arising from the day to day running of business necessitates that good accounting records must be kept with regards to their customers, business associates, financial institutions and

general prudent financial management. It follows therefore that building craftsmen entrepreneurs need to know how much money that comes into the business every day or week, how to determine the selling price for his/her products, how much he/she spends every day, week, month or year on raw materials, labour, utilities and other miscellaneous expenditures. Furthermore, he/she needs to know how much should be drawn for personal and family use, so as not to liquidate the business. The development of appreciation for accounting functions such as skills to keep basic accounting records and its use is so important to the building craftsmen entrepreneur to the extent that without it, the entrepreneur can get up one day to discover that he/she has used up the working capital. The result of this could be such that the entrepreneur can no longer pay salaries of his staff, cannot repair or replace equipment, cannot purchase raw materials as consumables and can no longer pay for other utility services. Accounting skills are those competencies in basic accounting required by a person to function competently, confidently, profitably, and successfully in the process of carrying out one's daily business transactions. They include skills in bookkeeping, purchasing and supply, bargaining, determining labour costs, simple budgeting, keeping of accurate receipts, sales records, skills in keeping reliable records, sourcing for market outlets, work in progress records, credit purchases, invoices, cheque payments, keeping customers' records and goods inventory. Others are skills in good credit facility practices, operating the cash payment receipts, cash sales, prudent financial and working capital

management. The knowledge of fundamental accounting competencies by craftsmen entrepreneurs will promote in them good financial management, which is aimed at ensuring that there is adequate cash on hand to meet the necessary current and capital expenditures as well as to assist in maximizing growth and profits. It requires knowledge of liquidity. Management of money demands that the building craftsmen entrepreneurs must need to plan for all his future need for funds, plan for the most economical way of acquiring funds from different sources and be able to also plan for the most efficient way of putting to use acquired money from friends, family members, banks and other sources.

Observationally, it is evident that many self-employed building craftsmen had gone bankrupt as a result of poor financial management resulting from inadequate educational preparation. Knowledge of basic accounting functions is of utmost importance to building craftsmen entrepreneurs. This, as have been mentioned, is acquirable through entrepreneurship education. Appreciation of accounting functions and its use will help the building craftsmen entrepreneurs to have a good financial control of their business; it will help them to improve on their public or outside image in terms of borrowing at favorable terms; it will assist the building craftsmen in anticipating and providing for seasonal fluctuations in cash inflows or outflows.

According to FGN (2004), craftsmen are part of the human resources required by any nation for effective sustenance of economic growth and development. According to Onoh (1994) craftsmen in the skilled

personnel hierarchy of the building industry, occupy a central position that is crucially important in order to move the building industry forward. The importance and contributions of craftsmen to the economic growth and development globally and Nigeria in particular are quite remarkable. Their role is such that hardly any other group would be able to replace or key in successfully. Craftsmen are skilled persons who have a level of formal education, that is, Junior Secondary School (JSS 3), City & Guilds (C & G) of London, West African School Certificate (WAEC, Technical) and National Technical Examination Board Certificate (NABTEB). It is important to observe that formal education assists an entrepreneur in excelling in different areas of human endeavour. Indeed, the concern here are craftsmen in the building trades who are entrepreneurs. The trade areas include the carpentry and joinery, furniture designers, block-laying and Concreting, plumbing, fitting works, glazers, and painting and decorators. According to Onoh (2006) education is the improvement of the intellectual capabilities of the beneficiary, acquisition of some essential skills and a further elevation of the person from a position of low value or status to one of high value and recognition. Entrepreneurship is the careful management of the introduction of goods and the provision of essential services for the maximization of profit bearing the attendant reasonable risks.

The building craftsmen entrepreneurs should be able to know how to employ the process of gathering both human and material resources needed for starting a business venture and for its sustenance. As managers of their businesses, building craftsmen

entrepreneurs are involved in ensuring that the daily tasks are creditably, carefully and safely carried out. They should be able to ensure the smooth running of the enterprise so as to maximize profits, solve problems and plan for the future. Basic accounting information and skills are very vital to the existence and successful management of building trades industry by self-employed building craftsmen. Hence, an entrepreneur's success or otherwise, is solely dependent on one's ability to manage business opportunities (Nwachukwu, 1990). These opportunities compel the entrepreneur to assume responsibilities in making various sacrifices to keep the enterprise afloat. Building craftsmen entrepreneurs fall within business managers as persons who seek out investment opportunities for the purpose of achieving economic goals as they provide goods and services needed by the society. Peculiar features of this group of entrepreneurs include the fact that they are the chief executives, motivators, crisis resolvers, leaders, role models, resource allocators in their own rights. They provide their own fund requirement for profitable daily running of the enterprise.

The business activities of building craftsmen entrepreneurs are usually local, that is, they serve their immediate communities and environs. According to Onoh in Osuala (2004), three categories of expectations are demanded from all entrepreneurs. First, they are required to possess technical competence. This is the ability to be technically skilled in the rudiments of the building industry. Second, they must possess system competence that is, having the ability as good planners and organizers to exhibit skills in fitting all components of the business together, in

order to move the enterprises forward to the desired future. Third, they must possess interpersonal competence. This category includes most role traits as accounting skills, marketing skills, communication and public relations skills. Building craftsmen entrepreneurs need to acquire basic accounting skills through entrepreneurship education. This is because the society they are serving today are both informed and sophisticated in their tastes through technological development and globalization. This makes it more imperative for self-employed building craftsmen entrepreneurs in order to upgrade and sharpen their focus in attaining self-reliance. Onoh (2006) stated that there exists a direct relationship between education acquired by a person and success as an entrepreneur.

Extensive research information available from more advanced countries of the world confirms the fact that there are desirable qualities, which every person who aspires to be self-employed must possess before success can be achieved. Now that the world is a global village through technological breakthrough, growths, and development, it follows that these factors are generally applicable irrespective of the environment to which they belong. To that extent, research efforts have further shown that all entrepreneurs tend to be people with tremendous amount of determined effort and commitment. They are persons that are high in achievement motive – they love to make things happen and excel. These qualities include the following:

1. Reasonable risk-takers
2. Self-confident
3. Hard-Workers
4. Goal Setters

5. Accountable

6. Innovative

1. Reasonable risk takers

They are not gamblers but recognize that success or failure depends on oneself, takes calculated risks and sensibly daring since failure could be shattering. The entrepreneur gets all the necessary information regarding the activities that he/she wants to undertake. Even though they show great liking for challenges and do not give up easily, they still operate within the confines of good reasoning.

2. Self-Confidence as a quality for self-employment

The entrepreneur knows that he/she is the architect of his/her future. He/she develops special linking for independence, which serves as a motivation for all undertakings and the driving force for steady and non-despairing stand. He/she is always determined to succeed where others may have failed. They are always optimistic and individualistic. Provides good leadership, gets along well with others and always responsive to suggestions and criticisms.

3. Hardworking – 'Workaholics'

He/she cherishes hard work, works at odd hours and closes for the day only when the work is done. He/she still attaches oneself to the work even when a lot has been achieved. Desires to prove oneself, faces challenges and enjoys achievement. The entrepreneur moves ahead even when everyone else is discouraged. For him/her, hard work is a way of fulfilling oneself and a reward of its own. He/she works with zeal, enthusiasm that neatly fits with the need for high achievement. They have penchant for persistence, perseverance,

and determination. They have initiative, drive and a lot of energy.

4. Goal setting quality

They have a mission and they are committed to it. They set their own goals, targets and aspires undoubtedly to reach the mark. He/she does not allow oneself to be easily distracted but always focused to one's objectives.

5. Accountability as an entrepreneurial quality

They love to keep careful records. Growth and profit are twin blessings. Success and failure are two sides of the same coin. He/she is accountable to himself/herself as life's business success depends on him/her. He maintains integrity and honesty in order to have stories to tell of humble beginnings.

6. Innovativeness of the self-employed

Doing common things in an uncommon way or manner. They introduce new ideas into the business world, new goals are set, new methods of production, distribution and so on. They are prime movers whose impulse pushes them to become very ambitious in order to become successful. They are also versatile. They do all kinds of jobs, none too mean or too high. They have insatiable desire for success, maintains openness of mind, flexible and resourceful with sound knowledge.

Much as all those that seek to be self-employed must possess these qualities, there are yet some entrepreneurial skills needed to achieve success. Skill training according to Osuala (2004) is training given to an employee to make him/her perform expertly on his/her job by using his/her

knowledge effectively and readily in execution of his performances. Skill is the ability to perform expertly, facility in performance with dexterity and tact. A lot depend on the entrepreneur to acquire these skills especially when one may not have been an expert or a professional in that area. The foundation of all successful entrepreneurial effort is good management, which is acquirable through training and education. The acquisition of right managerial skills and competences are very important. It is always advisable also for one to enter into self-employment in areas where he/she has interest, skills and knowledge. It provides great insight into the nitty gritty of the business area as opposed to a novice.

In self-employment, there are actual risks which one must necessary encounter. It includes the risk of the capital with which the business is started in the case of failure; the risk of the family (wife/children) and friends when one gets "choked" with business activities; the risks of hard emotional stresses as a result of business failures, disappointments, hypertension (stroke). However, the rewards of being self-employed includes social recognition, satisfaction derivable through being one's own boss and in control of other persons that now depend on one to realize economic gains.

Anaele (1997) observed that persons who receive entrepreneurship education have more knowledge with which to go into self-employment and succeed. It has to be noted that self-employed persons are individuals who perform the tasks themselves rather than assign their tasks to other people. Moreover, self-employed building craftsmen need basic accounting skills

acquirable through entrepreneurship education, since they aspire to become team-builder-entrepreneurs, who hope to expand their small scale enterprises into larger companies. The main thrust of this research is that in view of the anticipated expansion and growth which will likely get into a full-scale organization and beyond the planning and management skills of building craftsmen entrepreneurs that will require hiring of additional employees, a good level of accounting skills must be acquired through entrepreneurship education. This is because entrepreneurship education will help building craftsmen entrepreneurs have a clear definition of objectives and vision statement of their enterprises. The goals and vision targets of building craftsmen entrepreneurs should be stated right from the inception of the business. Such clear visions and definition of objectives can be described as the mental framework that gives rise to the future growth of an organization. Goals and vision statements are statements that state the purposes and future prospects of the establishment. They are explained to mean the mission and commission of the entrepreneur.

Osoka (1998) noted that the self-employed building craftsmen mission and commission statements are the straight forward descriptions of an entrepreneur's activities. Such statements are the clear overall ideas of what the venture is all about. Osoka further argued that the mission statement of an entrepreneur defines what the entrepreneur wants to be. The commission statement defines the preparedness, commitment, devotion and discipline of the entrepreneur in order to realize the mission and vision

goals. Following from the above, it will be difficult for self-employed building craftsmen entrepreneurs to articulate meaningful mission and vision goals without entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education will help sharpen the innate capabilities, understandings, ideas, thoughts, and talents of self-employed building craftsmen to have good mission and vision goals that must be consistent with the commission goals to avoid confusion. This is because a consistent or coherent vision must encompass fundamental values touching on employees, customers, ethics, profits, products, and the society as a whole in terms of good public relations. These fundamental values form the basis for building craftsmen enterprises overall sense of purpose and perception of his role in the world of paid services, as well as what image the entrepreneur wishes to project in the future.

Acquisition of basic accounting skills by self-employed building craftsmen through entrepreneurship education will boost the operational efficiency of the entrepreneur. It will empower the application of the arts of science in the management of enterprises. The entrepreneurial function is the control and management of an enterprise. It adjusts the enterprise to the dynamic situation in which it is being conducted, coordinating factors to achieve the maximum return of the capital invested by the entrepreneur. The acquisition of basic accounting skills will imbue on building craftsmen entrepreneurs a favorable disposition to prudently manage their enterprises in the most profitable way.

Statement of the Problem

Many self-employed building

craftsmen seem not to have the skill to build a strategy that can be used to analyze their capabilities and have an understanding of the market forces and competitors. (Osuala, 2004). Osuala further posited that they do not possess the ability to keep basic accounting records as cash receipts, cash payments, sales book, cash purchases, invoices, cheques, payroll records, working capital, product inventory, credit sales and purchases. Moreover, they do not seem to have a firm grasp of good bargaining and purchasing ability, ability to determine labour costs and simple budgeting as tool for financial control, skill in keeping utility and raw materials records. The possession of these skills will ensure that the self-employed building craftsmen can stay and progress in their businesses with good returns of profits. The non-possession of these basic accounting skills that are acquired through entrepreneurship education by self-employed building craftsmen therefore constitutes a problem such that, the chances of survival of the business are slim and the probability of early failure becomes high.

Research Question

1. What are the accounting skills needs of self-employed building craftsmen in Enugu Urban?

Methods

The purpose of this study was to determine the need of acquiring basic accounting skills by self-employed building craftsmen through entrepreneurship education for economic growth. A research question was used and the design was a survey type.

The study was carried out in Enugu Urban of Enugu State. The

instrument used was the questionnaire. The questionnaire constituted of a five point response scale with values 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 as Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Undecided, Strongly Disagreed and Disagreed respectively. The instrument with 28 questionnaire items was administered directly by the researcher within a period of two months. The population was 150 building craftsmen entrepreneurs that were purposively sampled within Enugu Urban. The instrument was face validated by three experts in measurement and evaluation in the Department of Science and Computer Education as well as three experts in Accountancy Education in Department of Technology and Vocational Education in Enugu State University of Science and Technology. The data collected were analyzed by computing the mean score for each of the items. The decision rule was therefore based on the lower limit of the mean, thus: Strongly Agreed 4.50 – 5.00; Agreed 3.50 – 4.49; Undecided 2.50 – 3.49; Disagreed 1.50 – 2.49; Strongly Disagreed below 1.50. It follows that any mean score above 3.50 was considered as agreed while any item with mean score below 3.50 was considered as disagreed.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the accounting skills needs of self-employed building craftsmen in Enugu Urban?

Data in table 1 below were used in answering the research question.

Table 1

Mean Responses of the Respondents on the Accounting skills needed by self-employed building craftsmen in Enugu Urban.

S/N	Accounting Competencies/Skills	X	Decision
1.	Competencies in accurate bookkeeping.	4.27	Agreed
2.	Ability in determining effective labour costs.	4.29	Agreed
3.	Skill in sourcing for necessary funds from Banks or other Financial institutions.	4.19	Agreed
4.	Ability to demonstrate simple budgeting.	4.23	Agreed
5.	Skill in prudent money management.	4.18	Agreed
6.	Competency in maintaining financial integrity or records.	4.22	Agreed
7.	Ability in keeping of accurate and honest accounting records.	4.28	Agreed
8.	Skill in effective management of working capital.	4.65	Agreed
9.	Ability to keep daily cash payment receipts.	4.16	Agreed
10.	Ability to keep up-to date credit sales records.	4.23	Agreed
11.	Ability to keep all cash sales records.	4.36	Agreed
12.	Ability to keep all receipt records.	4.25	Agreed
13.	Ability to keep goods inventory.	4.24	Agreed
14.	Ability to keep credit purchase records.	4.26	Agreed
15.	Skill to keep simple and easy to understand records.	4.45	Agreed
16.	Skill to keep work in progress records.	4.38	Agreed
17.	Skill to keep consistent records.	4.55	Agreed
18.	Skill in carrying market survey for sales.	4.72	Agreed
19.	Skill in preparing product waybills	4.74	Agreed
20.	Skill in determining selling price.	4.63	Agreed
21.	Skill to keep reliable records.	4.65	Agreed
22.	Skill in keeping all utility records such as water and electricity.	4.65	Agreed
23.	Skill in keeping raw materials records.	4.35	Agreed
24.	Skill in keeping records of invoice.	4.28	Agreed
25.	Skill in keeping cheque payment records.	4.56	Agreed
26.	Skill in keeping all ledger records for customers.	4.82	Agreed
Grand Mean		4.41	

Table 1 shows that the mean scores of the respondents on the accounting skills needed by self-employed building craftsmen in order to achieve their objectives. The grand mean of 4.41 indicates complete agreement by the respondents. This shows that self-employed craftsmen need all accounting skills as indicated in the instrument.

Discussion of Findings

Data from research question one revealed the accounting skills needed by self-employed building craftsmen that will enhance their business acumen and improve their profit margin. These skills include skills in keeping basic accounting records as accurate book keeping, cash payment receipts, cash sales, credit sales records, skill in determining effective labour costs, skill in sourcing for funds from banks and other financial

institutions and skill to carry out simple budgeting for the enterprises. Other skills that were revealed in the study include, skill in prudent financial management, skill in keeping financial records with integrity, skill in keeping accurate accounting records, skill in keeping the cash payment, all records, receipt records, goods inventory as well as viable credit purchase records, skill in keeping utility records such as water, electricity, telephone, sanitation rates and business permits. The degree of agreement by self-employed building craftsmen showed that basic accounting skills are needed by them for operational efficiency and maximization of profit in their self-employment efforts. The findings are in agreement with Osuala (2004), Onoh (2006), Ogbuanya et al (2010) and Yavala (2010), they all posited that self-employed persons could not progress

without these skills. They emphasized that the possession of these skills will consolidate and enhance their businesses as well as eliminate early failure.

Conclusions

It can be concluded therefore that the acquisition of basic accounting skills by self-employed building craftsmen is of utmost importance given the numerous contributions that are inherently profitable to self-employed building craftsmen and the society. To be recognized and appreciated are the facts that these skills are acquirable through entrepreneurship. These skills will enhance and promote the managerial stability of self-employed building craftsmen as they will become well informed in keeping the basic accounting records with the skills acquired through entrepreneurship education for effective profitability of their different ventures. Again, the level of education attained before entering into self-employment does not preclude any building craftsman from endeavoring to acquire these accounting skills. Accounting skills are inevitable skills needed by every self-employed building craftsmen.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the research.

1. Self-employed building craftsmen should endeavour to acquire accounting skills through entrepreneurship education that will promote the quality of their products and upgrade their services.
2. A strong awareness campaign should be embarked upon by appropriate government organs to sensitize building craftsmen

entrepreneurs on the need for acquiring accounting skills through entrepreneurship education.

3. The appropriate government organs and agencies can achieve this goal through organizing free-fee seminars and workshop for self-employed building craftsmen.

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