

**ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS FOR
THE IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN
ORUMBA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ANAMBRA STATE**

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Abstract

The Study investigated the assessment of the contributions of entrepreneurial skills for improvement of community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area, Anambra State. Three objectives and three research questions served as guide for the research. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 600 rural dwellers who were members of registered organisations in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The sample of the study comprised 300 community organisation members from four (4) community organizations. Questionnaire served as the main instrument for data collection. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument and this yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.86. Data collected from the research questions were analyzed using weighted mean. The findings, amongst others, showed that, to a high extent, innovative skill helps in enhancing active and representative participation of citizens in community development project so as to meaningfully influence decisions that affect them and thereby improve community development projects. Also, managerial skill helps in equipping project managers with the requisite skills to identify cost effective strategies for executing community development projects which have improved community development projects to a high extent in the area. To a high extent, communication skills have improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial, Entrepreneurial skills, Community development, Community development projects.

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Introduction

Community development is an initiative that was introduced to encourage human beings through mobilization to participate in their developmental affairs. Emeka and Ikenga (2013) posit that community development is a process that has occurred throughout human history. Community development is not a new thing in the history of human living as a social group. From time immemorial, man has often tried the best means of bringing about a better living through peaceful co-existence with his co-habitants (Rodney, 2012). The method is often local, the people could tax themselves, organize communal labour, and punish deviants or intransigents. In this way the people not only encourage initiatives, self-help and mutual assistance but also make themselves more effective. Community development is therefore the need to encourage affected communities to improve their conditions.

The United Nations (2014) defines community development as a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. It is a broad concept, applied to the practices of civic leaders, activists, involved citizens, and professionals to improve various aspects of communities, typically aiming to build stronger and more resilient local communities. The implication is that, for community development to occur, community development agents or agencies, community members, sometimes governments or non-governmental organizations will have to mobilize the people concerned in their different communities to enable them participate effectively in the community development process.

Furthermore, community development is the participation of members of a given community in the affairs of the community. Therefore community development can be conceptualized as a process by which the efforts of the community members are put together with those of governmental and non-governmental organizations for the purpose of ensuring positive reconditioning, restructuring and transforming of the lives of members of the community by harnessing available local resources in order to improve the living condition of the people of the community. It is the process of helping a community to strengthen itself and develop towards its full potential. Similarly, community development is a deliberate effort of community members and people that feel concerned to improve on the living standard of the people. Arthur, Timothy and Jose (2011) noted that community development is some kind of planned change, that is, deliberate efforts to change an unsatisfactory state of affairs. The term gained prominence in Nigeria during the colonial era when Social Welfare Officers (SWOs) promoted self-help to improve health, nutrition and general community welfare (Ajayi and Otuya, 2016). Since then, community development which addresses the developmental needs of the people has been moving from strength to strength in Nigeria. Moreover, one variable that helps in community development is execution of what is known as community development projects; hence, community development cannot evolve without community development projects being adequately embarked on.

Community development project, on the other hand, is a term applied to any community based project. Therefore, community development projects cover almost anything, including the most obvious section of concern to any community, the welfare element. Individuals, communities and government at all levels desire development in every facet of human endeavour. No matter how development is defined, the project approach is seen to be most practical, since results are visible and measurable. According to Hanachor (2012), the aim of community development projects in communities is to improve the well-being of the members of the communities where the projects are located.

From the foregoing, community development projects in Nigeria are basically an attempt to address the “felt needs” of the masses by the people and for themselves. According to Oduaran (2014), community development projects are those tangible ventures that the inhabitants of the community embark on, in order to improve the conditions of people residing in that community. For example, Anyanwu (2010) notes that, in some south-east Igbo speaking communities, part of the money realized from sale of communal palm fruit harvested was used to sponsor the education of indigent students in the community as well as execute other small and medium scale development projects spanning across a variety of fields such as improving health care delivery services, agriculture, nutrition, communal road maintenance, sanitation and rural cooperative thrift services. One of the basic assumptions of community development projects herein is that community development activities are all

inclusive as it provides opportunity for people to learn and grow thus, ensuring that no segment of the populace is exempted, youths inclusive.

Community development projects irrespective of the magnitude is capable of brightening the community and triggering off other developmental activities in the community. However, community development projects could be disrupted by the approach adopted by the government or donor agencies, the attitude of the community members on finance and execution of the projects. Different instances of community development projects according to Hanachor (2012) are: welfare community projects which is, a locally run and locally funded orphanage; a Christmas dinner kitchen for the homeless. Another important sector of importance to the community would be charity. Charitable projects in the community can include, but are not limited to, ecological charities concerned with either the maintenance of green spaces, or in some cases, the prevention of the reduction/removal of green spaces. An old clothes collection service would also be a community based charity project. Most economic community projects are designed at creating some sort of economic autonomy in a given community or local government area. However, for an effective implementation of any community project, entrepreneurial skill acquisition is very paramount. It is therefore necessary to understand what entrepreneurial skills are.

Entrepreneurial skills are business skills, which an individual acquires personally to function effectively in business as an entrepreneur and be self-reliant (Umunadi, 2014). Entrepreneurial skills are very important in community development projects. This is because, these skills consist of effective utilization of ideas, information, and facts that help a learner develop competencies, services, or an effective participant in community development projects. Entrepreneurship has to do with a system of ideas and values that are not ordinarily treated as part of the curriculum, it is the process of using private initiative to transform a business concept into a new venture or to grow and diversify an existing venture or enterprise with high growth potential (Mkpa, 2014; Ugwoke and Abidde, 2014).

However, various types of entrepreneurial skills are required for citizens of a given community to become successful entrepreneurs and participants in community development projects. Hence, Igbo and Hisrich (2014) identified some categories of competencies or skills needed for success in entrepreneurship such as managerial, innovative and communication competencies. It is pertinent to note that, the inclusion of these skills into the community development projects will reduce the rate of dependence on government for job, instill in the citizens of a given community the right mindset, the ability to be creative, and innovative, be able to create job out of their chosen career and more importantly participate effectively in community development projects and nation building. Thus, in every community, it is expected that the citizens should have started or would have exhibited some of the entrepreneurial skills. Recently, there are significant entrepreneurial skills agreed upon by researchers that make someone an entrepreneur. Thus, entrepreneurial skills that help for effective participation in community development projects include: managerial skills, communication skills, organisational skills, vocational/technical skill, networking skill, innovation skills, in-service skill among others. But, this present paper focuses on innovation, managerial and communication skills.

Innovation skill is an integral aspect of entrepreneurial skills that provides new ways of talent development. Innovativeness is the ability of introducing or using new ideas or ways of doing things. The process of innovation involves thinking creatively: Using imagination to manipulate instruments or variables, to formulate models, to discover possibilities, and to construct objects and images that never existed before. Innovation can be a change made in

established laws and practices by the introduction of something new, with the purpose of improving quality, quantity, output, or procedures. Mbanefo and Chiaha (2014) state that innovative skills focus on the facilitation and utilization of new knowledge acquisition modes, adoption of problem-solving strategies, integration of knowledge from diverse sources, utilisation of self-directed learning, and knowledge extension through elaborate creative expression. This innovative skill therefore helps in effective participation in community development projects.

Managerial skill is another aspect of entrepreneurial skills that help to facilitate community development process. Thus, managerial skill according to Anho (2011) goes beyond training and education; it involves a process of human capacities building through formal and/or informal training, inculcating the entrepreneur with managerial abilities such as ability to: manage money, raise money, relieve stress, be productive, lead, negotiate, make entrepreneur friends, identify strengths and weaknesses, hire effective people, train new staff, manage staff, focus on customers, close a sale, spot new trends, deal with failure and most importantly, take calculated risks. With the above mentioned aspects of managerial skills, an entrepreneur will find it easier to survive in the business environment and also function effectively in community development projects. He/she will be able relate within and outside the business. Therefore, the knowledge and ability of the individuals in a managerial position are to fulfill some specific management activities or tasks. Managerial skills are important for many reasons, they position you to act as an effective leader who can make good decisions, an effective communicator with the soft skills necessary to inspire a team, and a problem-solver who can bring clarity to any situation (Salehi and Mohammadi, 2014); hence, being a manager in a community development setting is a position to act as an effective leader and problem-solver in many simple and complex situations.

Communication skills are also key components of community development. Mobilizing community members for community development purpose is important, but members of communities can only be mobilized when communication is effective. Adequate communication skills lead to effective collaborative efforts in issue of community development. This is because, communication skills will help engage citizens in the community development. To bring about social change among the marginalized and vulnerable population groups, participation must be fostered through communication; as such will lead to the transformation of the community (Sarvaes and Liu, 2017). Communication skills in community development focus on enhancing the interaction between the people promoting change that will impact positively on improving the living conditions of members of the participating communities and the people with whom they work to actualize their dream. It is imperative to keep communication channels open among all project participants and organizations involved in community development initiatives in the participating communities. In the views of Aruma (2009), communication is the livewire of human culture which is characterized with many activities. Communication certainly elicits collective action of project participants in community development project in the participating communities.

However, it is imperative to re-emphasize the indispensability of entrepreneurship skills in meaningful development activities and execution of community development projects in various localities instead of community projects being paralyzed or abandoned. Pilot study in the area of study showed that there are many abandoned projects. These abandoned community development projects may be attributed to low skill acquisition and implementation of entrepreneurial skills in community development projects. This is because

most practitioners lack the organizational, scientific and technical skills and knowledge to embark on these communities based projects. In fact, majority of these people are illiterates who are not enlightened on how to maximize the use of entrepreneurial skills for the good of the community.

More so, while some of them do not have interest in participating in community development projects, others have interest but are not efficient in the discharge of their duties because they lack the appropriate exposure and technical know-how that would enable them function effectively. However, this has become a major problem in the study area. It has therefore been adjudged that effective acquisition and implementation of entrepreneurial skills such as: innovative, managerial and communication skills would help to improve community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area, Anambra state and this necessitated the study.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study is to assess the contributions of entrepreneurial skills for improvement of community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area, Anambra state. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. examine the extent innovative skills improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area.
- ii. ascertain the extent managerial skills improved community development projects in orumba South Local Government Area.
- iii. determine the extent communication skills improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. to what extent has innovative skills improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area?
- ii. to what extent has managerial skills improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area?
- iii. to what extent has communication skills improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area?

Research methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive design is a research design which aimed at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts of a given population. Orji (2011), on the other hand, explained descriptive research as one which involves eliciting responses from a relatively large number of respondents by administering pertinent instruments for collecting primary data on a portion of the population known as sample. Descriptive survey design was considered appropriate for the study because, a questionnaire was used to elicit information from people in the study area concerning the contributions of entrepreneurial skills for improvement of community development projects. The study was conducted in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 600

rural dwellers who were members of registered organisations in the Area. The sample size for this study was 300 respondents; this comprised 50% of the entire population of the community organisations. The sampling technique for the study was simple random sampling technique by balloting. According to Nworgu (2015), simple random sampling technique is a technique in which each element in the population has equal and independent chances of being included in the sample. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: “Assessment of the Contributions of Entrepreneurial Skills for Improvement of Community Development Projects Questionnaire” (ACESICDPQ). The instrument was structured in a 4-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) (4-points), High Extent (HE) (3-points), Low Extent (LE) (2-points) and Very Low Extent (VLE) (1-point). To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, the validated questionnaire was distributed to 10 rural dwellers from Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra state. The choice of this local government was because, they share similar characteristics with Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State where the research was conducted. The reliability of the instrument was determined by Cronbach Alpha method which yielded the co-efficient of 0.81, 0.82, 0.84. The overall reliability coefficient value of the instrument was 0.86, which showed that the instrument was highly reliable. A direct delivery method was used to administer the questionnaire to the 300 respondents in the different organisations in the Local Government Area. Data collected from the instrument were analyzed using weighted mean. The decision rule was based on the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, items with mean score of 2.50 and above were accepted, while those below 2.50 were not accepted. The research questions were answered using the real limit of numbers in the mean values as follows: A 4-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) (3.50 - 4.00), High Extent (HE) (3-points with 2.50 - 3.49 rating scale), Low Extent (LE) (2-points with 1.50 - 2.49 rating scale) and Very Low Extent (VLE) (1-point with 1.00-1.49 rating scale) were used.

Results

Question 1: To what extent has innovative skills improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area?

Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on the extent innovative skills improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State (n=300).

S/N	Item statement	VHE 4	HE 3	LE 2	VLE 1	Total score	Mean	Decision
1.	Innovative skills help in enhancing active and representative participation of citizens in community development projects so as to meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives.	175	98	15	12	1036	3.45	Accepted High Extent
2.	Empowering citizens with the ability to think creatively and proffer lasting solutions to community problems.	95	77	69	59	808	2.69	Accepted High Extent
3	Equipping citizens with ability to develop and implement new and unique strategies to improve community development projects	87	91	69	53	812	2.70	Accepted High Extent
4	Enabling citizens to harness their innovative skills, talents and experience to influence the community in a profound way.	111	97	71	21	898	2.99	Accepted High Extent

5	Equipping citizens with the ability to recognize any potential for improvement, not only in their fields, but in community projects.	68	37	99	96	677	2.25	Rejected Low Extent
Grand Mean							2.81	High Extent

Table 1 above shows the responses on the extent innovative skills improved community development projects in Orumba South L.G.A. The analysis revealed that items 1, 2, 3,4 have the mean ratings of 3.45, 2.69, 2.70, 2.99 respectively which indicate that innovative skills helped in enhancing active and representative participation of citizens in community development projects so as to meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives, empowered citizens with the ability to think creatively and proffer lasting solutions to community problems, equipped citizens with ability to develop and implement new and unique strategies to improve community development projects, helped in enabling citizens to harness their innovative skills, talents and experience to influence the community in a profound way. While item 5 with the mean of 2.25 was rejected. The criterion mean of 2.81 was accepted having reached the bench mark above 2.50, it indicates that innovative skills improved community development projects in Orumba South L.G.A.

Question 2: To what extent has managerial skills improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area?

Table 2: Mean ratings of respondents on the extent managerial skills improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State (n=300).

S/N	Item statement	VHE 4	HE 3	LE 2	VLE 1	Total score	Mean	Decision
6	Enabling individuals to create realistic budgets and develop financial plans for community development projects.	113	80	69	38	868	2.89	Accepted High Extent
7.	Helping project managers to optimize the allocation and utilization of limited resources such as fruits, tree materials and human capital.	98	67	76	59	804	2.68	Accepted High Extent
8	Equipping project managers with the requisite managerial skills to identify cost effective strategies for executing community development projects.	56	38	99	107	643	2.14	Rejected Low Extent
9	Enabling project managers to identify potential financial risks and develop strategies to mitigate them.	176	96	25	3	1045	3.48	Accepted High Extent
10	Helping in evaluating and implementing sustainable practices so as to ensure that the resources are used responsibly.	82	45	92	96	728	2.42	Rejected Low Extent
Grand Mean							2.72	High Extent

Table 2 above shows the responses on the extent managerial skills has improved community development projects in Orumba South L.G.A. The analysis revealed that items 6,7 and 9 have the mean ratings of 2.89, 2.68 and 3.48 respectively which were all above 2.50 and therefore were accepted. On the other hand, items 8 and 10 with the mean scores of 2.14 and

2.42 respectively which were all below the benchmark of 2.50 were all rejected. Therefore, since the criterion mean of 2.72 crossed the benchmark of 2.50, it indicated that the respondents accepted that managerial skills improved community development projects in Orumba South L.G.A

Question 3: To what extent has communication skills improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra state?

Table 3: Mean ratings of respondents on the extent communication skills improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State (n=300).

11	Ensuring that all stakeholders involved in project understand the project goals, objectives and expectations.	86	96	78	40	828	2.76	Accepted High Extent
12.	Helping to establish clear channels of communication by allowing for the smooth flow of information, feedback and updates.	126	111	35	28	935	3.11	Accepted High Extent
13	Facilitating the formation of strong and positive relationships between community members, project organizers and other stakeholders.	68	78	96	58	756	2.52	Accepted High Extent
14	Gaining support, inputs and resources from individuals and organizations within the community by building relationships bonds on trust and respect.	65	58	98	79	709	2.36	Rejected Low Extent
15	Empowering community members to actively participate in decision-making process.	178	106	11	5	1057	3.52	Accepted Very High Extent
16	Empowering community members to actively participate in decision-making process.							
16	Helping in addressing conflicts promptly by finding common ground, and maintaining a positive working environment.	29	38	176	57	587	1.95	Rejected Low Extent
17	Facilitating regular feedback loops by allowing for monitoring and evaluation of project progress, making adjustments as needed based on real-time information.	37	45	117	101	618	2.06	Rejected Low Extent
18	Contributing to the success of community development projects by enhancing their overall impact and ensuring their sustainability even after the initial project phase.	137	89	58	16		3.15	Accepted High Extent
Grand Mean							2.67	High Extent

Table 3 above shows the mean responses on the extent communication skills improved community development projects in Orumba South L.G.A of Anambra state. The analysis revealed that items 11, 12, 13, 15, and 18 with the corresponding mean ratings of 2.76, 3.11, 2.52, 3.52 and 3.15 were accepted. Items 14, 16, 17 with the corresponding mean scores of 2.36, 1.95 and 2.06 were rejected. However, the criterion mean of 2.67 indicates that

respondents accepted to a high extent that communication skills improved community development projects in Orumba South L.G.A of Anambra State.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings on the first research question showed that innovative skills have helped to improve community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State. This is to say that citizens have been equipped with ability to develop and implement new and unique strategies to improve community development projects through the acquisition and harnessing of their innovative skills and talents. The people have also been empowered with the ability to think creatively and proffer lasting solutions to community problems through their acquisition of innovative skills; thus, these innovative skills have helped in enhancing active and representative participation of people in community development projects so as to meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives. This is in line with Baba's (2013) assertion that innovative skills help participants develop the skills they need to: Innovate faster and more effectively; constantly look for new ideas and creative solutions; keep an open mind and challenge the status quo; propose and communicate innovative ideas; position, promote, and generate buy in for innovative ideas and proposals; contribute to a culture of experimentation, creativity, and innovation. This also agrees with Mbanefo and Chiaha (2014) who stated that innovative skills focus on the facilitation and utilization of new knowledge acquisition modes, adoption of problem-solving strategies, integration of knowledge from diverse sources, utilisation of self-directed learning, and knowledge extension through elaborate creative expression.

The findings on the second research question revealed that managerial skills have improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State to a high extent by helping project managers to optimize the allocation and utilization of limited resources, enabling individuals to create realistic budgets and develop financial plans for community development projects and enabling project managers to identify potential financial risks and develop strategies to mitigate them. This is supported by Anho (2011) who states that managerial skill goes beyond training and education; it involves a process of human capacity building through formal and/or informal training, inculcating the entrepreneur with managerial abilities such as ability to manage finance and resources and take calculated risks. The findings were also in agreement with Salehi and Mohammadi, (2014) who also stated that managerial skills are important for many reasons, they position you to act as an effective leader who can make good decisions, an effective communicator with the soft skills necessary to inspire a team, and a problem-solver who can bring clarity to any situation.

The findings on the third research question showed that communication skill has improved community development projects in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State to a high extent through facilitating the formation of strong and positive relationships between community members, project organizers and other stakeholders. It also ensures that all stakeholders involved in project understand the project goals, objectives and expectations; helping to establish clear channels of communication by allowing for the smooth flow of information, feedback and updates. Again it contributes to the success of community development projects by enhancing their overall impact and ensuring their sustainability even after the initial project phase and empowering community members to actively participate in decision-making process. This is in line Fasel's (2011) assertion that communication skill is imperative to make ventures to be easy in order to ensure that all will participate in the

society. As also opined by Pratt and Boyden (2015) who rightly assert that the purpose of providing information is, indeed, to enable people to take certain actions.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed the importance of entrepreneurial skills for the improvement of community development projects in the study area. It found out that Innovative skill as an entrepreneurial skill helped in enhancing active and representative participation of citizens in community development projects so as to meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives. It also empowers citizens with the ability to think creatively and proffer lasting solutions to community problems. People are also equipped with the ability to develop and implement new and unique strategies to improve community development projects, enabled to harness their innovative skills, talents and experience to influence the community in a profound way.

Furthermore, managerial skill also enabled individuals to create realistic budgets and develop financial plans for community development project. Also communication skill as an indispensable component of entrepreneurial skills ensures that all stakeholders involved in project understand the project goals, objectives and expectation in helping to establish clear channels of communication and allowing for the smooth flow of information, feedback and update in the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Members of the community should be enlightened on the importance of acquiring and harnessing innovative skill as it enhances an active participation and execution of community development project.
2. The project managers of community development should be empowered and intimated on how best to manage the finance and resources of communities through workshops and seminars.
3. The individuals need a re-orientation on the indispensability of communication in the execution of community development projects. They should have the orientation that the worth of every worker should depend on the person's ability to communicate effectively.
4. On the issue of networking, it is recommended that community development agencies and NGO's should see to the mobilization and creation of avenues for members of community projects to establish healthy working relationships and work as a team to actualize the set objectives and goals of community based projects.
5. Lastly, the appropriate agencies should see to the amelioration of the stipulated challenges facing the utilization of entrepreneurial skills for improving community development projects.

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