
Advancing Entrepreneurship Education in Namibia: A Practical Approach

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This paper is a qualitative analytical study of competences in Entrepreneurial Education. It is based on an initiative which analyzed various approaches to entrepreneurial education in Namibia. In recent past, promoting entrepreneurial education at local, regional and national levels has become a high priority in public policy. The Namibia educational systems have expanded dramatically while the graduate job market is declining tremendously. Entrepreneurial education which can lead to job creation is a sinequo non. The different approaches to entrepreneurial education in Namibia are analyzed. The differences in conceptual, contextual, design and delivery impact both positively and negatively on entrepreneurial education in Namibia. A number of actual and perceived barriers need to be overcome to facilitate a better understanding of entrepreneurial education. The conclusion and recommendations could offer valuable insight into the important aspects of entrepreneurial education in Namibia. Various stakeholders could also derive some benefits including policy makers, educators, government agencies and students. A further study on entrepreneurship education and curricula practices is highly recommended.

Introduction

The prevailing perception in societies is that entrepreneurship is a fundamental skill that is acquired through lifelong learning to enhance human capital development in the form of competence and manpower which is Namibia's most vital asset. To educate the new generation in entrepreneurship is a strategy for strengthening the individual's ability to exploit opportunities in life, both in business and industry thus preparing the ground for future economic growth and value creation in Namibia. A focus on entrepreneurship education in Namibia, more so through formal education, would not only develop a creative and innovative culture, this culture will also enhance the ability and willingness to take initiatives and risk. Formal education could also promote an entrepreneur's cognitive abilities to better evaluate opportunities.

Promotion of entrepreneurship entails full collaboration by the relevant stakeholders, more especially the education system (both formal and informal) and the local environment. Children and the youth must be encouraged to believe in their own creative abilities. They need to know that creativity, determination and collaborative ability are highly valued, and that they can create values and jobs for themselves and others.

It is important to create a positive attitude to entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurs at an early age, given the fact that one of the reasons that school leavers and graduates of institutions of higher learning do not want to become entrepreneurs, is that they prefer to hold a secure job as a wage/salary earning employee (Iluka, in NEID et. al., 2005). This is largely based on the negative perception of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, there is a fear of risk taking, which is one of core aspects of entrepreneurship. A change required is not only assistance to SMEs but also new concepts in education and training.

Entrepreneurship and Education

Entrepreneurship is learned and developed. Its core activities are innovation and creativity. Therefore, it is not limited to special individuals with certain personality traits rather, it is a

combined effect of personality, environment, experience, acquired attitude and learning on the competitive behaviors required by the entrepreneur to drive the market process and create value (Stokes & Wilson, 2006). Education both the formal and informal sectors have potentials to contribute to creating a more entrepreneurial culture starting with young children at school. This implies that the education system at all levels should focus on fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among learners. The objectives of entrepreneurship education should therefore aim at:

- Contributing to the creation of an entrepreneurial culture
- Providing the necessary knowledge needed to identifying business opportunities as well as to establish and effectively operate commercial enterprises, for instance, personal financial management skills.
- Creating awareness of the socio-economic significance of entrepreneurial enterprises in Namibia.
- Creating awareness of the national and personal benefits derived from successful entrepreneurs and improving their own.
- Increasing the number of profitable and competitive entrepreneurs.

Various surveys, GEM (2002 & 2004); the European commission studies (2004) and Honig (1998) in Coleman (2004) positively indicate a clear and strong correlation between education and entrepreneurial success. People with secondary and a tertiary education are more likely to progress their businesses beyond the start up phase, thereby enabled to create more jobs in the process. The entrepreneur's level of education therefore seems to impact on his/her success in growing the business and creating jobs. A survey study by Harris (2003) showed that entrepreneurship sector in Namibia does not attract people with tertiary education since they can enter directly into waged employment but those with secondary education; some have grade one to nine qualifications only. More entrepreneurial training is thus of necessity in schools.

SME and Entrepreneurship Contrasted

Small and Medium Enterprise and Entrepreneurship are two separate concepts.

SME is a concept referring to the size of businesses and the behaviour of these SMEs are influenced by their limitations of being small and medium sized. Numerous business problems are continuously faced by these types of ventures. These include:

- High production cost and low quality products.
- Low technology.
- Lack of or no inter and intra industry linkages to support the companies development
- Poor management and non aggressive marketing.
- Inadequate financial assistance from the government and
- Unorganized SME development programs.
- The SMEs usually depend on financial intermediaries, particularly the commercial banks in order to obtain credit for their operations. The terms and conditions of loans are too tight. There is no flexibility for SME.

On the other hand, the entrepreneurship concept as indicated by Mueller (2004) and Cronje, Du Toit, Moraise and Motlatla (2006) is associated with the psychology and behavioural dimensions of the owners and founders of the business. It is a dynamic force that stirs the economic equilibrium by creating an entrepreneurial process.

Numerous studies on successful entrepreneurs show that the success of most business ventures, small, medium or large are mainly due to the entrepreneurship aspect. This paper is aimed at highlighting the concepts and types of competences entrepreneurs need to exhibit.

The Namibia Situation

SMEs make up an important part of the Namibian economy: they contribute an estimated 12% to the GDP and employ about 1/5 of the total workforce.

In the recent past many activities have been undertaken in order to stimulate the growth of the number of SMEs, to create different kinds of support – both financial and managerial – and to train people as entrepreneurs. The Policy and Program on Small Business Development in Namibia (ILO, 1997) induced a growth rate of 10% by 2000. It appeared that the net result of jobs created and jobs lost was most positive in the economical clusters of body care, health care and crèches, restaurants as well as hospitality, tourism and crafts (soft sector), much less in electronics, metal, mechanical, manufacturing and consulting. However, the net result was negative in the clusters of construction, maintenance and carpentry as well as textile and leather manufacturing, services and transport. The report on SME Development and Impact Assessment (2004) revealed that the clusters with positive job growth are the smallest businesses and the clusters with the negative results are the largest businesses.

It is apparent that many new entrepreneurs prefer to enter into the so called soft sector businesses. These businesses are relatively easy to enter, risk avoiding, and not much innovative. An important set of reasons seem to lie in the personal characteristics of new business owners. Lack of psychological success factors and the lack of desire to take initiatives in making decisions show lack of true entrepreneurial behaviors.

In the present situation we can depict three levels of entrepreneurial development.

First, there are people who have or are developing certain technical skills which they want to exploit as self sustaining entrepreneurs, but do not have entrepreneurial skills and when they might develop these; some of them might develop an entrepreneurial attitude and behave accordingly. Most of them still have to be trained in crafts and more so in entrepreneurial skills such as marketing, record keeping, employing personnel, among others. All sorts of organizations (governmental and private) play different roles in this development, examples are the CED, and J.C.C. The big challenge for these upcoming entrepreneurs is the change of mind set from having (some) skills to becoming a competent entrepreneur. This will require a lot of input presently provided mainly by the mentor schemes such as those provided by Bank Windhoek other Consulting firms.

The mentors would need to be trained in order to help the entrepreneurs to develop from dependent entrepreneurs to be to self sustaining business people who might eventually be entrepreneurs.

Secondly, some educational institutions, (e.g., Polytechnic) realized that the national aim for increasing number of SME's can only be realized when people at an earlier stage are interested and trained as skilled or competent school leavers or university graduates, who might enter into entrepreneurship, (NIED, 2006) however, the change of mind set still has to take place.

The third stage is the youngsters of primary school age. These are informally exposed and perhaps challenged to make little steps into an entrepreneurial setting, more so when there are and more SME's in their surroundings.

Challenges

SME Development on the Long Term

One of the challenges for Namibia is the goal of getting more and more people involved in small and medium sized businesses.

In business words, the change of mind set implies a full acceptance and incorporation (both at individual and business level) of the business concepts. It involves a paradigm shift of culture or attitude of taking up a job or small business activities for subsistence reasons towards taking ownership, exhibiting entrepreneurship behavior and feeling challenged by goals that lay beyond the individual interest of earning some money for a living. For an entrepreneur this change of mind set means not just the mere acquisition of knowledge, skills and experience, but the ability to apply entrepreneurial characteristics which he/she might have acquired to a certain extent as well as the ability to develop the proper entrepreneurial competence.

SEMs that fit in Namibia economy would be of interest to new entrepreneurs if they have made the mind shift and have given proof that they are competent before they choose to go into business. That means they get acquainted with business principles and be stimulated to take positive steps in the direction of their abilities at a young age.

SMEs Development on the Short and Intermediate Terms

A qualitative research was carried out on focus groups in Northern Namibia in 2006 to seek their opinions about the realism and development of the SME sector in Namibia. The fourteen participants in each of the four different focus groups were randomly selected from the population frame. They comprised of SMEs owners. Most of them are in the soft sector. Majority of them (85 %) were males while the rest (15%) were females. Their ages range between 25-40 years.

A structured interview was administered to the participants by the researchers in the different focus groups. Questions range from their opinions on change in mind set, the extent of training they had, capital, how long they have been in business, their perceived business growth, how favorable is the environment for them to operate to their full capacity and what motivates them into business.

The opinion of the majority of the participants was that the change in mind set is not easy with small entrepreneurs or the people that finished school and who want to be entrepreneurs. Although they might get trained to a large extent, the change of mind set does not take place, except the ones that already possess an entrepreneurial attitude and will act accordingly. The mentor program - together with the support of many other organizations in the SME field - would go along way to set up SMEs and keep their business going. More emphasis would need to be placed on starting entrepreneurs in the rural areas, where there exists a high potential of businesses to start and young people to enter.

The interviewees were of the opinion that although they might have a lot of knowledge and skills, a large percentage still misses the proper attitude to implement it. Those who have this proper attitude would need to be selected and helped to get into business. The better businessmen are educated (supposed they possess the characteristics and competences) the better they perform. Spotting the intelligent students who are interested to stimulate them to take up entrepreneurship is worthwhile. They should be entitled to enter easily the mentor program and make use of all the other support measures.

The interviewees pointed out that circumstances and conditions are not favourable to them to develop their capabilities, especially in rural areas, where there is little experience with entrepreneurship and little chance to be exposed to it. The emphasis of SME policy, measures and efforts would need to be placed on the youngsters, especially in rural areas.

In Namibia, getting more SME's and more entrepreneurs need a few basic things which are lacking. There is lack of business orientation and awareness. Entrepreneurship is not well promoted. Business owners start a business with lack of motivation (this is evident from the opinion of the respondents). Many of them (this applies also to the students in the Business discipline) do not know how to start up a business. They are also short of viable ideas.

However, solving these omissions does not solve the problem of the need of change in attitude.

The Way Forward

In order to obtain real impact and enhance an increase in the number of SMEs the following need to be considered:

- a) Entrepreneurship should be promoted on a much larger scale and much more extensively.
- b) Young people should be exposed to business settings; the ones with the right attitude should be scouted and stimulated to develop their entrepreneurial abilities,

- b) Much effort needs to be spent on educating entrepreneurs-to-be on how to start a business and how to cope with all sorts of conditions that they might face.

Simulating and training in entrepreneurship nationwide requires efforts to develop and maintain it at all levels of education, bearing in mind that:

1. Young learners at primary school level should be exposed to business concepts in order to develop the right mind set (skills and competences can be developed later).
2. Students who have been taught the theories of business should get some practical experience in order to develop their competences as an entrepreneur.
3. People that are already in business should be helped to perform to the best of their ability and try to develop some competences; they need training, mentoring and support.
4. Mentors should be well trained for their tasks and keep their level in pace with the level of the entrepreneurs they work with. There should be training standards for the mentoring.
5. Government, teaching institutions and teachers should be well informed and convinced of the change of mind set needed and the conditions to be fulfilled. There should be a very strong emphasis on exposure at primary school age, scouting, setting up a multi level training system and more coordination.

Implications for Tertiary Institutions

The curriculum should be focused on how to get competences developed during the students' studies using methods most suitable and feasible for the purpose. The possible competences to be developed in their simplest way are: (for a more detailed list see Appendix).

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| 1. Taking up ownership. | 2. Time management, | 3. Team work |
| 4. Communication | 5. Marketing. | 6. Personnel management |
| 7. Operations management | 8. Financial management. | 9. Result orientation |

In order to develop as many of these competences the students would need to get exposed to practical situations where they can learn how to perform and on which they can be assessed.

In the Polytechnic of Namibia, entrepreneurial education is compulsory for all the B.Tech degree students. This is a systematic integration of entrepreneurial training in scientific and technical studies. Business schools and technical/scientific faculties would need to collaborate more by creating interdisciplinary teams of students who could practice mini- company activities. There needs to be more focus on developing the skills and competences necessary for exploiting innovations and knowledge transfer activities in combination with the commercialization of new technology. The Institution is in the process of establishing The Namibia Business Innovation Center for practical SME sessions and pre and post mentorship program for prospective entrepreneurs.

For tertiary institutions to accomplish their roles they need to build business and managerial competences in the students. In the table (1) below are some suitable practical components which can lead to acquisition of competences earlier stated. Analysis of the components is made with regards to their advantages and disadvantages.

Conclusions and Recommendations

With regard to the introduction of practical components into the entrepreneurial studies at tertiary institutions, two main points can be drawn:

1. The introduction of the practical components should aim at developing competencies,
2. It should be within the level of cognition and general interest of the students, focusing on their future businesses or carrier.

Table 1: List of Practical Components, and Competences; Their Advantages and Disadvantages

Practical component	Competences	Advantages	Disadvantages
Role model performance	taking ownership time management	real picture, personal, little work, no extra staff needed , cheap, applies to all students	no active learning , more stimulating than learning
Case studies	time management team work, communication marketing, personnel management , operational management, financial management, result orientation	real material , relatively little work, extra staff needed, relatively cheap, suitable for large _ number of students	abstract, no active_ learning, more analytical than_ practical, teacher needs a lot of experience, value depends very much on depth and availability of elaborate cases
Assignments within SME's on subjects taught (as in CED and the NDC)	depends on assignment, taking ownership, time management, team work, communication, marketing, personnel management, operational management, financial management, result orientation	real situation, cheap, suitable for large number of students, students may receive remuneration for it	only a small range of competences can be practiced, lot of extra work for staff: organizing, mentoring, students & SME, assessing the progress of students fewer SME's
Internship	Depends on length of time .team work, communication, marketing, operational management, organizational management ,financial management, result orientation	real situation, more staff are needed, cheap, suitable for large students number Students may receive remuneration	Increased staff engagement, Fewer SME's (family owned businesses do not like to share)
Apprenticeships	Depends on length of time. taking ownership, time management, team work ,communication, marketing Personnel, operational & financial management, result orientation	real situation, few staff, cheap large nos. of students, students may receive , remuneration	Same as for internships
Simulations	Same as for apprenticeship	real situation, very practical few staff needed,	no actual exposure to real business but enough to pick up

		cheap, very suitable for large number of students, Great variety of , situations and business types	the idea and attitude
Mini Enterprises, (the Company Program)	Same as in simulations	real situation, inspiring challenging, need drive, problem solving, no set backs, competition and success	Few students, expensive, more staff needed, lot of , organization, need venues, experienced mentors, accountants and, sponsors
Incubator schemes	Same as in mini enterprises	Same as for mini enterprises	Same as for mini enterprises but incubator scheme is needed

These have implications for the staff and management responsible for entrepreneurial education. Two basic decisions need to be taken

1. The development of competences applicable for the course and, the efforts (material and man power resources) needed to realize such competences.
2. The level of effort feasible for a particular educational institution.

On clarifying the decisions, table 2 below indicates curriculum options that are most suitable on which they can make their choices taking into consideration the costs, requirements of staff, and assessment modes.

Table 2: List of Curriculum Options

OPTIONS	Little Effect on Competences	High Effect on Competences
Relatively easy to organize	Role model performance	Simulation
Relatively hard to organize	Case studies, Assignments Internships, Apprenticeships	Mini Enterprises Incubator schemes

Based on the above conclusion, the following recommendations are made for concrete actions:

To comply with the need of introducing practical components for all students in the Entrepreneurial course as to provide a good insight in to what doing business is all about, institutions should introduce simulations. This can be contracted at a relatively low cost. It can also be used as a selection method for the students that entitle themselves to enroll for the mini enterprise component at a later stage.

Academic institutions should be in partnership with private sectors and work out a plan on how to set up mini enterprises for students, who are interested, enthusiastic or selected groups. This can be a Company Program as an elective course component for the Entrepreneurial students or as an additional course component being organized and managed by different bodies. Later this could be incorporated in the Entrepreneurial course for all enrolled students.

Higher educational institutions should integrate entrepreneurship across different subjects and courses notably within scientific and technical studies.

An appropriate method of assessment should be available to measure students' achievement against the objectives for each course. Namibia has a strong examination driven system, this is not well suitable for assessing competences. There is a need to develop and use other methods of assessment; a shift from norm to criterion referencing is desired.

Related institutions such as CED, JCC and bureaus (Consulting firms) should be involved in training or mentoring SME's in order to coordinate the mutual activities on SME training and development. There should be a closer level of corporation between related institutions. This is a strategy with clear objectives and covers all stages of entrepreneurial education.

A center for coordination, promotion to the market, to corporate firms, and external relations should be created; this should work together with other supporting business organizations to develop and give entrepreneurs a better and more profound start.

Emphasis of SME policy, measures, efforts, and sponsoring should be placed on the youngsters, especially in rural areas.

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