

Administrative Competencies Required For Self-Employment in Auto-Mechanics

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Abstract - *The factor of administrative competencies is one aspect of the auto-mechanic's needs that is not commonly discussed as being relevant to his work. This may perhaps be that very many auto-mechanics of acclaimed proficiency fall with a low academic bracket with some of them not having an academic profile at all. For the successful auto-mechanic however, administrative competencies cannot be kept aside in the performance of his job. Administrative competencies can be explained in terms of the managerial prowess of an auto-mechanic to perform his practical work concomitantly with attending to his colleagues, parts sellers, other marketers and customers without being distracted. This study therefore looked into the administrative competencies required for self-employment in auto-mechanics. A research question guided the study that was directed at a population of 273 auto-mechanics. Mean statistic was employed to analyze the questionnaire items while the t-test was used to test the hypothesis. Results showed that administrative competencies are highly required to complement the practical work of the auto-mechanics, especially the ability to negotiate prices both with parts sellers and his customers, his dependability, trustworthiness and honesty and his ability to manage resources and working tools.*

Key Words: *Administrative Competency, self employment, Auto-Mechanics, and Key working tools.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Administrative competencies are companions to practical ones for in as much as practical competencies are needed by the auto-mechanic on the real job performance; absence of administrative skills would keep the workshop disorganized and unattractive to customers. According to Olaitan and Ekong (1999), the success of any business venture depends on the quality and effectiveness of management. They explained that management is the act of planning, organizing, coordinating and supervising the affairs of a business organization towards the achievement of set goals and objectives. For the auto-mechanic, his

ability to manage other aspects of his work and workplace must be complementary to his practical competencies. Hence Lefton, Buzzota and Sherberg (1980) contended that administrative skills (planning, organizing, controlling etc) must go hand in hand with people skills which they say is an umbrella term that covers the ability to understand human behaviour to communicate, to motivate and to work with people as individuals.

If it is required that the auto-mechanic should be acknowledged, this should not just be for the work he has performed on a vehicle but it should also cover the attention given to customers in the face of distraction from his colleagues and his ability in negotiating prices with parts sellers; and of course a well kept workshop is a function of a well organized auto-mechanic.

The personal competence of the auto-mechanic is valuable for enhancing his performance. Adapting to the work adjustment competencies revealed by Dangana (2002) would be a step forward in the right direction. They include: ambition, cooperative and helpfulness, independent and initiative, responsiveness and following directive, dependability, punctuality and responsibility, neatness, orderliness, good manners and personal appearance, carefulness, alertness and perspective, dedication, devotion, honesty and loyalty. Being skilled at diagnosing and repairing vehicles is important, but these skills alone are not enough for you to remain successful long term in the automotive industry. Modern technicians must possess lifelong learning skills to adapt to changing technology found in today's cars and trucks (Thomson 2013). In current flatter and less hierarchical work environments anyone who wants to get his/her ideas heard and implemented will require a set of core competencies: communication, influences, planning, organizing, and customer responsiveness. Those who want or find others to listen to, fund, act on, or support their ideas will require these core competencies no matter what technical/functional career specialty they pursue and whether or not they aspire to formal managerial positions (Weiler, Stephen and Schoonover 2001). Hence Littleton (2014) accepted that intrinsic qualities that foster the soft skill set for today's work environment include a willingness to learn, self-confidence, a positive attitude, and demonstrating a good work ethic.

The auto-mechanic is an administrator in his own workshop and how well organized he is would form part of the basis for his success. To have correct focus as a

workshop administrator, the auto-mechanic requires guidance information about his job. Ede (2001) enumerated guidance information which is necessary for the auto-mechanic to include:

Job opportunities in auto-mechanic

- The successful mechanic
- The social and personal life of a mechanic
- Mechanic customer relationship
- How to keep the job
- How to establish a mechanic workshop
- Membership of a professional body.

In almost the major towns in Nigeria, auto-mechanic workshops are found in concentrated camps popularly known as mechanic villages. In this case, an auto-mechanic sets his workshop to have boundary with another. And where people come to work as neighbours, conflicts are inevitable. Olaitan and Akpan (2003) therefore contend that sharing of decision making can be a source of avoiding and resolving conflicts. In fact as a worker and administrator the self-employed auto-mechanic's peaceful co-existence with mechanics, sellers of spare parts and other business associates is an important parameter for measuring his stability and success.

Another area of administrative competence required by the auto-mechanic is with regards to customer relationship. In a world of competitive business, the auto-mechanic ought to have an understanding of the application of marketing strategy. Kotler (1984) defined that a marketing strategy is a consistent, appropriate, and feasible set of principles through which a particular company hopes to achieve its long run customers profit objectives in a particular competitive environment. It behoves that the auto-mechanic ought to have good relationship with his customers as his survival strategy. Hence Litt (2001) explained that the first technique for retaining great repairs shops is to treat all the personnel with respect. There is nothing like mutual respect to foster long term relationships. He pointed out that you pick a shop because they give you respect. They choose to stay with you for the same reason.

Customers would prefer a mechanic that is transparent in dealing with them through clear explanation of what is involved in terms cost before or after carrying out the repairs. Neiger (2007) therefore advised that the price for car repairs should be clearly posted, and they should always call you with a car repair estimate before they do any work. It should be noted that no workshop administrator who yields to the instincts of fraud could ever be acclaimed either in private or public practice. Johnson (2003) therefore reviewed that home and auto-mobile repairs offenders may recommend an array of fraudulent "emergency" repairs, often requiring an advance deposit. They may subsequently fail to do any work at all, start but not finish the work, or do substandard work that requires correction. He concluded

that dishonest auto-mechanics may falsely inform customers that certain repairs are needed, or they bill for services or repairs that were not requested or were not completed. A transparent mechanic would however, clear all forms of doubt about his personality and improve customer patronage.

1.2 Research question

What administrative competencies are necessary for self-employment in auto-mechanics?

1.3. Hypothesis:

H₀: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of auto- mechanics with working experience of 5 years and above and those with less than 5 years working experiences on the administrative competencies required for self-employment in auto-mechanics.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

A survey design was applied to collate the necessary information on administrative competencies required for self-employment in auto-mechanics in Benue state Nigeria. The target population for this study included all the auto-mechanics in Benue state Nigeria. However the auto-mechanics in Makurdi urban, the Benue state capital was the focus of the study.

2.1 Data Gathering Instrument

The data gathering instrument was a questionnaire which was sub-divide into a section on working experience and the others on administrative competencies with response categories rated from scale 5-1 as Highly Required (HR), moderately Required (MR), Uncertain (UN), Not Required (NR) and Highly Not Required (HNR).

2.2 Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire 'was administered directly to the auto-mechanics by the researcher and four other assistants.

2.3 Method of Data Analysis

Mean statistics for the analysis of the data for the research questions was used. The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance by use of the t-test.

Table 1.0 The mean Responses of Auto-mechanics on Administrative Competencies Required for Self-employment in Auto-mechanics.

S/N	Description of competencies	Mean	Decision
1.	All auto-mechanic must be able to read and write	1.09	Disagree
2.	Have the ability to explain automotive principles	1.84	Disagree
3.	Have a tacit knowledge on the operation and functions of all parts a motor vehicle	4.05	Disagree
4.	Ability to relate well with customers and other mechanics	4.41	Agree
5.	Be able to know what to do, when and how to do it	4.50	Agree
6.	Ability to listen to other	4.53	Agree
7.	Communicating favorably with others	4.54	Agree
8.	Be able to negotiate prices, both with Parts sellers and customers	4.65	Agree
9.	Ability to keep the job	4.39	Agree
10.	Must be computer literate	2.00	Disagree
11.	Ability to take formal courses in auto-mechanics	2.11	Disagree
12.	Ability to persuade and keep customers	4.40	Agree
13.	Ability to work with apprentices	4.51	Agree
14.	Must be regular and punctual in the workshop	4.57	Agree
15.	Dependability, trustworthiness and honesty	4.62	Agree
16.	Ability to manage resources and working tools	4.63	Agree

Table 1.1 t-test results of auto-mechanics on administrative Competencies Required for Self-employment in Auto-mechanics

Df =204, t-critical = ± 1.97, ≥ 0.05 level of significance.

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S/No	Description of competencies	X1 x2 SD1 SD2	T-cal Decision
1.	All the auto-mechanic must be able to read and write	2.16 1.78 1.51 1.05- 2.50	Reject
2.	Have the ability to explain auto-motive principles	1.75 1.96 0.74 0.79 1.98	Reject
3.	Have a tacit knowledge on the operation and function of all parts of a motor vehicle	4.06 4.06 1.12 1.12 0.76	Accept
4.	Ability to relate well with customers and other mechanics	4.46 4.35 0.83 0.62- 1.10	Accept
5.	Be able to know what to do, when and how to do it	4.59 4.39 0.54 0.61- 2.54	Reject
6.	Ability to listen to others	4.52 4.55 0.55 0.52 0.37	Accept
7.	Communicate favourably with others	4.56 4.53 0.49 0.63- 0.36	Accept
8.	Be able to negotiate prices, both with parts seller and customers	4.62 4.68 0.48 0.90- 0.96	Accept

9.	Ability to keep the job	4384.410.81 1.020.21	Accept
10.	must be computer literate	2.151.811.1 0.99-2.29	Reject
11.	Ability to take formal courses in Auto-mechanics	1.98 2.28 1.04 1.19 1.91	Accept
12.	Ability to persuade and keep Customers	4.46 4.33 0.80 0.92 - 1.06	Accept
13.	Ability to work with apprentices	4.57 4.43 0.51 0.71 - 1.68	Accept
14.	Must be regular and punctual in the workshop	4.61 4.52 0.48 0.61 - 1.19	Accept
15.	Dependability, trust and honesty	4.61 4.64 0.48 0.48 0.40	Accept
16.	Ability to manage resources and working tools	4.70 4.55 0.47 0.65 - 1.85	Accept

3. Discussions

Self-employment in auto-mechanics is both job and business. The mechanic thence have to be well grounded in administrative competencies to enable him succeed. Administrative competencies are the skills needed for managing business and social and inter-human interaction. Hence the auto-mechanic ought to have a tacit understanding of the functions of all parts of motor vehicle. Understanding the functions of vehicle parts and explaining to customers on request or as the need may arise will build up trust between the two and boost the morale of the mechanic. Ojukwu (2006) in citing Okoro affirmed that when individuals are well trained for the work they do, they find the job more interesting and they derive more pleasure and satisfaction from it. They suffer from less boredom and tension and their mental health is improved.

Building up good relationship with the customer would help the auto-mechanic to have a better

patronage of his business. Leboeuf (1987) thus submitted that:

- A customer is not dependent on us, we are dependent of him.
- A customer is not an interruption of our work; he is the purpose of it. We are not doing a favour by serving him he is doing us a favour by giving us the opportunity to do so.
- A customer is not someone to argue or match wits with: Nobody ever won an argument with a customer.
- A customer is a person who brings us his wants. It is our job to handle them profitably to him and ourselves.

The ability of the auto-mechanic to relate well with customers and other mechanics would enable him learn to listen to them and endeavour to communicate favourably with them. Hence good communication would help the mechanic to be able to negotiate prices both with parts sellers and customers. The secret of keeping customers and thence the job stems to a reasonable extent to good communication. According to Chan (2005), normal conversation consists of three parts:

- The introduction
- The body
- The closing

These communication strategies are used for you to get to know someone you never met before. Many people fumble or lose money on these important steps because they do not communicate well enough the first time they meet.

The factor of being regular and punctual in the workshop was accepted by the respondents because no matter how competent an auto-mechanic is, the problem of truancy would crumble his businesses. To a large extent to keep apprentices would depend on how regular and punctual the mechanic attends to his workshop. For the apprentices, the mechanic is both master and teacher while the workshop is the school. Dependability, trustworthiness and honesty would show the extent to which the dignity of mechanic can be acclaimed by customers and fellow mechanics. It is not all the time that the customers have to be at hand to wait until the repairs are carried out. When customers come to realize that their mechanic gives them the best in terms of cost for repairs and honest attention to their work, they would trust and respect him. The mechanic who

wants to be trusted by others should first trust himself. This is the essence of managing an auto-mechanic shop.

Conclusion

The auto-mechanic cannot afford to neglect administrative competencies because they are necessary for enhancing his performances in terms of human relationships. The auto-mechanic would therefore receive patronage from his customers depending on how he is able to manage the circumstances arising from the performance of his job with due regards to the attention he gives to his colleagues and customers concomitantly with his work. An understanding of what would be the effect of resorting to unacceptable Social behaviour on his work is therefore the reason for which this study hopes to achieve. This understanding is required by the auto-mechanic to help him moderate his activities in his workplace and so project his dignity and as well as protect his work.

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