

ASSESSMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SMALL SCALE ELECTRICAL/ELECTRONIC ENTREPRENEURS IN ADAMAWA STATE

S.S, Manabete and G.J. Zamdayu

Abstract

Small scale enterprises are a way out of unemployment. The study set out to examine the conditions in electrical/electronic entrepreneurship in Adamawa State, with a view to determining its performance. Electrical/electronic job shops, the nature of work in them, the educational background of the shop owners and their income levels were carefully considered. The sample was randomly drawn from three towns, and using the questionnaire, data were collected from twenty eight (28) job shops, out of which eight (8) were rendered invalid. Descriptive statistical method of frequency and percentage was used to analyze the data obtained from the remaining copies of the questionnaire. Findings of the study revealed that entrepreneurs are generally successful in their business, having maintained a decent standard of living. However, they prefer both this type 'of employment and wage employment. The key problem was a capital to start their business and sustain it. It was suggested that the formation of co-operative societies could assist greatly in a provision of loans to such entrepreneurs.

Introduction

Electrical/Electronic practice finds a very wide application in day-to-day activities, especially from the industry to the small and medium scale enterprise - sales, repairs, maintenance and design and construction. The roadside mechanic, for instance, has been very relevant and hence in high demand to repair damaged electrical/electronic appliances/systems (Brammoh, 1998). But then while the mechanic tries to resuscitate the broken down equipment, he discovers that he needs spare parts. Then he quickly runs to a spare parts store to secure the parts for his repair work. Here, while some entrepreneurs deal solely in repairs, others combine both repairs and sales. And yet others deal only on sale of spare parts.

It is not far-fetched to state that the rise of small-scale enterprises (SSEs) especially in a developing country like Nigeria, was due to the inability of Government to provide enough jobs for the citizenry. The country's social, economic and political problems have led to a high proportion of graduate and non-graduate unemployment (Anyakoha, 1995; Yohanna, 1998). As the country witnesses population growth, illiteracy has been on the increase (Yakubu, 1997). Consequently, many unemployed youths have turned to many social vices like violence, street begging, loitering, armed robbery, alcoholism and other forms of drug abuse, and even suicide (Akanbi and Ugbe, 1997; Tika and Manabete, 2003).

In the last couple of decades, Government has tried to tackle the issue of unemployment and poverty by introducing certain schemes such as DFRRI, NDE, MAMSER, FEAP, Skill Acquisition Programme (SAP), FSP, NAPEP, Youth Employment Scheme (YES) and Accelerated Food Production Projects (Aliyu, 1997; Olewuezi, 1999; Apagu, 2003). Others are, Nigerian Agricultural and Co-operative Bank, Community Bank, and People's Bank of Nigeria (Adeyemi, 1999). Unfortunately, the schemes have yielded very little dividend. Some of them have either been totally abandoned, or "renamed"¹¹ but with similar objectives. Even those, which are considered to be still alive, it is as though they are dead.

In order to effectively sponsor SSEs as a poverty alleviation strategy, entrepreneurs do not only rely solely on Government. It is very important for entrepreneurs to put some personal savings into their businesses. Or alternatively to re-invest in them as Sodiki (2001) suggested. In addition, the formation of NGOs, such as cooperative societies will assist them in obtaining loans to provide capital for their businesses. NGOs play vital roles in the effective operation of SSEs. For instance, a foreign NGO - the Korean Federation of Small Business - provides training and productivity improvement services to small-scale entrepreneurs with a view to promoting them to enter the international market (Momoh, 2000).

Skill in vocational/technical education is concerned with the ability an individual possesses to carry a trade (Yamusa, 1993, citing Legge, 1970). Skill training, in this connection, irrespective of how and where it is acquired should lead to a vocation - being the job an individual does to earn a living. It is one's career, a chosen profession in the world of work (Okoh, 2001). The job may be a trade, a profession, or an occupation. Most skill acquisition programmes follow a pattern of apprenticeship education, lasting for a specified period (Orji, 1996). The education is basically that of observing and practicing, employing sometimes trial and error (Osuala, 1993; Ezeani, 1995). As the practice progresses with time, the apprentice achieves a considerable level of perfection.

Small-scale engineering based businesses are very important in revamping the national economy. They propel, according to Sodiki (2001), the nation forward towards an industrial

development. Using the crafts, tools, equipment and machines can easily be fabricated.

Sambo (1997) discussed the factors that determine the success or failure of an entrepreneurship. These include capital, experience, market and credit facilities. The study on employment preference by Akanbi and Ugbe (1997) suggests that graduates of business education preferred both self and wage employment. But although the graduates preferred wage employment due to such reasons as consistency in payment and the benefits of promotions and wage increments, they are also of the view that a successfully self-employed person is as good as, if not better than, a professional employed in a large organization.

It is of utmost importance to study employment conditions in small-scale enterprises (SSEs) with a view to determining their performance and then making a fair comparison between them and public sector employment. In this connection, the study set out with this objective in view. Due to the teeming number of radio, television and motor repairmen (Manabete, 2003; Tika & Manabete, 2003), the study considered types of job shop and the nature of work in them (Idris & Aderoba, 2000). It looked at the educational background of job shop owners, their income levels and the problems they encountered. The study then proffered some very useful suggestions.

Methodology

The study covered three major towns. A research of this nature required a survey visit to the towns which the researchers undertook. This was necessary to determine to a large extent, the sample size for the study. Consequently, the number of shops involved in electrical/electronic small scale entrepreneurship practice in Yola was about twenty-one (21). In Mubi and Numan, they were eleven (11) and seven (7) shops respectively. These figures gave a total of thirty-nine (39) shops. The questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of twenty-eight (28) shops randomly selected. Out of the twenty eight (28) copies of questionnaire, five (5) were not returned; two (2) were partially filled and one (1) had a page missing. Descriptive statistical method of frequency and percentage was used in analyzing the data collected, which are presented in tables.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Presenting Respondents View Regarding How They Went into Electrical/Electronic Business

Test Item	Respondents' Views	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How respondents got into business		
- By apprenticeship	-	-
- By formal education	7	35
-Both apprenticeship and formal training.	13	65

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents went into electrical/electronic business by both apprenticeship training and formal education. This view is expressed by 13 respondents who represent 65%. As seen in 2 Table 2, 13 or 60% of the respondents had studied up to a technical college and acquired the C & G/WAF.C Technical Certificate. The percentages for those that went to a Craft School and Polytechnic/College of Education (though low) clearly show that respondents had formal training in their chosen careers or their chosen profession in the world of work (Okoh, 2001).

The position held by Orji (1996)' Osuala (1993), and Ezeani (1995), indicates that even apprenticeship training alone follows some form of education that lasts for some specified period of time.

Table 2: Shows the Educational Background of Respondents

Test Item	Respondents' Views		
	Certificate obtained	Freq.	%
Indicate your educational background.			
- Primary school	FLSC	-	-
- Craft school	Craft certificate	5	25
- Technical College	C and GAYAEC(Tech)	12	60
- Polytechnic/Col. Of Educ.	ND/HND/NCE(Tech)	3	15
- University	Degree.	-	-

Table 3: Shows How Long Respondents Have Been in Business

Test Item	Respondents Views	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How long have you been in business? - Up to 5 years	3	15
Up to 5 years		
-Up to 10 years	10	50
- Up to 15 years	4	20
- Up to 20 years	-	-
- 20 years and above	3	15

Starting a business and staying in it is of utmost importance. The data of Table 3 show that 50% i.e. 10 respondents had been in business for up to 10 years. In fact, no respondents had been in business for less than three years. This is a clear manifestation of the fact that respondents had made concerted effort to remain in business for many more years ahead. This success in business sustainability may be attributed to the size of the business in which, according to Table 4, the number people was below 5. This undoubtedly makes for effectiveness in supervision and a sense of collective responsibility towards the business.

The data of Table 5 show that in the 3 selected towns, most shops are involved in repairs/maintenance work. This is supported by 10 respondents who make-up 50%. On the whole, this study underscores the importance of job shops as Idris and Aderoba (2000) pointed out. Here, in each of three selected towns, one job shop or the other was available.

Table 4: Showing the Number of People in Electrical/Electronic Business

Test Item	Respondents' Views	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How many people are involved in your business? - Less than 5 people - Less than 10 people - Less than 15 people - Less than 20 people - 20 people and above.	125	60
	3	25
		15

Table 5: Showing Types of Job Shop and the Nature of Work in Them

Types of Jobs Shop			Major Duties	Nature of Work
	Freq,	%		
Repair/Maintenance	10	50	Repair work	Repair of radio, TV, Video, Recoiling of motors, etc.
Design and construction	2	10	Manufacturing	Construction of PA Systems, Stabilizers, etc.
Sale of parts	5	25	Sales	Sale of Spare parts
Sales/Repairs	3	15	Sales/Repairs	Sale of spare parts and repair work.

In Table 6, entrepreneurs enjoy a high patronage, as shown by 14 respondents who make up 70%. This justifies the position held by Sambo (1997) that for any business to succeed, the market should play a very vital role. However, customers' payments are both prompt and delayed as shown by 15% respondents or 75% delayed payment lasts as long as one month (Table 7) as attested to by 12 or 60% of the respondents.

In Table 8, when customers delay collection of repaired or purchased items, majority opinion (15 or 75%) suggests that the trend congests shop, affects records of income and presents security problems to the business.

Table 6: Showing Customer Attitude to Business in Respect of Payments and Patronage

Test Items	Respondents View	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
On customer Patronage:		
High patronage	14	70
Moderate patronage	5	25
Low patronage	1	5
On customer payments:		
Prompt	3	15
Delayed	2	10
Both prompt and delayed	15	75
Refusal to pay	-	-

Table 7: Showing Customer Attitude to Business in Respect of Payment Delay Rate

Test Items	Respondents View	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Up to 1 month	12	60
Up to 3 months	7	35
Up to 6 months	1	5
Up to 1 year	-	-
1 year and above	-	-

Table 8: Showing Customer Attitude to Business in Respect of Effect of Delay in Collection of Repaired/Purchased Item on Business

Test Items	Respondents View	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Congestion of shop	3	15
Record of income affected	1	5
Poses security problem	1	5
All of the above	15	75

Table 9: Showing Respondents' Views Regarding the Success/Failure of Their Businesses

Test Item	Respondents views	Freq.	%
		On average income per day	14
On average income per week	13	65	
On average income per month	15	75	
On income stability	Moderate	12	60
Factor in income stability	Civil servant payments and contractors	14	70
Way income has affected entrepreneurs	Decent living	16	80
Work Preference	Both public and private	13	65
Level of satisfaction	Moderate	12	60
Reason for success recorded	Dedication to duty	15	75
Entrepreneurs' Main problem	Poor capital base	14	70
Entrepreneur' basic suggestion	Provisions of loans	13	65

The data of Table 9 present only the majority views of respondents. The average income per-day of over N2,000.00 can be considered adequate for any small scale enterprise. Entrepreneurs maintain a decent level of existence. Consequently, as Aliyu, Bagudu, and Abidemi (2000) have observed, poverty levels are low and social vices like stealing and corruption are considerably reduced. However, the clamour for both public and private employment is in line with the study by Akanbi and Ugbe (1997). Entrepreneurs' success in their business undertaking is attributable to their dedication to duty. Dedication to duty, it must be stressed, includes also re-investment into the enterprise by entrepreneurs as Sodiki (2001) suggested.

Findings

From the analysis of the results, the following findings have been obtained:

1. Entrepreneurs went into electrical/electronic business through both apprenticeship and formal training. In fact, at time of establishing their business entrepreneurs had read up to a technical college and acquired certificate in relevant field. With less than 5 people, entrepreneurs had been in business for up to 10 years.
2. While repairs, manufacturing, sales, sales/repair work are undertaken in relevant shops, majority of people are in repair/maintenance business.
3. Entrepreneurs enjoy a high customer patronage. However, payments by customers are both prompt and delayed. Payment delay rate lasts as long as one month. Delay in collection of repaired items leads to congestion of shop. Furthermore, the trend does not only affect record of income but poses security problems.
4. On the whole, entrepreneurs are successful in their business having enjoyed a moderately stable income of N30,000.00 per month, thereby maintaining a decent level of existence. The stability is due mainly to income levels of civil servants and contractors.
5. But although entrepreneurs' income has affected them in the area of decent living, their preference is for both public and private employment. Their failure to record very high success is due to the fact that they face the key problem of capital for their business and desire that loans be provided to them to ease their conditions.

Problems and Suggestions

Problems of finance and high tariffs (Sodiki, 1999; Apagu, 2003), security, shop congestion, and further training are common with many small-scale enterprises. The following are recommendations that are likely to enhance the conditions of small-scale electrical/electronic entrepreneurs:

1. The formation of NGOs such as co-operative societies will assist in the provision of loans at low interest rates.
2. Government tariffs, whether they are those of States or Local Governments, need to be low, to enable entrepreneurs derive maximum benefits from their businesses.
3. Seminars and workshops need to be organized from time to time for small-scale entrepreneurs to update their skills and knowledge.
4. Incentives like awards for excellence need to be given to small-scale entrepreneurs to boost their morale and to sustain them in business.
5. Ethno-religious clashes lead to a general atmosphere of insecurity. This retards business activities. The spirit of nationalism, tolerance and hard work needs to be imbibed by the citizenry. This will go a long way in enhancing entrepreneurship practices.

Conclusion

Due to Governments' inability to provide employment to all citizens, there has been the need to set up privately owned enterprises. The study examined private employment in small-scale electrical/electronic business. Most entrepreneurs dealt with repair and maintenance of electrical/electronic appliances. The study has found that though entrepreneurs are happy with their self-employment enterprises, thereby maintaining some decent level of existence, they prefer both wage and private employment. This goes to show that publicly employed citizens require, in addition to this, some sort of a private business, which will fetch them additional income for their families.

Capital has remained the key problem for most privately owned enterprises. Loans that attract low interest will definitely be useful in this area. In adoption, the formation of co-operative societies will also pave the way for entrepreneurs to receive loan grants for their businesses. This way they can continually expand their businesses.

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