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Skills For Engineers to Become Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development in Anambra State

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the skills for engineers to become entrepreneurs in the era of sustainable development in Anambra state. Four research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design study was adopted for the study. Population of the study comprised all the 254 engineering lecturers (219 from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, 15 from Anambra State Polytechnics, Mgbagwu and 20 from Federal College of Education (Tech), Umunze). The sample is 128 engineers (110 from Nnmadi Azikiwe University Awka, 8 from Anambra State Polytechnics, Mgbagwu and 10 from Federal College of Education (Tech), Umunze). Simple random sampling was used to draw 50% of the total number of engineering lecturers in each of the institutions making it 128 respondents. A structured questionnaire tilted "Skills for Engineers to Become Entrepreneurs in the Era of Sustainable Development Questionnaire (SEBEESDQ)" was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument contained 28 items in four sections according to the research questions on a four-point rating scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD) each. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and determine the spread of the responses from the mean. Findings of the study indicated among others that engineers require entrepreneurial skills to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state. Based on the findings, it was recommended that since engineers need entrepreneurial skills to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development, they should be given mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs to help them learn relevant entrepreneurial skills, among others.

Keywords: *Engineers, Skills, Entrepreneurs, Development, Sustainable development*

Introduction

Education is a key tool for both national and sustainable development. it inculcates in recipients, requisite information and development skills for technological advancement and socio-political development which spurs economic progress. Mohammed et al (2022) enlightened that the focus of education at our tertiary institutions is moving away from traditional methods towards entrepreneurial growth. There is now an emphasis on entrepreneurship to economic progress and sustainable development (Aribisala, 2023a; Agu & Nwachukwu, 2020). Krishnan et al (2022) noted that individuals must completely embrace entrepreneurship given the fact that graduates roam the streets searching for jobs. These are people that should be contributing positively to the society. This sad situation makes it urgent for graduates to be prepared for entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship is defined as an incremental dynamic process of wealth production created by an individual or collective system within an organizational structure through the development of something new, from the conception of ideas to the creation of a business, which demands effort, time and resources and includes financial, psychological, and social risks (Jaimes-Acero et al, 2022). An entrepreneur embodies the entrepreneurial spirit. Entrepreneurs are individuals that create, organized, and manage a business, taking both risks and rewards. The entrepreneurial capacity allows the creation of strategies ideal for expanding the productivity and the general development of any organization. Akinbobola (2020) noted that it comprises four abilities: to innovate and be creative, identify and exploit new business opportunities, willingly take risks, and create and develop business networks. Graduates in general and engineers specifically ought to embrace entrepreneurship to contribute to not just economic development but sustainable development. An engineer a person that earned a bachelor's degree in engineering or related field with developed expertise in a specific engineering discipline like mechanical, electrical, computer and civil. An entrepreneurial engineer is a person with developed technical and soft skills. Krishnan (2022) noted that it is essential that the engineering graduates have the possibility of developing their business ideas effectively, so they do not depend on the possible hiring from a company. This implies that it is relevant and urgent for the engineering programs to include in their curriculum and the teachers' training the development of skills and entrepreneurship. This will support the development of the startups from their research results and enhance the graduates' competitiveness.

Skill means a developed ability or proficiency in performing a specific task, activity or function typically acquired through practice, training, experience and education. Entrepreneurial skills are skills that enable entrepreneurs succeed in creating, managing and growing a business or venture. Crucial entrepreneurial skills for sustainable development are adaptability, innovation, financial literacy and social responsibility (Agu & Nwachukwu, 2020). Adaptability skills allow entrepreneurs to effectively respond to shifts in the market and seize new opportunities (Mohammed et al, 2022). Aribisala (2023b) submitted that being able to adapt quickly and efficiently may make an entrepreneur thrive or be left behind. This skill makes entrepreneurs when faced with challenges and setbacks to be able to bounce back. It makes them to be innovative and embrace the winds of change and let the business soar to new heights through the

power of innovative ideas. Innovation mean more than coming up with new ideas, it entails implementing those ideas effectively. These entrepreneurial skills should be used in a sustainable manner. This means that the impact of every activity on the environment must be considered. This warrants that engineers who will become entrepreneurs should have environmental skills

Environmental skills refer to the knowledge, abilities and practices that enable individuals to interact with and manage the natural environment in a sustainable way. Ogando (2022) submitted that some specific examples of environmental skills include climate change mitigation and adaptation skill, waste management and reduction skill, environmental monitoring and reporting skill and sustainable supply chain management skill, among others. This skill enable entrepreneurs take steps to protect and preserve the environment being aware of problems affecting it. Environmental skill is the ability to maintain natural resources while enhancing human welfare (Sherpa, 2022). It guarantees that the demands of the people are addresses without the chance of comprising the needs of future generations. Environmental skills enable entrepreneurs produce economic results without endangering the environment in the short or long term (Abraham & Jaleel, 2023). Again, entrepreneurs should be able to walk along with other entrepreneurs. They therefore need collaborative skills.

Collaborative skill is seen as a key 21st century skill for entrepreneurs. Collaborative skill allows entrepreneurs form a synthesis of information that enables them create new products through the combination of different perspectives and ideas. It helps an entrepreneur work well with others which increases production and develops healthy relationships. It aids brainstorming which leads to developing unique solutions. They are competencies required when working with other team members on a joint objective example communication, open-mindedness, conflict resolution, team work and problem-solving(find out if you can add anything here from the last paragraph of the handwritten thing on collaborative skills). It entails building relationships with team members, knowing how to resolve conflicts when it arises and creating an inclusive, respectful working environment (Zoe et al, 2023). The National Association of Colleges and Employers (2024) submitted that the ability to work in a team is one of the top skills employers look for in students' resumes and 76% of employers want candidates with these skills. This implies that collaborative skill is very important for an entrepreneur to thrive. They also need social impact skills to bring positive impacts on the community where they exist.

Social impact skills enable entrepreneurs make significant and positive changes through conscious and deliberate efforts or activities in their operations and administrations (Duke, 2021). Business owners that make significant social impacts are known as social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurs own businesses that directly benefit society through their efforts in addressing one or several components of social challenges. They create social impacts in any way they can through the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) which are set as a way for individuals, businesses and organizations to work together towards making a significant impact in the world. Vodă and Florea (2019) noted that with social impact skills, entrepreneurs can choose greener ways to operate and create fewer by-products. Social impact skills also enable entrepreneurs create opportunities that are otherwise unavailable to the minorities and underprivileged. These groups can get access to quality education and clean water, gender equality or able to obtain decent work and thus gain economic growth. Gibson (2022) submitted

that social impact skills are ability to practice corporate social responsibility, skills for making socially responsible investment, managing business on a global scale, crafting a business sustainability strategy and building networks as sources of power and influence.

According to Jaimes-Acero et al (2022), soft skills like Responsibility, Humility, Critical thinking, Communication (divided into Difficult conversations, Non-verbal language, Presenting in front of different audiences, Writing reports), Negotiation, Action coordination (divided into Commitment, Claims, Supervision, Acknowledgment), Emotional competence, Leadership, Entrepreneurship (divided into Risk analysis, Analysis of business ideas considering methodologies, Creativity) are essential for engineers to become entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial activities ought to contribute to the development of the country in a sustainable manner given the realities of climate change.

Development is the process of improving the quality of life, economic well-being and social progress of a community or nation. Globally, sustainable development, not merely development is desired. According to Brundtland report also known as “Our Common Future”, sustainable development is that development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Its importance lies primarily in its dual focus on the socio-economic development of communities and environmental preservation, aiming to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Sustainable development is integral to social justice and economic stability. Through the equitable distribution of resources and benefits, sustainable development seeks to reduce poverty and social inequality, contributing to a fair and inclusive society (Sachs, 2015). Moreover, sustainability has become a key driver of economic growth, with the rise of the "green economy" and growing demand for clean energy, sustainable transportation, and other eco-friendly products and services (Geissdoerfer, Savaget, Bocken, & Hultink, 2017). This trend offers new opportunities for job creation, innovation, and investment, further highlighting the economic viability of sustainable development. Engineering entrepreneurship has potentials of contributing to sustainable development. However, despite the relevance of engineering entrepreneurship to sustainable development, the skills necessary to support an entrepreneurial venture and increase the entrepreneurial abilities have not been studied enough, and it is not clear which skills are necessary to boost entrepreneurship, hence the present study.

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, engineers would not only possess technical expertise but also a comprehensive set of entrepreneurial, environmental, collaborative, and social impact skills that empower them to drive sustainable development. These skills would enable engineers to innovate, create businesses, and develop solutions that address environmental challenges, enhance community welfare, and stimulate economic growth. In regions like Anambra State, where sustainable development is crucial, engineers ought to be well-equipped to transition into entrepreneurial roles that align with global sustainability goals.

However, the current situation in Anambra State suggests a gap in the skill sets of engineers

aspiring to become entrepreneurs. While there is a growing awareness of the need for sustainability, many engineers appear not to have adequate entrepreneurial acumen and environmental awareness necessary for sustainable business creation. Also, collaborative skills, such as networking, partnership-building, and teamwork, are probably underdeveloped, and there is a limited focus on social impact skills that are essential for addressing community needs. As a result of these skill gaps, the potential for engineers in Anambra State to contribute to sustainable development through entrepreneurship remains largely untapped. The lack of well-rounded skills means that engineers often struggle to launch and sustain businesses that are not only economically viable but also environmentally and socially responsible. This situation hinders progress towards achieving sustainable development goals and highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions to develop entrepreneurial, environmental, collaborative, and social impact skills among engineers. Addressing these gaps is crucial for fostering a generation of engineer-entrepreneurs capable of driving sustainable growth in Anambra State hence the study on assessment of skills for engineers to become entrepreneurs in the era of sustainable development in Anambra state

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine skills for engineers to become entrepreneurs in the era of sustainable development in Anambra state. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. Entrepreneurial skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state
2. Environmental skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state
3. Collaborative skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state
4. Social impact skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the entrepreneurial skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state?
2. What are the environmental skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state?
3. What are the collaborative skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state?
4. What are the social impact skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state?

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. This was done by seeking the opinions of engineers on the problem of the study. The study was carried out in higher institutions (Nnmadi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State Polytechnics, Mgbagwu and Federal College of Education (Tech), Umunze) all in Anambra state. The population is 254 engineering lecturers (219 from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, 15 from Anambra State Polytechnics, Mgbagwu and 20 from Federal College of Education (Tech), Umunze). The sample is 128 engineers (110 from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, 8 from Anambra State Polytechnics, Mgbagwu and 10 from Federal College of Education (Tech), Umunze). Simple random sampling was used to draw 50% of the total number of engineering lecturers in each of the institutions making it 128 respondents. The choice of 50% is to ensure that the sample is representative enough by using half of the engineering lecturers in each institution. The choice of 50% is informed by Nworgu (2015) who opined that 30%-80% of a population is adequate for a research work.
The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Skills for Engineers to Become Entrepreneurs in the Era of Sustainable Development Questionnaire" (SEBEESDQ) which was constructed by the researcher based on the research questions. The questionnaire was made up of 28 items and was divided into four parts 1, 2, 3 and 4. Part 1 with 7 items to elicit information on entrepreneurial skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development; part 2 has 7 items which covered environmental skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development; part 3 has 7 items which focused on collaboration skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development and part 4 has 7 items which covered social impact skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instrument was pilot tested to ensure its reliability and the data collected was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha. This gave a coefficient reliability of 0.73. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher and a research assistant using direct administration method. The research assistant was briefed and instructed on how to distribute and collect copies of the questionnaires from the respondents. All the 128 copies of questionnaires distributed were collected and duly filled. They were all used for analysis.

The data obtained were analyzed using mean based on the 4-point scale ranging from strongly agree of 4 points to strongly disagree of 1 point. Any item with a mean response of 2.50 and above was considered 'agreed' while anyone with a mean response below 2.50 was considered 'disagreed'.

Results

Research Question one What are the entrepreneurial skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state

Table 1: Mean Responses of Engineers on the Entrepreneurial Skills Required of Engineers to Become Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development in Anambra State

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Ability to design business models that balance economic, social and environmental sustainability	3.71	.60	Agreed
2	Ability to implement sustainable technologies and innovations	3.62	.88	Agreed
3	Ability to manage supply chains for sustainable development	3.53	.70	Agreed
4	Ability to think creatively for sustainable development	2.64	1.06	Agreed
5	System thinking skills to understand complex sustainability challenges	3.73	.62	Agreed
6	Ability to apply nature-based solutions to develop sustainable products and services	2.53	1.10	Agreed
7	Understanding sustainable finance and accounting practices for sustainable development	2.53	.91	Agreed
	Cluster mean	3.41	.88	Agreed

The analysis in Table 1 shows the cluster mean and standard deviation of 3.41 and .88 indicating the items are entrepreneurial skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state. The analysis of items indicates that all the seven items were rated as entrepreneurial skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state.

Research Question Two What are the environmental skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state?

Table 2: Mean Responses of Engineers on the Environmental Skills Required of Engineers to Become Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development in Anambra State

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Skills for understanding the environmental impacts of products throughout their entire life cycle	2.95	.71	Agreed
2	Ability to optimize resource use for sustainable development	3.13	.62	Agreed
3	Ability to use sustainable technologies for environmental challenges	3.12	.53	Agreed

4	Ability to utilize renewable energy sources and systems	3.02	.77	Agreed
5	Ability to design systems that minimize environmental harm	3.02	.57	Agreed
6	Ability to mitigate environmental risks	3.31	.78	Agreed
7	Ability to use strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions	3.59	.70	Agreed
	Cluster mean	3.02	.77	Agreed

Results in Table 2 show the environmental skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state. The cluster mean and standard deviation of 3.02 and .77 indicates that respondents agreed that all those items are the environmental skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state.

Research Question Three What are the collaborative skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state?

Table 3 Mean Responses of Engineers on the Collaborative Skills Required of Engineers to Become Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development in Anambra State

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Ability to engage with diverse stakeholders for sustainable development	3.30	.80	Agreed
2	Ability to engage and empower local communities for sustainable development	3.30	.80	Agreed
3	Ability to resolve conflicts among diverse stakeholders for sustainable development	3.38	.73	Agreed
4	Ability to facilitate and mediate discussions and negotiations among stakeholders for sustainable development	3.39	.73	Agreed
5	Ability to collaborate with stakeholders to co-design sustainable solutions	3.36	.72	Agreed
6	Ability to maintain trust among stakeholders for sustainable development	3.29	.77	Agreed
7	Ability to lead in complex environments for sustainable development	3.31	.80	Agreed
	Cluster mean	2.56	.92	Agreed

Results in Table 3 shows the collaborative skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state. The cluster mean and standard deviation of 2.56 and .92 indicates that all those items are collaborative skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state.

Research Question Four What are the social impact skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state?

Table 4: Mean Responses of Engineers on the Social Impact Skills Required of Engineers to Become Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development in Anambra State

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Understanding social justice principles for sustainable development	2.85	.71	Agreed
2	Ability to work effectively with diverse cultural groups and stakeholders	3.09	.64	Agreed
3	Skills in engaging stakeholders in sustainable development decision-making	2.81	.69	Agreed
4	Ability to develop innovative solutions to social problems	2.85	.71	Agreed
5	Ability to manage projects that benefit local communities	3.09	.64	Agreed
6	Ability to promote social inclusion for sustainable development	2.89	.67	Agreed
7	Ability to understand indigenous peoples' rights and engagement strategies	3.07	.62	Agreed
	Cluster mean	2.81	.69	Agreed

Results in Table 4 show the social impact skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state. The cluster mean and standard deviation of 2.81 and .69 indicates that all those items are social impact skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state.

Discussion of Findings

The results in table 1 show that there are entrepreneurial skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state. Some of the skills are: ability to design business models that balance economic, social and environmental sustainability; ability to manage supply chains for sustainable development; system thinking skills to understand complex sustainability challenges and ability to apply nature-based solutions to develop sustainable products and services, among others. This finding aligns with the submission of Aribisala (2023 b) submitted that entrepreneurs need entrepreneurial skills to able to create business and be able to adapt quickly and efficiently to changing trends to make them thrive. This implies that entrepreneurial skills will aid entrepreneurs to sustain and succeed in business. It will help them to continue adding value by offering relevant products or services.

The finding in research question two revealed that engineers require environmental skills to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state. Such environmental skills include: skills for understanding the environmental impacts of products throughout their entire

life cycle; ability to use sustainable technologies for environmental challenges; ability to utilize renewable energy sources and systems and ability to design systems that minimize environmental harm, among others. This finding aligns with Abraham and Jaleel (2023) that environmental skills enable entrepreneurs produce economic results without endangering the environment in the short or long term. This means that environmental skills will enable engineers to become entrepreneurs that will contribute to sustainable development. This finding also collaborates the submission of Sherpa (2022) that environmental skill equips entrepreneurs with the ability to maintain natural resources while enhancing human welfare.

The results in table 3 revealed that engineers require collaborative skills to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state. Such collaborative skills include: ability to engage with diverse stakeholders for sustainable development, ability to resolve conflicts among diverse stakeholders for sustainable development; ability to engage and empower local communities for sustainable development; ability to collaborate with stakeholders to co-design sustainable solutions and ability to maintain trust among stakeholders for sustainable development, among others. This finding aligns with Zoe et al (2023) that collaborative skill enables entrepreneurs build relationships with team members, know how to resolve conflicts when it arises and create an inclusive, respectful working environment. This implies that with this skill, entrepreneurs can team up, pool their efforts collectively to achieve sustainable development.

The finding in research question 4 show that there are social impact skills required of engineers to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state. Some of the skills are: understanding social justice principles for sustainable development, ability to work effectively with diverse cultural groups and stakeholders; ability to develop innovative solutions to social problems and ability to manage projects that benefit local communities among others. This finding aligns with the submission of Duke (2021) that social impact skills enable entrepreneurs make significant and positive changes through conscious and deliberate efforts or activities in their operations and administrations. This is to say that social impact skills will enable entrepreneurs initiate businesses that is beneficial to the society. The findings also align with Vodă and Florea (2019) that with social impact skills, entrepreneurs can choose greener ways to operate and create fewer by-products. This positively affects societal members.

Conclusion

Based on the research objectives, data were collected, analyzed and interpreted. The findings revealed that engineers require entrepreneurial, environmental, collaborative and social impact skills to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development in Anambra state,

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

1. Since engineers need entrepreneurial skills to become entrepreneurs for sustainable

development, they should be given mentorship by experienced entrepreneurs to help them learn relevant entrepreneurial skills.

2. Sustainable development, entrepreneurship and environmental education should be incorporated into engineering curricula since engineers need environmental skills to become engineers for sustainable development.
3. Engineering association, institutions and other stake holders should encourage team-based projects and case studies that address sustainable development challenges. This will equip engineers with collaborative skills needed for them to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development.
4. Engineers are encouraged to participate in social impact projects and initiatives as this will sharpen the social impact skills needed for them to become entrepreneurs for sustainable development.

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