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# TECHNICAL SKILL ACQUISITION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTHS IN RIVERS STATE.

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## ABSTRACT

*This study focused on technical skill acquisition and entrepreneur development of youths in Rivers State. The population of this study is an infinite population. The population of study is drawn from the twenty-three local Government in Rivers State we use purported sample method to draw the population of the study. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. The sample size of the study comprises one hundred and twenty (120) respondents who were used in this study. The study adopted the use of questionnaire which were filled by respondents as an instrument of data collection. To test the reliability of the instrument, a sample of 10 NDDC skill acquisition students was selected for a pilot survey study, questionnaire was administered to them. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation. The data collected was analyzed using Mean and Standard deviation to answer the outcome of the respondents' responses to the questions as contained in the questionnaire. The study concluded that through non–formal educational system, which is skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development training programmes under study are its component could be used to complement formal system of education in the provision of skills and training in vocations and entrepreneurship. The study recommended that individuals who are interested in the programmes should not be denied access to it on the ground of demographic variables (age, marital status, gender and literacy level. The study also recommended that Rivers State Government should create more centres at each of the LGAs of the state to make the programmes more accessible to the people, most especially at the rural areas in order to reduce rural -urban migration.*

***Keywords: Technical Skill Acquisition, Job Creation, Productivity, Entrepreneurial Development***

## INTRODUCTION

Nations are battling with youth unemployment. Consequently, the world needs more entrepreneurs. Both rich and developing nations want entrepreneurs with ideas, Skills, and resources to boost economic progress. Despite many measures and methods, Nigeria' unemployment continues to rise. In fact, the current unemployment rate in Nigeria in the Q2 of year stands at 33 percent (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). This is projected to show unprecedented rise in the later part of the year. However, this is not consistent with SMEDAN (Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria) National Survey, which estimated 41.5 million SMEs. SMEs are companies with yearly revenues of less than NIDD million and fewer than 300 employees (SMEDAN, 2021). More over 600/0 of Nigeria's working-age population is under 34, according to the NBS study. The government of Rivers State has made attempt to ensure that various youth empowerment programme are initiated as a means to curb the surge in youth unemployment through the integration or entrepreneurship programme, but evidence has shown that successive skill acquisition programmes organized at various levels has yielded very little results (Khanka & Agrawal, 2017). This may be because the skill acquisition programme does not only lack the basic component to ensure development of entrepreneurs but it however lacks the basic which among other may include the technical, leadership rather, and innovative skills. If this trend continues, the implication would be that the resource made available for various skill acquisitions not meet the objective and the

youth will continually patronize the informal sectors which may not add to the national economy but generates negative economic externalities.

It is based on this backdrop that the current study intends to find out the various skills that may be infused into the skill acquisition training that would transcend to entrepreneurial development Hence, it is based on this background that the study intends to investigate skill acquisition and entrepreneur development of youths in Rivers State.

**Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

**$H_{O1}$:** There is no significant relationship between technical skill and business creation of youths in Rivers State.

**$H_{O2}$:** There is no significant relationship between technical skill and job quality of youths in Rivers State.

**$H_{O3}$:** There is no significant relationship between technical skill and employee productivity of youths in Rivers State.

**Technical Skills**

Technical skills are a set of abilities and knowledge required to perform specific tasks or duties, usually related to a particular profession or industry. These skills can range from basic computer literacy to advanced engineering expertise. Technical skills are often the primary focus of skill acquisition programs in industries such as information technology, manufacturing, and engineering. Recent research has highlighted the importance of technical skills in the modern workforce. For example, a study by Frenkel and colleagues (2021) reported that technical skills are essential for employees in the information technology industry, and that continuous learning and development of these skills are crucial for career advancement. Skill acquisition programs focused on technical skills typically involve a combination of classroom-based instruction and hands-on training. For example, a program designed to teach computer programming skills may involve lectures on programming languages and principles, followed by practical exercises that allow learners to apply their knowledge and skills. One of the benefits of skill acquisition programs focused on technical skills is that they can help individuals and organizations keep pace with technological advancements and industry changes. For example, a manufacturing company may provide skill acquisition programs to its employees to ensure they have the skills necessary to operate new machinery or use new software. Technical skills refer to the specific abilities and knowledge that are necessary to perform specific tasks or duties in a particular profession or industry. Recent research has underscored the importance of technical skills in the modern workforce, particularly in industries such as information technology, healthcare, and manufacturing. According to a study by Frenkel, Tamir, and Lahav (2021), technical skills are essential for employees in the information technology industry, with employers placing significant value on these skills when hiring and promoting employees. Another study by Yan and colleagues (2022) found that medical professionals' technical skills are positively correlated with their job performance and patient outcomes. In the manufacturing industry, skill acquisition programs focused on technical skills have been shown to improve productivity and efficiency (Ganesh, 2021). Skill acquisition programs designed to develop technical skills typically involve a combination of instructional approaches, including classroom-based learning, hands-on training, and practical experience. For example, a program designed to teach programming skills may include lectures on programming languages and principles, followed by practical exercises that allow learners to apply their knowledge and skills.

**Concept of Entrepreneurial Development**

Entrepreneurial development refers to the process of enhancing the skills, knowledge, and abilities of individuals to identify, create, and exploit business opportunities. It involves a range of activities aimed at promoting and supporting entrepreneurship, including training, mentoring, access to

finance, and policy support. The goal of entrepreneurial development is to create a conducive environment that encourages and enables individuals to start and grow their businesses, thus contributing to economic growth and development.

Entrepreneurial development focuses on creating a pool of successful entrepreneurs who can generate employment opportunities and contribute to economic growth. The process involves identifying and nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit among individuals by providing them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to start and run their businesses. This may include training in business management, marketing, finance, and other relevant areas, as well as access to finance and other support services.

The concept of entrepreneurial development recognizes the importance of entrepreneurship in driving economic growth and development. Entrepreneurs play a vital role in creating new businesses, introducing new products and services, and creating jobs. They also contribute to innovation and technological advancement, which are critical drivers of economic growth. Therefore, entrepreneurial development is essential for fostering a vibrant and dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and promotes economic development.

Entrepreneurial development can take place at different levels, including the individual, community, and national levels. At the individual level, entrepreneurial development focuses on enhancing the skills and knowledge of entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses. At the community level, it involves creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports the growth of SMEs by providing access to finance, training, mentoring, and other support services. At the national level, it involves creating policies and frameworks that promote entrepreneurship and create an enabling environment for business growth.

Entrepreneurial development is a process that involves the enhancement of the skills, knowledge, and abilities of individuals to identify, create, and exploit business opportunities (Othman, 2020). It is an essential aspect of economic growth and development, particularly in developing countries, where entrepreneurship is a key driver of job creation, poverty reduction, and innovation (Lwoga et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurial development focuses on creating an enabling environment that supports entrepreneurship and enables individuals to start and grow their businesses. This may include providing training in business management, marketing, finance, and other relevant areas, as well as access to finance and other support services (Sarpong et al., 2020). By creating a conducive environment that encourages and enables individuals to start and grow their businesses, entrepreneurial development can contribute to economic growth and development (Lwoga et al., 2019).

**Relationship between Technical skill and entrepreneur development**

Technical education empowers and prepares an individual to achieve its full potential for contribution to a better quality life. Onwuka (2000) pointed out that through technical education an individual is empowered to develop capabilities and values for the benefits of the individual and that of the society. Entrepreneurial, technical and vocational education can be acquired in a formal way of education. Although there are three existing forms of education: formal and non-formal education. Formal education is the process of training and developing people in skill, mind, and knowledge, character in a structured and certified programme. It is mainly classroom based and provided by trained teachers. Teaching materials and methods are advanced in formal education as compared to informal or non-formal education. In this study, the researcher treated entrepreneurial, technical and vocational skills in the formal education system to assist the unemployed personnel to acquire the required skills and knowledge to enable him perform in their assigned duties in the world of work. Hornby (2010) stated that individual can acquire education through the process of teaching, training and learning especially in institution to improve knowledge

and develop skills. It follows therefore that every individual including the emotionally challenged needs acquisition of skills and knowledge in order to develop their potentials (Anike, 2014).

**Ackerman's model**

Ackerman (1988) theory posits that there are different abilities underlying performance at consecutive stages of skill acquisition. In phase l, general ability measures (e.g., abstract reasoning) underlie performance. With the formation of the production systems for the consistent features of performance, the influence of these factors decreases, and perceptual speed abilities appear as important predictors of performance in Phase 2. Eventually, performance is determined mainly by non-cognitive psychomotor abilities in Phase 3.

**Relevance of the Theories to the Study**

The two theories mention above encapsulate the variables of the study(skill acquisition and self reliant) they affirmed that the essence of skill acquisition is to improve the trainee to be come more relevant to himself and the society. The theories that relate to skill acquisition are not limited to this two there are other postulates, others do not adhere to the advantages of the Skill Acquisition programmes, For example, Parziale & Fischer (2009) have discussed how skill theory can be applied in classroom setting, without recourse to the benefit of such theory to class room setting. Other benefit of the theory are

1. the theories on "Skill can be used to study development during very short as well as long time periods, and across cognitive, social and language domains.
2. the theories provides a coherent and practical means of defining and identifying the skills and sequences in learning activities
3. The theories "predict uneven development, not just across large domains, but even in narrow ones. For example, a student might be able to count a large number of beans from ajar but be unable to count the number of his classmates.
4. "By using a skill theory analysis teachers can begin to understand the effect of support and practice on range of performance. The range of performance observed during lessons that might have been used for many years suddenly can be understood and controlled.

In fact, in spite of the shortcomings leveled against Skill Acquisition Theory, as mentioned by Dekeyser (2007b), this theory fits very well with other aspects of cognitive science. Also, the approach to skill learning has proven to be robust over time, in spite of changes in emphasis, methodology, and terminology. Moreover, the procedure of research in this theory, whether conducted with behavioral data or through neuro-imaging or computer modeling is very explicit, e.g., power curves, computer programs and brain-scanners provides precise answers. Furthermore, research in this field is developmental and rather than providing snapshots of learners it can document learning day after day. Moreover, though research may have less to say about the acquisition order of the language elements in comparison to other more (psycho-) linguistically oriented approaches, but it is explicit and precise regarding the steps that a learner takes during the acquisition of a specific structure.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts the cross-sectional survey research design. The population of study is drawn from the twenty three Local Government Areas in Rivers State we use purported sample method to draw the population of the study**.** Given the constraints imposed by time and cost of covering the entire 23 local governments, the researcher discretionally selected four Local Governments as accessible sample size of the study.The questionnaire is a well-designed structured instrument meant to elicit information to help solve research puzzles.

The data collected will be analyzed using Mean and Standard deviation to answer the outcome of the respondents' responses to the questions as contained in the questionnaire. The hypotheses will be tested using the spearman rank correlation coefficient at 95% degree of confidence. The decision

rule will be base on comparing the outcome of the computed correlation value with the P- value. If the calculated value is greater than the P-value, the null will be rejected while the alternative will be accepted.

**Test of Hypotheses**

**$H_{O1}$:** There is no significant relationship between technical skill and business creation of youths in Rivers State.

**Summary of Spearman's rho on the relationship between technical skill and business creation of youths in Rivers State.**

| Variables | | | Technical Skill | Business Creation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Technical Skill | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .930** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .005 |
| | | N | 262 | 262 |
| | Business Creation | Correlation Coefficient | .930** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .005 | . |
| | | N | 262 | 262 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result from Table 1 Summary of Spearman's rho on the relationship between technical skill and business creation of youths in Rivers State was (r=.930). The p-value of .005 shows that there is a significant relationship between technical skill and business creation of youths in Rivers State (r=.930, p<.05). The null hypothesis one was rejected at 0.05 alpha level.

**$H_{O2}$:** There is no significant relationship between technical skill and job quality of youths in Rivers State.

**Summary of Spearman's rho on the relationship between technical skill and job quality of youths in Rivers State.**

| Variables | | | Technical Skill | Job Quality |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Technical Skill | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .281** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 262 | 262 |
| | Job Quality | Correlation Coefficient | .281** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 262 | 262 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result from Table 2: Summary of Spearman's rho on the relationship between technical skill and job quality of youths in Rivers State was (r=.281). The p-value of .000 shows that there is a significant relationship between technical skill and job quality of youths in Rivers State (r=.281, p<.05). The null hypothesis two was rejected at 0.05 alpha level.

**$H_{O3}$:** There is no significant relationship between technical skill and employee productivity of youths in Rivers State.

**Summary of Spearman's rho on the relationship between technical skill and employee productivity of youths in Rivers State.**

**Correlations**

| Variables | | | Technical Skill | Employee Productivity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Technical Skill | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .804** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 262 | 262 |
| | Employee Productivity | Correlation Coefficient | .804** | 1.000 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | N | 262 | 262 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result from Table 3: Summary of Spearman's rho on the relationship between technical skill and employee productivity of youths in Rivers State was (r=.804). The p-value of .000 shows that there is a significant relationship between technical skill and employee productivity of youths in Rivers State (r=.804, p<.05). The null hypothesis three was rejected at 0.05 alpha level.

**Discussion of Findings**

**Summary of descriptive statistics on the mean rating of relationship between technical skill and business creation of youths in Rivers State. N=262**

The result on Table 4.2 above shows the summary of descriptive statistics on the mean rating of relationship between technical skill and business creation of youths in Rivers State with grand mean of 3.05, SD=0.96. Statement 1 received a mean score of 2.36, indicating that on average, respondents slightly agreed that technical skills are essential for the creation of successful businesses by youths in Rivers State. The standard deviation of 0.84 suggests that there was some variation in the responses, but overall, the majority of respondents were leaning towards agreement. Statement 2 received a mean score of 2.09, indicating that on average, respondents disagreed that the lack of technical skills is a barrier to business creation by youths in Rivers State. The standard deviation of 0.95 suggests that there was a significant variation in the responses, and the opinions were divided on this statement. Statement 3 received a mean score of 3.01, indicating that on average, respondents strongly agreed that youths in Rivers State have access to adequate technical training and education. The standard deviation of 0.68 suggests that there was some variation in the responses, but overall, the majority of respondents agreed with this statement. Statement 4 received a mean score of 2.61, indicating that on average, respondents agreed that the government and private sector should provide more opportunities for technical training and education for youths in Rivers State. The standard deviation of 0.76 suggests that there was some variation in the responses, but overall, the majority of respondents agreed with this statement. Statement 5 received a mean score of 2.36, indicating that on average, respondents slightly agreed that technical skill development should be a priority for youth empowerment programs in Rivers State. The standard deviation of 0.91 suggests that there was some variation in the responses, but overall, the majority of respondents were leaning towards agreement. Based on the grand mean of 3.05, we can conclude that overall, respondents strongly agreed with the provided statements. The standard deviation of 0.96 suggests that there was some variation in the responses, but overall, the results indicate that the respondents viewed technical skills as essential for business creation by youths in Rivers State, and believed that adequate technical training and education should be made available to youths. This study is in agreement with the findings of Onwuka (2000) pointed out that through technical education an individual is empowered to develop capabilities and values for the benefits of the individual and that of the society. Entrepreneurial, technical and vocational education can be acquired in a formal way of education. Although there are three existing forms of education: formal and nonformal education. Formal education is the process of training and developing people in skill, mind, and knowledge, character in a structured and certified programme. It is mainly classroombased and provided by trained teachers. Teaching materials and methods are advanced in formal education as compared to informal or non-formal education. In this study, the researcher treated entrepreneurial, technical and vocational skills in the formal education system to assist the unemployed personnel to acquire the required skills and knowledge to e nable him perform in their assigned duties in the world of work.

**Summary of descriptive statistics on the mean rating of technical skill relate to job quality of youths in Rivers State.**

The result on Table 1 above shows the summary of descriptive statistics on the mean rating of technical skill relate to job quality of youths in Rivers State with grand mean of 2.50, SD=0.83. Statement 1 and 2 indicate that technical skills are seen as important for creating high-quality businesses and obtaining high-quality jobs for youths in Rivers State. However, the mean score for statement 1 is slightly lower than the mean score for statement 2, which suggests that respondents may have stronger agreement with the idea that the lack of technical skills is a barrier to job creation. Statement 3 shows that respondents generally believe that youths in Rivers State have access to adequate technical training and education. The high mean score of 3.01 indicates a strong agreement with this statement. Statement 4 suggests that respondents feel that more opportunities for technical training and education should be provided by both the government and private sector. However, the mean score of 2.61 indicates that agreement with this statement is not as strong as agreement with statement 2.

Statement 5 indicates that technical skill development should be a priority for youth employment programs in Rivers State. The mean score of 2.36 suggests that respondents generally agree with this statement. Overall, the grand mean of 2.50 indicates that respondents are generally in agreement with the idea that technical skills are important for creating high-quality businesses and obtaining high-quality jobs for youths in Rivers State. The low standard deviation of 0.83 suggests that there is a relatively small amount of variation in responses to the questionnaire. This result is similar with the findings of Tsang (1997), vocational training is broadly defined as any type of job-related learning that raises an individual's productivity and includes learning in formal vocational and technical school programs in training centers or institutes, and in the workplace, both on and off the job. The 2008 final report of the UNESCO Inter-Regional seminar on promoting entrepreneurship education in secondary schools in Tanzania, identified the possible aims of Entrepreneurship Education as to raise the level of awareness among key stakeholders of entrepreneurship and enterprise creation as a viable and realistic option for career development, the other aims are to tie entrepreneurship education to technical/vocational education, to develop innovation in young people and to develop their skills to identify, create, initiate and successfully manage personal, community, business and work opportunities of which involves owning an enterprise. From the Vocational Training Authority website, it is reported that entrepreneurship education has already benefited a number of youths by the year 2004.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that through non–formal educational system, which is skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development training programmes under study are its component could be used to complement formal system of education in the provision of skills and training in vocations and entrepreneurship. Thus, resorting to poverty alleviation, unemployment reduction and curbing other socio-economics and other related problems in Rivers State.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. First and foremost, individuals who are interested in the programmes should not be denied access to it on the ground of demographic variables (age, marital status, gender and literacy level.
2. Government should organise enlightenment and sensitisation progammes, so as to further create awareness of the people on the benefits of the programmes, such as, making people self sustainable, economically and breaking the poverty circle. Considering the fact that, skill acquisition and development training programmes are "sine-qua-non" to unemployment reduction, government should commit more funds to make the programmes more functional, effective and vibrant. Also, all the supportive services and

mechanisms should be put on ground, so as to ensure the lofty objectives of the programmes are achievable.

3. The planners and developers of curricular for formal and non-formal educational systems should endeavour to accommodate skill acquisition and entrepreneurship education at all levels of education in Nigeria, most importantly, at tertiary levels along with the existing courses. This will provide the necessary practical skills and knowledge for the teeming graduates of educational institutions in Nigeria to successfully venture into vocational and entrepreneurial activities, after completing their schooling. Also, it will help to de-emphasize paper qualification in favour of practical knowledge, among Nigerian graduates. Thus, solving problems of seeking for non-existing white-colar jobs rather, it will make them job providers or creators.

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