

# SELF-EMPLOYMENT IN CRAFTS – AN OPTION FOR THE DISABLED HEARING IMPAIRED

by

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**KEY WORDS:** *Self-employment, hearing impaired, option, disabled.*

## ABSTRACT

This study examined self-employment as an option for the disabled hearing impaired using the exploratory design. Of the 80 respondents who took part in the survey 19 (23.8%) were teachers of the hearing impaired, 19 (23.8%) were hearing impaired employees, 37 (46.2%) were hearing impaired apprentices and 5 (6.2%) were self employed hearing impaired persons. Four sets of self-administered questionnaire were used for data collection from the different groups of respondents. Findings showed that the hearing impaired could be self-employed, cope with new demands and developments involved in self-employment. Good educational background and period of apprenticeship were found to be prerequisites for self-employment. Communication was reported by 61.3% of respondents to be a barrier to self-employment. The implications of these education and rehabilitation of the hearing impaired are discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

Work has always had the potential of meeting more than the economic needs of man. It can also meet broad social and psychological needs. The presence of disability which has vocational consequences may bring forth emotional turmoil and psychosomatic complaint. Ability to earn one's own living, to be matured, independent and self-sufficient is the goal and ambition of all people, the disabled inclusive.

There is understandable apprehension about the ability of the disabled to establish a viable business. "It is hard enough for them to find jobs: How can they possibly create them?" Reactions like this, however, do not only show lack of confidence in the abilities of the disabled people, but also reflect a typical view about self-employment. The attitudes of the disabled themselves are more important than those of the general public when it comes to determining the viability of self-employment for disabled people. Furthermore, whatever the object of self-

employment may be should be such that would meet the social, emotional and psychological needs of the disabled. It is in this view that craft was used as a case study.

Craft is a system of language, which serves to communicate in an ordinary way. Crafts can help the hearing impaired put their ideals across to other people, provide avenue for real thinking and build in self confidence in their own ability (Linderman and Linderman, 1977). Craft have also been found to have therapeutic values as an emotional outlet for inner conflicts and stress.

In Nigeria, many hearing-impaired school leavers are encouraged to go into trade centers. These centers only train but are not involved in job placement. Also, the kind of education given the hearing impaired is too "book centered" which does not prepared them for employment. These have made it imperative to look for an option for the hearing impaired to attain self-sufficiency and self-actualization (Olubela et al; 1999; Adewusi, 1987).

There are a number of different ways in which people can attain economic independence. Self employment is only one of them. Jobs on the open labour market become more and more scarce. Self-employment may be the only practicable option for many people. In economic terms, it represents possibly the most cost-effective way of creating jobs. The capital requirements are usually very small. In addition, such tend to use readily available materials and to sell to local people at prices they can afford. Furthermore, such tend to involve the whole family. This mutual support and security that the system provides make it particularly suitable for disadvantaged group like the deaf. This makes them move gradually from total dependence towards independence as far as is feasible, while still enjoying a certain degree of support from their families.

Disability can be a stimulus for independent problem solving and innovation. Disabled children often develop new and effective ways of moving around, communicating or otherwise overcoming their problems. This experience of facing and coping with difficulties can be a valuable form of personal development. Hearing impaired people develop their own ways of keeping company with themselves without the distraction of conversation and if

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their business is of a kind where they do not regularly have to speak to other people or where such contact can be facilitated as necessary by outsiders, they may be particularly effective because of other ability to concentrate and to avoid distractions (Harper and Momm, 1989).

Social Learning Theory (SLT) offers a framework for understanding self-employment behaviour. Specifically, SLT addresses a dynamic relationship among three factors: an individual, his or her social environment and a specific behaviour in question for example self-employment (Bandura, 1986). In relation to the present work, the influence of school and rehabilitation environment have been shown to have important influences on self-employment. SLT clearly states that opportunities to practice a behaviour do enhance self-efficacy. Other means include information, encouragement from significant others and vicarious learning from others who have performed the behaviour (Clark and Zimmerman 1990; Green and Kreuter, 1991). These offer guidelines for developing educational and rehabilitational programmes in enhancing self-efficacy towards self-employment (O'Koon, 1997).

The objectives of this study were to identify:

- (i) Problems that the hearing impaired might face in becoming self-employed;
- (ii) Basic prerequisites for self-employment and
- (iii) Level of preparedness of the hearing impaired to go into self-employment.

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Disabled persons:** anyone who experiences significant limitations in one or several functions because of a physical, sensory or mental impairment or deficiency. Disability may or may not affect the ability to work, but a disabled person will usually have to cope with more problems than would a non-disabled person. However, it is a misconception (suggested by the term disability and nourished by common prejudice) that disability means inability to work.

**Self-Employment:** It is as reflected in this study the very smallest type of enterprise that employs few workers, may be only the owner.

**Hearing Impaired:** Those in whom the sense of hearing is non-functional for the ordinary purposes of life.

**Employee:** A worker who is not self-employed.

#### METHODOLOGY

##### Design and Sample Selection

The study utilized the exploratory design. Four different groups of subjects were used for the study. These were randomly selected. The first group of subjects were teachers of the hearing impaired randomly selected from four schools, (Methodist Grammar School Bodija, Ijokodo High School, Ibadan School for the Deaf and Omoyeni Special School Orita Aperin) all in Ibadan metropolis. The second group was made up of hearing impaired employees from their various workplaces ranging from school settings to private and public organization; the third were hearing

impaired apprentices learning different types of craft like weaving, carpentry, tie and dye. The bulk of this group was made up of self-employed hearing impaired person who ranged from hairdressers, carpenters and cloth weavers.

##### Research Instruments and Administration

Four sets of high structured self-administered questionnaires were developed by the investigator. These instruments were pre-tested for appropriateness and applicability. Each set of instrument was for each group of subjects. Each instrument had 14 items and is divided into two sections - Section A consist of the demographic characteristics and section B consist of items relating to subject of study.

Consent was obtained from school authorities and individual respondent before questionnaire administration. Administration time ranged between 30 and 45 minutes.

##### Data Analysis

Data collected were cleaned and analysed using simple percentages.

#### RESULTS

The results are presented in five parts.

##### Part I - Demographic characteristics of Respondents

Eighty respondents participated in the study. Of these 47 (58.8%) were males and 33 (41.2%) females. Respondents' ages ranged from 13 to 40 years with a mean age of 22.3 year. Nineteen (23.8%) respondents were teachers of the hearing impaired apprentices and 5 (6.2%) were self-employed hearing impaired persons.

##### Part II - Results from Teachers of the Hearing Impaired

Nineteen teachers were interviewed. Of these 19, 14 (73.7%) reported that courses are offered in their schools for the hearing impaired in craft. Types of crafts being taught in their different schools are weaving, sewing, carpentry, carving, tie and dye. Period of training varied as 8 (42.1%) said between 1 to 6 years. 7 (36.8%) said above 6 years while 4 (21.1%) gave no response. When asked if the teachers considered education as a basic necessity for training the hearing impaired in craft, 17 (89.5%) responded in the affirmative while 2 (10.5%) said it is not. When asked if teachers taught their hearing impaired students can be self-employed in craft taught in school 17 (89.5%) said Yes while 2 (10.5%) said No. However, only 5 (26.3%) of teachers thought the training given in school is sufficient for self-employment and as a result, almost all 18 (94.7%) of teachers advocated for a period of apprenticeship after leaving school before going into self-employment. Problems identified by teachers in venturing into self-employment were finance, communication and patronage. Despite these problems, all the teachers interviewed were of the opinion that the hearing impaired persons will be employed. Slightly more than half (57.9%) of respondents were of the opinion that

the hearing impaired would be more satisfied with self-employment.

### Part III – Results from Hearing Impaired Employees

Nineteen hearing impaired employers were interviewed. Of these, 17 (89.5%) reported being satisfied with their current employment as well as enjoy working with their employees. Only 8 (42.1%) of those interviewed would have preferred working for themselves. However, despite this low preference for self-employment, 15 (78.9%) is of the opinion that it is better for the hearing impaired to be self-employed. Thirteen (68.4%) were of the opinion that basic education should be a prerequisite for employment while 14 (73.7%) believe the hearing impaired can go into self-employment after leaving school. Almost all respondent 18 (94.7%) consider period of apprenticeship as necessary before self-employment. About a third (31.6%) considered communication as a barrier to self-employment while slightly less than that (21.1%) were of the opinion that the hearing impaired will face problems while going into self-employment. All the respondents were of the view that the hearing impaired can perform equally well like their hearing counterparts in self employment, 11 (57.9%) though the hearing impaired can cope with stress involved in self-employment, 16 (84.2%) believed that the hearing impaired in self employment will be patronized and 17 (89.5%) said self employment can aid creativity of the hearing impaired.

### Part IV – Results from Hearing Impaired Apprentices

Thirty-seven impaired apprentices were interviewed. Of these 27 (73.0%) reported been trained in craft while in school while 15 (40.5%) considered period of apprenticeship as a waste of time based on their in-school experience. Twenty-six (70.3%) considered basic education as essential before apprenticeship period. Slightly more than half 19 (51.4%) supported period of apprenticeship before setting up own business, 26 (70.3%) are enjoying their period of apprenticeship while 29 (78.4) were looking forward to the day they will be on their own. Twenty-nine (78.4%) of the apprentices would prefer to work somewhere first after graduation before up their own while 23 (62.2%) said self-employment would aid their creativity. A little above half 20 (54.1%) said they will derive satisfaction by being self-employed; 28 (75.7%) believe the hearing impaired can cope with new demands and developments involved in self-employment. Communication was reported to be a problem by 24 (64.9%) of respondents while 23 (62.2%) were of the opinion that their self-employed hearing counterparts are willing to train others. Majority 27 (73.0%) though that it is possible to settle down immediately after graduation.

### Part V: Results from Self-Employed Hearing Impaired Persons

Five self-employed hearing impaired persons were interviewed. Four (80.0%) of respondents agreed that the

hearing impaired persons should be self employment. However, 4 (80.0%) of the respondents did not consider period of apprenticeship as a pre-requisite for self-employment. Two third of respondents reported that it will take the hearing impaired a long period to establish on his/her own after training. All the respondents said the hearing impaired can cope with stress involved in self employment. In addition, 80.0% of respondents said the future is bright for the self employed hearing impaired, would be able to adjust to new demands and developments, that-the hearing are willing to patronize the self employed hearing impaired and that the hearing impaired self employed persons would perform as expected.

Furthermore, 80.0% of respondents derive satisfaction from being self employed while 40.0% would prefer being employed by somebody else rather than being self employed. Communication was considered a barrier by 40.0% of respondents and 40.0% were of the opinion that self-employment has aided their creativity.

### DISCUSSION

Results showed male preponderance. This is not surprising as Nigeria is a male dominated society where strong patriarchal systems are exhibited. This affect educational and occupational opportunities, feeding practices, household chores and distribution of family resources.

The results showed that good educational background and period of apprenticeship before self-employment are pre-requisites. These were consistent with the findings of Ajayi (1998), Adeniyi (1984), and Adewusi (1987). These findings are important as educational requirements for employment are rapidly increasing. The number of jobs open to the functionally illiterate is rapidly shrinking, as more jobs now require at least a high school education.

Furthermore, communication was found to be a problem to the self employed hearing impaired. Without gainsay, it is obvious that expressive language is a very essential part of every day life. The hearing impaired therefore need a lot of motivation and communication method of the hearing impaired (sign language) should be learnt by all and sundry to reduce the gap created. This finding is consistent with the findings of Alade and Abosi (1991) Olokesusi (1992), Oni et al (1993).

The period of apprenticeship as found would be necessary before self-employment. This would provide the hearing impaired the opportunity of knowing minute details involved in self-employment and the type they are interested in. These minute details ranged from materials selection, techniques of production, marketing strategies and accounting systems. Also, this finding shed light on the weakness of the existing education and rehabilitation programs for the disabled as such programs do not get involved in placement after training and only a few offer such courses that could lead to self-employment. This may hinder the interest of the hearing impaired in craft or

even make them lose a talent or skill due to lack of motivation. This weakness is also highlighted by Olubela et al (1999).

### Lessons Learnt

Lessons learnt from this study were that not all the hearing impaired are content to make a living through begging. It is therefore unrealistic and unwise not to incorporate employment skills in their educational or rehabilitation programmes or both. Secondly, the hearing impaired should be judged on their merits and should have fair access to support and equal opportunities with their hearing peers and finally, the results highlights the need to remould the traditional rehabilitation approaches. Wherever the hearing impaired develop entrepreneurial skills, they do so outside rehabilitation institutions such as special schools and vocational rehabilitation centers. The challenge of these lessons is the need to acquire a new outlook where those who need assistance towards self-help, training to cope better with their disability, an opportunity to develop their skills and short term assistance to overcome their disadvantage would be given a fair chance to compete on an equal level with their non-disabled peers.

### CONCLUSION

This study has explored self-employment in craft as an option for the disabled hearing impaired. Results showed that the hearing impaired can cope with new demands and developments involved in self-employment. However, communication was found to be a barrier to self-employment. These findings therefore suggest a new outlook to the education and rehabilitation of the hearing impaired.

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