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Entrepreneurial Skills Needed by Farm Youths for Enhanced Agricultural Productivity

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Abstract
This study investigated the entrepreneurial skills needed by farm youths in agricultural production in the rural parts of Oyo and Oke-ogun area of Oyo state, Nigeria using survey research design. Six research questions guided the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the subjects for the study. The subjects comprised 300 farm youths born or nurtured by farming households or by farmer parents living in a village, which is predominantly considered as a farming community. A survey questionnaire titled 'Entrepreneurial Skills Survey (ESS)' was used in collecting data from the subjects in the study area. The simple percentage, mean and t-test at 0.05 significance level were the statistical tools used for data analysis. The results revealed a comprehensive list of the entrepreneurial skills that every farm youth should possess for enterprise success and growth such as: personal characteristics, interpersonal skills, critical and creative thinking skills among others. The study concluded that farm youths must continue to strive for excellence in their farm operations by possessing the right skills that are in demand, which should include continued time and effort to maintain and improve their entrepreneurial skills.
Keywords: Farm youths, Entrepreneurial Skills, and Enhanced Agricultural Productivity

1. Introduction

The agricultural sector of Nigeria comprises adults and young people especially youths in rural areas. The young people herein refers are youths. "Youth" according to the UN (2015) is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community. The Nigerian National Youth Policy published by the Federal Government of Nigeria (2009) defines youth as anyone between the age of 18 and 35. There is no standard global definition of youth. However, the researchers, in this study describe youth to be any individual between the age of 18 and 40. The population of this youths found in agriculture appears to be very few across the country when compared to ageing population. This poor state of youth participation in agriculture is due to poor state of agricultural productivity experienced by practicing farmers (NDE, 2006). What then could be responsible for the poor state of agricultural productivity? The poor state of agricultural productivity and low esteem of agriculture as manifested in rural-urban migration, youths' low interest in farming, lack of industrial firms to process agricultural products and skilled labour among others has led to worsening Nigerian food deficit (Daudu, Okwoche and Adegboye, 2009). The Reasons for rural youth involvement in non-farm activities and migrating to urban areas include; the perception of greater job opportunities due to the presence of industries or companies in cities, poor physical infrastructure and social amenities in the rural areas, search for education and skills acquisition, and the absence of desirable job opportunities and general dislike of village life or expulsion from rural communities resulting from the commitment of an offense or crime (Kalu, 2013). In Nigeria, agricultural production and practices is still being carried out using traditional approach; the physical strength, which declines with age. Also, lack of skills and techniques required to manage other factors of production available for agricultural practices are among factors responsible for low agricultural productivity.

The most obvious form of entrepreneurship is that of starting new business. Some entrepreneurs create startups, but the vast majority of entrepreneurs do not work for startups. They are working for well-established companies (Dougherty, 2014). Some experts according to MindTools.com (2016) define entrepreneurs as people who are willing to take risks that other people are not. Thinking about this definition, entrepreneurship does not necessarily involve starting one's own business. Many people who don't work for themselves are recognized as entrepreneurs within their organizations. Others according to Seymour (2002) define them as people who start and build successful businesses. Sobel (2008) sees an entrepreneur as someone who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise. The authors qualify an entrepreneur as an agent of change. Entrepreneurship is the act of being an entrepreneur or "one who undertakes innovations, finance and business acumen in an effort to transform innovations into economic goods" (Scott, 2003). Entrepreneurship according to Sobel (2008) is the process of discovering new ways of combining resources.

In spite of the fact that the youths possess a lot of energy and other inestimable assets for high productivity, little can they achieve without the required skills. MindTools.com (2016) noted that

what makes someone a successful entrepreneur are some skills that are needed to build a great business. Acquiring correct entrepreneurial skills is a necessary part of designing a person's life and the way that person wants it to be. It certainly helps to have strong technology skills or expertise in a key area, but these are not defining characteristics of entrepreneurship. Instead, the key qualities or traits such as creativity, the ability to keep going in the face of hardship, and the social skills needed to build great teams. If someone wants to start a business, it is essential to learn the specific skills that underpin these qualities. It is also important to develop entrepreneurial skills if a person is in a job role where he/she is expected to develop a business, or "take things forward" more generally.

Entrepreneurial skills are a wide range of competencies that are seen as entrepreneurial and useful to farm youth entrepreneurs, such as; knowledge, skills and personal traits. Entrepreneurial activities are substantially different depending on the type of organizational activities involved. Researches have indicated that certain skills seem to be associated with entrepreneurs. Howkins (2001) found that entrepreneurs in the creative industries need a specific set of traits including the ability to prioritize ideas over data, to be nomadic and to learn endlessly. Laura (2005), Marsan (2009) identified some essential skills needed to build a great business and become a successful entrepreneur. These skills are classified into six categories namely: personal characteristics, interpersonal skills, critical and creative thinking skills, practical skills, technology skills, and financial literacy skills

Based on the above definitions and researchers' observation that the Nigerian youths do not in this 21st century participate actively in Agriculture while those who participated complained that they could not achieve much; it becomes necessary to find out what skills do farm youth entrepreneurs need to build and run a successful agricultural business? This study is out to provide answer to this question.

For farm youths to act as agents of change as Sobel (2008) has qualified them, i.e., to replace in whole or in part inferior innovations across agricultural markets and industries, and simultaneously creating new products including new agricultural models, they need to be attuned to entrepreneurial skills which are largely responsible for the dynamism of their sectors and long-run economic growth.

There is the need to examine how the youths that engaged in agriculture in Nigeria perceived and embraced each of these categories of skills. The study therefore examined the perceptions of farm youths about each of the categories with the aim to provide answers to some questions on how farm youths may become successful entrepreneurs.

1.1 Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study

1. What are the personal skills needed by the farm youths for enhancing agricultural productivity?
2. What are the interpersonal skills needed by the farm youths for enhancing agricultural productivity?
3. What are the critical and creative thinking skills needed by the farm youths for enhancing agricultural productivity?
4. What are the practical skills needed by the farm youths for enhancing agricultural productivity?
5. What are the technology skills needed by the farm youths for enhancing agricultural productivity?
6. What are the financial literacy skills needed by the farm youths for enhancing agricultural productivity?

1.2. Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the perceptions of the male and female respondents about entrepreneurship skills needed by farm youths

2. Method

The study was carried out in Oyo state of Nigeria, specifically in the rural part of Oyo and Oke-ogun area of the state. The area was chosen because of the high concentration of farming communities in the area. Most of the dwellers in the study area are farmers and they are involved in the production of poultry products and crops such as vegetables, yam, maize, cassava, citrus, banana, pawpaw and pineapple.

The population for this study comprises of all the youths born or nurtured by farm families or farmer parents in the study area. The age categories considered as youth range between 18 and 40 years because they fell within the active age bracket. The communities in the study area were stratified into five strata based on farming population and access of the farm youths to schools. Three communities were selected from each stratum by simple random sampling, making a total of 15 communities. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. All farming households in each of the fifteen communities were numbered. Twenty of such households were then randomly selected from each community to make up 300 farming households for questionnaire administration. In all, three hundred (300) farm youths were used in the study.

Questionnaire was administered on farm youths within the range of 18 and 35 years of age in the marked households. The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point scale to indicate, Strongly Agree (SA); Agree

(A); Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD) and centered on information about personal skills, interpersonal skills, critical and creative thinking skills, practical skills, technology skills and financial literacy skills needed by farm youths in relation to farm operations.

Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and mean. The mean was determined from the values allotted to the 4-point rating scale of responses which are: SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2 and SD = 1. A mean of 2.50 was considered as "Agree" and any value less than 2.50 as "Disagree".

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Frequency & Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Age and Educational Level

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years):		
18 – 25	62	20.7
26 – 35	106	35.3
36 – 40	132	44.0
Total	300	100
Gender:		
Male	226	75.3
Female	74	24.7
Total	300	100
Level of Education:		
No formal education	15	5
Completed primary school	42	14
Primary school drop-out	18	6
Still in Secondary School	24	8
Completed secondary school	84	28
Secondary school dropouts	57	19
Others (NCE, HND, B.Sc./B.Ed., M.Sc./M.Ed., etc.	60	20
Total	300	100

The results of the study as shown in table 1 reveal that majority (44%) of the farm youths fell between 36 and 40 years of age followed by 35.3% that were between 26 and 35 years old. Very few (20.7%) of the respondents were between 18 and 25 years of age.

The results in table 1 above further reveal that more than three-quarter (75.3%) of the farm youths are male while about a quarter (24.7%) of them are female. This implies that gender is no barrier to active involvement in farming activities in the study area. Data collected indicate that 14% and 28% of the farm youths had completed primary and secondary education respectively; 6% and 19% were primary and secondary education dropouts respectively while 20% had obtained post-secondary education qualifications. This is an indication that the farm youths have access to formal education in their local communities.

3.1. Research question 1: What are the personal skills needed by the farm youths for enhancing agricultural productivity?

Table 2. Mean rating and Standard deviation of personal skills needed by farm youths

Personal Skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Optimistic Thinking	300	2.57	1.232
Vision	300	3.00	1.018
Initiative	300	2.93	1.080
Desire for Control	300	3.25	0.870
Drive for Persistence	300	3.78	0.551
Risk Tolerance	300	2.57	1.232
Resilience	300	3.94	0.289

Most of the respondents as revealed in table 2 above perceived that every entrepreneur should examine their personal characteristics, values and beliefs.

While there is no one "right" set of characteristics for being a successful entrepreneur, certain general traits and practical skills will help to succeed. This is in line with the skills identified by Laura (2005), Marsan (2009). By examining their own personal strengths and weaknesses and comparing these with those of the typical entrepreneur, farm youths can get a sense of how well this career will fit with his/her personality.

Farm youths are expected to work closely with people – this is where it is critical to be able to build great relationships with their team, customers, suppliers, shareholders, investors, and more. They need to develop ability for optimistic thinking that will help a person get through tough times and create a compelling

vision of the future, and then inspire other people to engage with that vision. They also need to acquire the instinct to start problem-solving or business improvement projects and develop ability to lead others and make decisions even when facts are uncertain. This will enable them to learn and grow from mistakes and failures when things don't go as planned.

Persistence is one of those qualities that one cannot do without. This is the art of being relentless and keeping going, when everything goes against plans. Farm youths are therefore encouraged to keep going when no-one else cares or thinks they will make it. Ability to communicate well to sell vision of the future to investors, potential clients, team members, and more is another desirable interpersonal skill needed by farm youths to enhance productivity.

3.2. Research question 2: What are the interpersonal skills needed by the farm youths for enhancing agricultural productivity?

Table 3. Mean rating and Standard deviation of interpersonal skills needed by farm youths

Interpersonal Skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Leadership and Motivation	300	3.77	.669
Communication	300	3.75	.624
Listening	300	3.60	.612
Personal Relations	300	3.99	.115
Negotiation	300	3.73	.574
Ethics	300	3.99	.100

The results obtained in table 3 above revealed that excellent entrepreneurs will not require someone else to motivate them.

If farm youths are to succeed, then they will have to motivate themselves. This finding aligns with the findings of Howkins (2001). If they are to succeed, then they will have to motivate themselves. Farm youths should note that actual self-motivation comes from inside and not outside. A burning desire that emanates from inside of self will work for them as long as it is strong enough. So the reasons to succeed must be very strong to withstand scrutiny, attack, challenges, obstacles and just plain old problems.

They need to develop skill at active listening and empathetic listening to what others are saying vis-à-vis the ability to communicate well to sell vision of the future to investors, potential clients, team members, and more. These are needed for good negotiation that can resolve differences between people in a positive, mutually beneficial way.

3.3. Research question 3: What are the critical and creative thinking skills needed by the farm youths for enhancing agricultural productivity?

Table 4. Mean rating and Standard deviation of critical and creative thinking skills needed by farm youths

Critical and Creative Thinking Skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Creative Thinking	300	3.77	.669
Problem Solving	300	3.98	.151
Recognizing Opportunities	300	3.83	.373

Results in table 4 revealed that many people think that they are either born creative or not.

Creativity is a skill that an individual can develop if he/she invests the time and effort. This is in tandem with the findings by Howkins (2001) that entrepreneurs in the creative industries need to possess ability to prioritize ideas over data. However, creativity is a skill that an individual can develop if he/she invests the time and effort. As an entrepreneur, farm youth needs to come up with fresh ideas, and make good decisions about opportunities and potential projects.

A farm youth entrepreneur must be a person who is adaptable, flexible and prepared to be creative and innovate. Farm youths are therefore encouraged to always coming up with ideas to keep things fresh and new. Innovation and creativity have to be at the front of their mind throughout their entrepreneurial career.

3.4. Research question 4: What are the practical skills needed by the farm youths for enhancing agricultural productivity?

Table 5. Mean rating and Standard deviation of practical skills needed by farm youths

Practical Skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Goal Setting	300	3.18	.867
Planning and Organising	300	3.80	.654
Decision Making	300	3.97	.180
Business Knowledge	300	3.78	.551
Entrepreneurial Knowledge	300	2.95	1.096
Opportunities-specific knowledge	300	3.10	1.013
Venture-specific knowledge	300	3.77	.669
Knowledge of Rules and Regulations	300	2.90	1.077

Findings revealed that practical skills and knowledge are needed to produce goods or services effectively, and run a company.

Findings obtained in table 5 above suggested that practical skills and knowledge are needed to produce goods or services effectively, and run a company. This can be learnt from others who have worked on projects similar to the ones that a farm youth is contemplating, or he/she can find a mentor – someone else who has been there before and is willing to coach. He/she may also choose to learn more about a particular venture by working for another organization. An entrepreneur should never be too proud to ask for help. There are thousands of successful people out there who are actually prepared to assist.

3.5. Research question 5: What are the basic and technology skills needed by the farm youths for enhancing agricultural productivity?

Table 6. Mean rating and Standard deviation of basic technology skills needed by farm youths

Basic Technology Skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Word Processing Skills	300	3.10	1.013
Spreadsheets Skills	300	3.78	.551
Database Skills	300	2.99	1.112
Electronic Presentation Skills	300	2.73	1.134
Web Navigation Skills	300	3.12	.986
Web Site Design Skills	300	3.00	1.035
Email Management Skills	300	3.03	1.081
Digital Cameras Knowledge	300	2.93	1.080
Computer Networking Knowledge application	300	2.93	1.080
File Management and Windows Explorer Skills	300	2.68	1.153
Downloading Software Knowledge	300	2.61	1.108
Installing Computer Software Skills	300	2.93	1.095
Videoconferencing Skills	300	2.72	1.145
Computer related Storage Devices	300	3.35	.728
Scanner Knowledge	300	2.43	1.088
Computer Security Knowledge	300	3.12	.986

Results in table 6 above revealed that some basic technology skills are needed by farm youths even though some of the technological skills were perceived as not very important by some of the respondents as could be seen in the mean rating analysis shown in the table.

The need for technical and technology skills continues to grow as technology grows; youths in agriculture need these skills to cope with technological pace as articulated by Turner (2005) and Marsan (2009). Such essential skills as shown in table 6 below include ability to; use some type of word processing program to complete written tasks in a timely manner, use some type of spreadsheet program to compile farm inputs and outputs and even financial data, use electronic presentation software to learn about new innovations from workshop done through electronic presentations, navigate the World Wide Web and search effectively for information relevant agricultural practice on the Internet and use e-mail to communicate with customers and colleagues and be able to scan and send attachments such as sales invoice and picture of products to customers and create e-mail folders. Other skills are ability to understand and know how to use the following data storage devices (a disk, CDs, USB drives) for storing important information.

Some of the technological skills were perceived as not very important by some of the respondents as could be seen in the mean rating analysis shown in table 6. Such skills include ability to; use electronic presentation software, use some type of database program to create tables, store and retrieve data, and query data, operate a digital camera and understand how digital imagery can be used to post farm products on bill board and

internet, use computer network knowledge applicable to business operation system, manage computer files and be able to complete tasks like create, and delete files and folders, move and copy files and folders, download software from the web and know of the major sites that can be used for this purpose and ability to install computer software unto a computer system.. The reason may be due to their technology literacy level and access to technological facilities.

3.6. Research question 6: What are the financial literacy skills needed by the farm youths for enhancing agricultural productivity?

Table 7. Mean rating and Standard deviation of financial literacy skills needed by farm youths

Financial Literacy Skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Records Keeping Skills	300	3.97	.180
Coordinating skills	300	3.04	1.047
Administrative Skills	300	3.07	1.048
Accuracy Skills	300	3.28	.879
Information and Task monitoring	300	3.10	1.013
Supervisory Skills	300	2.98	1.010
Ability to prepare financial statement	300	2.68	1.141
Reporting Skills	300	3.38	1.020

Results revealed that farm youths, in addition to finances, considered investing their time and energy into farming activities.

These findings are pointing to the fact that farm youths should dip their toes in the water and go all out for success. They should be prepared to invest whatever time is required, whatever investment is required and whatever energy is required. In other words, they should note that all out massive investment is a crucial part of entrepreneurial journey.

Good business acumen demands that a person must put it all on the line and prepare to take some risk(s), whether that is financially, personally or may be with personal or business reputation. Most entrepreneurs fail many times before they succeed. Farm youths should therefore prepare for setbacks and the inevitable knocks they will obviously get on their agricultural practice.

In this fast-paced global economy, exceptional organization of finances becomes a prized skill. Farm youths that want to be part of the new generation need to be financially literate to enable them; establish and maintain simple cash and accrual accounting systems, perform business activity and installment activity statements, maintain asset and inventory records, prepare financial statements and establish a payroll system, keep office accounts, process daily financial records and manage financial records for their businesses.

3.7. Hypothesis*:* There is no significant difference between the perceptions of the male and female respondents about entrepreneurship skills needed by farm youths

Table 8. Gender difference on response on entrepreneurial skills

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-cal.	t-value	Sig
Male	226	87.26	0.606	298	26.97	1.96	.000
Female	74	51.50	1.324				

Finding in table 8 above shows that the value of the t-calculated is greater than the t-critical, hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The result of the test of hypothesis in table 8 showed that there is significant difference between the perceptions of the male and female respondents about entrepreneurship skills needed by farm youths. This is also revealed in the mean rating (87.26) of male and mean rating (51.50) of female. The difference is as a result of the fact that the number of male (226) participating in farming business is more than the female (74) as revealed in table 1.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The population of the youths found in agriculture in the surveyed areas appears to be very few compared with the number of adults that are involved. Male youths are found to be more involved in agricultural practice than their female counterpart. They assumed the risks of agricultural business and continue in the practice with little knowledge or lack of skills and techniques required to manage other factors of production available for agricultural practices.

The survey exposed the farm youths in the surveyed area to identify that jobs in agricultural business require application of some entrepreneurial skill (personal skills, interpersonal skills, critical and creative thinking skills, practical skills, technology skills, and financial literacy skills) for enhanced productivity. The farm youth entrepreneurs considered a wide range of these entrepreneurial skills as very important and useful for

success in their agricultural enterprise. Given the growth of technology, the youths in agriculture realized they need some of the technological skills and other identified skills to cope with technological pace.

It could therefore be concluded that as global farm business and associated technologies continue to change and evolve, farm youth entrepreneurs must continue to strive for excellence in their work by possessing the skills that are in demand, which should include continued time and effort to maintain and improve their entrepreneurial skills.

Farm youths and other entrepreneurs who tend to start ventures that build on specific skills should find out how well they have developed the skills that successful entrepreneurs used to start and grow their ventures.

All entrepreneurs should share with others, more general, skills such as communication, team-building, and creative-thinking skills so as to have an idea of where their strengths are and which skills they need to work on. The information will help them to improve their skills and performances in business.

Ministries of Agriculture, Rural Development, Youth Empowerment and Education, Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), Agricultural Corporation, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Higher Educational Institutions, National Research Institutes, Multilateral Organizations, Industrialists etc. should from time to time organize seminar and workshop that focus on entrepreneurial activities and development. This should be handled by educational experts and successful entrepreneurs with practical wealth of experience in the field of agriculture so as to encourage their motive to embark on agricultural activities.

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