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Reference: Shimba, Allan Isack (2018). The effects of experiential entrepreneurship learning programmes on performance of trainees' enterprises : empirical evidence from small businesses in Tanzania. In: Business management review 21 (2), S. 66 - 78.

This Version is available at:

<http://hdl.handle.net/11159/3395>

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THE EFFECTS OF EXPERIENTIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP LEARNING PROGRAMMES ON PERFORMANCE OF TRAINEES' ENTERPRISES: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM SMALL BUSINESSES IN TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

Informed by experiential learning and entrepreneurship theories, this study explored the effects of an entrepreneurship and small business development training programme on performance of the trainees' enterprises. Pedagogically, the training adopted an experiential learning approach and involved a group of 24 adult trainees who were owner-managers of micro and small enterprises located in Morogoro Region, in Tanzania. Three months after the training, a monitoring and evaluation process was carried out, through which the trainees were followed-up in their respective areas to examine the extent to which they had put into action what they had learnt during the training and thereby enabling the researcher to deduce the effects of the training. The findings show that the trainees had undergone positive changes, both quantitatively and qualitatively. These included increases in the volume of operations, number of employees, sales levels, quality of the products offered, market coverage, methods of distribution and improvement in management of their enterprises. The findings imply that if well-designed and implemented, the use of experiential learning in entrepreneurship and small business development training programmes can significantly enhance trainees' internalisation of the appropriate knowledge, skills and thereby improve performance of their enterprises.

Key words: *learning, entrepreneurship, micro and small enterprises, Tanzania.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, it has been widely acknowledged that training people about entrepreneurship knowledge and skills is one of the potential areas upon which a country can engender its development initiatives (URT, 2017; Ahmad, 2013; Pittaway & Edwards, 2012; Gerba, 2012; Anderson, 2011). This arises from the observation that, among many other things, entrepreneurship education is responsible for creating entrepreneurs and providing employment opportunities (Lean, 1998), improving the quality and quantity of existing as well as future entrepreneurs (Hynes, 1996), and enhancing a country's competitive position (Kennedy, 1993). It is therefore not surprising that in many countries, the adoption of entrepreneurship training programmes has been highly appreciated, including countries which were formally socialist oriented such as Tanzania and even those in Central and Eastern Europe (Todorov, 1999). Due to the influence of perceived benefits of entrepreneurship training programmes, in many countries training interventions have been offered to different categories of learners and they range from a few days to a year or even longer (Nieman, 2001).

Apart from claims about the benefits of training in entrepreneurship, in some cases it has been debated whether these training initiatives adequately address the business needs and other entrepreneurial requirements of the trainees. This doubt arises from observations that in some cases there are differences in terms of perceptions of training providers on the one hand and those of participating trainees on the other hand (Lean, 1998; Kaijage, 2013; Tambwe, 2015). Furthermore, the prevailing cultures within a country or a given society can impact upon the degree of acceptance of such entrepreneurship trainings (Van Barneveld, 2002), the degree of interest in the courses offered and the focus of such courses. This suggests that although entrepreneurship training programmes may internationally have a common focus (Hisrich & Peters, 1998), in practice there may be differences in emphasis depending on specific needs of participating trainees in various countries. Such differences are induced among other factors by the histories of the countries, economic and social situations, funding available and culture of the people (Van Barneveld, 2002; Aman, 1996). Dana (2001) for instance, observes that countries with long histories of capitalism and entrepreneurship have major differences with transitional economies (which are undergoing radical changes in their social, economic and political spheres). Thus, as some scholars (Matlay, 2001; Lean, 1998) observe, in order to effectively design and deliver a given entrepreneurship training,

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Business Management Review 21 (2), pp.66-78 ISSN 0856-2253 (eISSN 2546-213X) ©July-Dec 2018 UDBS.
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there is need to conduct context specific training needs assessments to avoid replication of entrepreneurship trainings offered elsewhere.

Tanzania is one of the said transition economies, which was governed by socialist-oriented policies from her independence in 1961 up to the mid-1980s (Nyerere, 1968). However, after realising the importance of the role played by the private sector in which entrepreneurship is a focal point, from the mid-1980s a number of initiatives have been undertaken to reform the economy, including adoption and appreciation of entrepreneurship training programmes at various levels. Through its Vision 2025 (URT, 1999) and the launching of policy documents like the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Policy (URT 2003a) and the National Trade Policy (2003b), the country declared that the private sector would be the engine of its economic development. Many of the players in the private sector are micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Since the declaration, a number of interventions have been directed at developing the capacity of MSMEs by the Government of Tanzania, non-governmental organisations, and the donor community. Such interventions include provision of entrepreneurship trainings to different groups of MSMEs. Nevertheless, since these trainings are often conceived and designed by the suppliers (supply side driven), a number of debates have been raised in connection with their relevance, depth of coverage in the various subject matters and even the duration of such courses (Kaijage, 2013; Tambwe, 2015). In some cases these trainings have been supplied free of charge to the trainees and in certain instances trainees have been facilitated to attend the trainings (in terms of being provided transport, meals and accommodation). In other cases however trainees have been required to pay. Questions have often been asked about the actual motivation of the trainees in these entrepreneurship and small business development training programmes, the motive of the training sponsors, whether the trainings offered are really entrepreneurial focused or they are just business management oriented, the competences of trainers used and the overall impact of those trainings on performance of the trainee's enterprises. This article has attempted to fill some of these knowledge gaps by using empirical findings from a group of trainees who are beneficiaries of one of the donor supported initiatives, the African Institute for Capacity Development (AICAD), based in Morogoro Region, in Tanzania. The general objective of the article was to examine the impact of an experiential learning entrepreneurship training on performance of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in the Tanzanian context and was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i) To examine the content and methodology of what was being taught in entrepreneurship and MSEs development programmes.
- ii) To assess the impact of an experiential entrepreneurship learning on performance of enterprises of the trainees.
- iii) To assess the perception of trainees about the relevance of entrepreneurship and small business development training programmes in the operation of their businesses.

In the following sections this article is organised as follows. First a review of the literature regarding the relevance of experiential learning in entrepreneurship is provided, followed by the methodology adopted in carrying out this study. After the literature review, a description of the training programme and the participants are provided. The major findings are presented thereafter, followed by a discussion. The last but one section provides major conclusions and then implications and recommendation from this study are given last.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theme regarding training and learning about entrepreneurship has been associated with complexities as it involves many parameters in the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Ahmad, 2013; Gerba, 2012; Anderson, 2011). Concepts like training, learning and entrepreneurship, have brought about long debates in the literature with regard to how entrepreneurship training and learning processes should be designed, implemented and evaluated; and what the best practices are in the context of developing economies, especially in post-socialist countries like Tanzania.

The concern and debate about who an entrepreneur is, has been in the literature for many years, although some scholars (Orford *et al.*, 2004, GEM, 2013) think that the concept is still poorly understood to the majority. Pioneering works of classic economists like Say (1803) attempted to distinguish entrepreneurs from capitalists, conceptualising entrepreneurs as agents of change. Scholars like Schumpeter (1934) further portrayed entrepreneurs as persons who do things that are not generally done in the ordinary course of business routines, seeing them as idea persons, men of action who possess the ability to inspire others, and who do not accept the boundaries of structured situations. They further portrayed entrepreneurs as creative destructors. Following these differences in scholarly perspectives, there is therefore no single definition of an entrepreneur which is generally accepted. Despite the non-existence of a common definition, to a large extent, an entrepreneur can be portrayed as a person who, among many other things, possesses the qualities of innovativeness and creativity (Schumpeter, 1934); has high needs for achievement (McClelland, 1961); takes calculated risks; has

considerable drive and determination; has an internal locus of control; actively searches for opportunities and takes advantage of them (Shane, 2003). The list is endless. Ideally, these are the desirable qualities, which entrepreneurship training programmes today are expected to promote among learners.

Regarding the concept of learning, it is apparent that David Kolb's (1984) work about *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*, has often been cited as a foundational contribution. He developed the argument that for the learning process to be effective, efficient and have the desired impact it has to be experiential-based. He observed that ideas are neither fixed nor immutable elements of thought, but are formed and re-formed by experience. That is, learning is a process whereby concepts are derived from and continuously modified by experience. To him, no two thoughts are ever the same, since experience always intervenes. Learning is considerably broader than what is commonly associated with the school classroom. It occurs in all human settings, such as from school to the workplace, through formal and informal means and it encompasses all life stages, from childhood to adolescence, to middle and old age. Figure 1 summarises the experiential learning cycle through which ideally a learner has to be taken through.

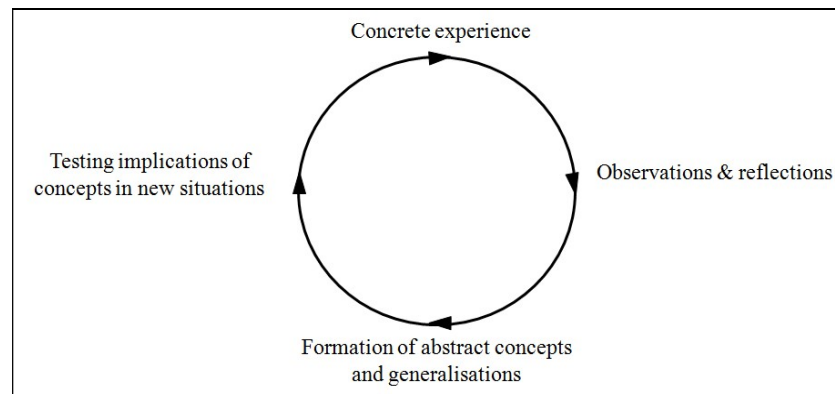


Figure 1: The Experiential Learning Cycle (Source: Kolb, 1984)

The conceptualisation of learning (Figure 1) therefore requires that for effective and efficient impartation of the intended skills and knowledge bundles, learning facilitators (trainers) should observe the specific requirements of learners. In line with the above assertion and specifically with regard to learning entrepreneurship, Gibb (2011) stresses that development of the entrepreneurial mindset requires learning by doing, conversion of knowledge into both strategic and problem solving mind maps as a basis for flexible decision making, ownership of learning, relationship learning and learning by trial and error. Packaging their views in a relatively similar way, Noyes and Brush (2012) emphasise the need for a different approach and logic in engaging students in entrepreneurship education, one that is focussed on action, iterative market experimentation, an entrepreneur's self-understanding and engagement of self-selected stakeholders. Higgins and Elliott (2011) emphasise focusing on learning outcomes that are specifically derived from the enactment of an activity, rather than from the traditional classroom environment. Other scholars like Jones and English (2004) argue that a different learning environment is required to support the study of entrepreneurship, essentially a teaching style that is action-oriented, which encourages experiential learning, problem solving, project-based learning, creativity, and is supportive of peer evaluation. Moreover, Kickul and Fayole (2007) advocate for an interdisciplinary model of entrepreneurship education which includes methods of teaching that allow for learning under conditions of ambiguity and uncertainty. They recommend creating an environment which allows students to develop immediate and personal experience and a sense of personal accomplishment or failure for the results obtained.

Regarding the aspect of training in entrepreneurship, debate has also been raised in connection with whether entrepreneurship is trainable or is an innate personal trait. To a very large extent however many scholars (Wu & Li, 2011; Gibb, 1988) agree that training plays an important role in enhancing entrepreneurial behaviours, although effectuation of the processes is challenging even in the very advanced training institutions. Neck *et al.* (2014), for instance, argue that entrepreneurship should be taught as a portfolio of practices, including acquisition of skills, knowledge, and mindset through deliberate hands-on, action-based activities that enhance development of entrepreneurial competencies and performance. Nevertheless, Dhliwayo (2008) argues that a relatively few learning institutions have created entrepreneurship curricula along these lines. They cite examples of institutions with such curricula which include the top schools in business education, such as Babson College, Stanford School of Business, MIT Sloan School of Management, London Business School, and National University of Singapore. In the cited institutions entrepreneurship learning entails a strong 'learning-by-doing'

element through outside-the-classroom activities such as internships with start-ups, creating and running small ventures on campus and working on small consulting jobs. In line with these views, in their survey of experiential entrepreneurship education offerings among 25 top undergraduate entrepreneurship programmes in the USA, Mandel and Noyes (2014) observe that experiential entrepreneurship education, by its nature, deviates from a customary academic approach of classroom-based learning. Trainers must show comfort and competency in guiding highly unstructured and unpredictable experiences, given the nature of innovation and the entrepreneurial processes. They further observed that classic doctoral training, which is focussed on research outputs and peer-reviewed publications, does little to equip entrepreneurship training facilitators, particularly those without entrepreneurship experience. If a non-practising trainer is put in front of practising entrepreneurs, the learners often struggle to find insights that they can immediately apply to their ventures. For that reason, the availability of entrepreneurially experienced full-time trainers for student mentoring has been a key bottleneck as it is often difficult to find trainers who are comfortable with the practical approach. Moreover, there are concerns regarding the pressure for large classes, which make evaluation of entrepreneurship students' work more of a challenge when using this pedagogical approach. Thus, when combined with the unstructured methods of teaching and learning, which are often advocated, the task becomes more challenging for entrepreneurship trainers.

Faced with these challenges, concerns have been on how entrepreneurship training programmes can then be best approached. With this, some scholars have suggested that potentials for improving entrepreneurship training are dependent on partnership between teaching institutions, business community and the government. De Faioite *et al.* (2003), in their study: *Education and training for entrepreneurs: A consideration of initiatives in Ireland and The Netherlands*, report that through such linkages, in the past few years, significant changes have been attained on entrepreneurial performance of the MSMEs. The linkages include provision of practical training opportunities for university students, mentorships by practicing entrepreneurs, active promotion of entrepreneurship within universities, provision of incubation spaces, mounting business plan competitions and provision of business start-up grants for students. All these initiatives are seen to have an impact on stimulation of an entrepreneurial spirit among university students.

The concept of enterprise performance has also been widely studied and examined both quantitatively and qualitatively (Al-Matari *et al.*, 2014; Santos & Brito, 2012). Quantitative indicators include increase in sales, assets owned, profitability, number of employees and market share. Qualitative indicators on the other hand include the quality of the goods and services delivered to customers, satisfaction of customers and registration status of the enterprise in terms of whether the enterprise operates formally or informally, especially for the case of micro and small enterprises. However, since this study largely involved micro and small enterprises, performance was examined in terms of a combination of both quantitative and qualitative indicators that were relevant to those enterprises. The variables examined included increase in the level of sales, increase in the capital involved in operations of the enterprises, ability to generate income for family needs (like food, healthcare, school fees and decent house), number of people working in the enterprise as well as the quality of the goods produced and services offered. Following the SMEs Policy (URT, 2003a), in Tanzania, micro enterprises are defined as those which employ 1 up to 4 people and have a capital investment in machinery of up to 5 million Tanzania shillings. Small enterprises employ 5 up to 49 employees and have a capital investment in machinery of between 5 and 200 hundred million Tanzanian shillings. Medium enterprises employ 50 to 99 employees and have a capital investment in machinery of between 200 and 800 Tanzanian million shillings. Large enterprises employ 100 people and above and have a capital investment in machinery of above 800 million. However, it has been observed that there are circumstances in which operationalisation of the definitions above, in terms of considering both the number of employees and capital investment may be difficult. That is, in situations where the number of employees and capital investment stipulated do not correlate. In such circumstances the policy document provides that the level of capital invested in the enterprise becomes the main determining factor.

METHODOLOGY

This study involved a survey of 24 Tanzanian micro and small enterprise owners located in Kilombero, Morogoro Rural, Morogoro Municipality and Kilosa districts in Morogoro Region. The respondents had previously attended a 10-day entrepreneurship and small business development training, sponsored and coordinated by the African Institute for Capacity Development (ICAD) at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA). The trainees were followed-up three months after they had taken part in the training programme. The follow-up aimed at establishing how they perceived the value addition of the training, how they had put in action what they had learnt, as well as the key benefits they had gained in terms of improvement in their business performance.

Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. Apart from the respondents' verbal responses, the researcher also had an opportunity to observe and validate the responses provided. That is, instead of just being told that the respondent kept records for the enterprise's sales, the researchers verified the responses by actually looking at what was written in the record books. The researchers also had an opportunity to physically visit the production facilities, witness processes undertaken, and inspect the business premises and quality of goods which the trainees produced before and after the training. The questionnaire comprised several items which solicited information about quantitative and qualitative performance of the enterprises, before and after the entrepreneurs attended the training. Quantitative data was analysed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software, and summary of frequencies and percentages were generated. In line with Creswell (2013), qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews, business record reviews, participant observation and observation of artifacts. Information from these sources was summarised and analysed through the use of content analyses, cross analysis of key themes and pattern matching of those themes in order to come up with coherent explanation of the ways the training programme had affected the business of the trainees. As far as the trainees and training programme were concerned, participants were all adults whose age ranged from 20 to 63 years, and who had primary school up to college level of education. Their gender and geographical distribution were as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Composition of Participants in Terms of Gender

Gender	District				Total
	Kilosa	Kilombero	Morogoro Rural	Morogoro Municipality	
Male	5	3	2	1	11
Female	2	5	0	6	13
Total	7	8	2	7	24

Although some of the trainees had multiple businesses, their main business categories are as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Main Categories of Businesses of the Trainees

	Main business categories	Detailed activities	percentage
1	Commercial farming	Farming and selling of sunflower, simsim, rice, maize, vegetables, sugar cane and palm oil.	25.00%
2	Food processing	Processing and selling: sunflower oil, Lishe flour (mixture of maize and sorghum), yoghurt, fruits and vegetables, chili sauce, tomato sauce, grain, mangle-pickle, banana-wine, jam, milk, juices and palm oil.	58.33%
3	Animal keeping	Keeping of local poultry, pigs and cows	4.17%
4	Bee keeping	Bee-keeping, honey processing and selling	12.50%

In terms of the time they had been in business, over 50% of the trainees were relatively new (less than 5 years) in the types of business they were running, while a small proportion of them had been in their businesses for over 10 years. Table 3 provides the details.

Table 3: Duration in the Business (Years)

Duration in years	Frequency	Percent
1 to 4 years	14	58.3
5 to 7 years	5	20.8
8 to 10 years	2	8.3
more than 10 years	3	12.5
Total	24	100.0

The content of the entrepreneurship and enterprise development training covered a wide variety of fundamental issues in enterprise development, ranging from trainees' self-awareness about their potentials and limitations to developing action plans for their enterprises. The trainers were also selected from various institutions as a way of bringing into the classroom different theoretical and practical experiences, exposures and orientations to the trainees. Table 4 provides the various modules that were covered, sources of the facilitators and the time allocated for each module.

Table 4: Contents of the Training, Source of Facilitators and Duration

Modules	Topics covered	Source of facilitators	Duration (days)
Module 1: Business basics	Personal awareness and business identification	Equal Opportunities for All (Trust Fund)	1
Module 2: Business planning	Forms of business, need for business planning, business planning process, practical business planning for one's business	University of Dar es Salaam Business School (UDBS)	3
Module 3: Business management	An overview of management and organisation polices, strategic decision-making, business polices, marketing management, production management, human resources management, financial management and records keeping	Small Industries Development Organisation (SIDO)	3
Module 4: Social and personal aspects of the business	Business ethics, self-confidence, and social responsibility	Mzumbe University	1
Module 5: Risk identification and management	Risk identification and management, business environment.	Mzumbe University	1
Module 6: Field visits	Participants and course facilitators visited enterprises located in Morogoro Region	Selected course facilitators and ICAD staff	2
Module 7: Action planning and course evaluation	Setting key activities that trainees will do within 3 months after the training, course evaluation	Selected course facilitators and ICAD staff	1

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

One of the concerns about why MSMEs do not grow and perform well is often about the ways they find, get and hold customers. Moreover, the categories of customers they serve, in terms of whether they sell directly to end-users, middlemen or institutions also matter. This implies that firms that have limited markets largely sell to end-users of their products while enterprises that can sell to middlemen and institutions have relatively high levels of marketing operations. This scenario was explored and the findings from the training participants are summarised in Table 5, which show that the training had positive impact on this aspect. Before the training, 7 of the firms had mostly been selling to end-users, while after the training the number decreased to 3 firms.

Table 5: Customer Groups before and after Training

Groups of customers	Before		After	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
End-users/ households	7	29.2	3	12.5
Middlemen/ agents	8	33.3	11	41.7
General market	8	33.3	9	37.5
Others	1	4.2	2	8.3
Total	24	100.0	24	100.0

Many of the trainees had established the enterprises using their personal savings as well as those of their spouses, as indicated in Table 6. Moreover, the role played by friends, relatives and group contribution schemes was evident. None of the firms had access to loans from formal sources of credit.

Table 6: Sources of Start-up Capital

Sources of capital	Frequency	Percent
Personal and spouse savings	14	58.3
Retirement package	2	8.3
Friends	2	8.3
Relatives	3	12.5
Group contributions	3	12.5
Total	24	100.0

The researchers wanted to know what had motivated the participants to establish their enterprises. A number of reasons were provided, but the major ones are as indicated in Table 7. The table shows that most of the trainees established their enterprises for the purpose of generating income, making profit and creating self-employment.

Table 7: Main Reasons for Establishing Businesses

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Generating income	18	75.0
Making profit	2	8.3
Availability of raw materials	1	4.2
Self-employment	2	8.3
Experience and ability to compete with others	1	4.2
Total	24	100.0

In terms of the number of people working for the enterprises, as Table 8 shows, most (75%) of the enterprises had between 6 and 20 employees, indicating that as per the Tanzania SME Policy (URT, 2003) they could be categorised as small enterprises if such employment was on permanent basis. The remaining 25%, whose number of employees is 4 and below, could also be categorised as micro enterprises, as per the National SMEs Policy. Nevertheless, most of the jobs were seasonal.

Table 8: Number of People Working in the Enterprises

Number of employees	Frequency	Percent
From 1 up to 4	6	25.0
5 up to 10	15	62.5
11 up to 15	2	8.3
16 up to 20	1	4.2
Total	24	100.0

Apart from providing jobs to the above mentioned number of employees, trainees were further asked to indicate the number of people in their extended families who depended on their respective businesses. Upon calculating the number of dependants per enterprise and then summing-up, it was apparent that a total of 181 people depended on these 24 enterprises. Table 9 provides details of these summations.

Table 9: Number of People Dependent on the Enterprises

No. of dependants per enterprise	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	17	
No. of enterprises	1	1	3	2	2	4	1	4	3	1	1	1	24
Total	2	3	12	10	12	28	8	36	30	11	12	17	181

The findings in Table 9 indicate that the 24 micro and small enterprises played a significant role in supporting the livelihood of many people. In that respect, empowering the owner-managers of these enterprises implied that the lives of many other people behind these small scale entrepreneurs were also supported. When asked about the value addition of the training in the various operations of their enterprises, the trainees were able to mention many areas upon which they found the training relevant. These included proper keeping of business records, planning for their business operations, how to involve family members in their businesses as a matter of minimising payment for casual laborers, as well as searching for markets and holding customers. Table 10 provides a list of the issues they mentioned to have learnt.

Table 10: Major Issues Learnt from the Training

Issues	Frequency	Percent
Involvement of family	24	100.00
Keeping records	24	100.00
Value addition	18	75.00
Business planning	24	100.00
Market searching	24	100.00
Food storage	17	70.83
Management of people	24	100.00
Having specific business location	18	75.00

When asked about the extent to which they had put into action the issues they had learnt, most of the participants said that they had improved the way they kept business records for both sales and expenses, how they carried out marketing activities as well as locating their enterprises strategically. The researchers were also able to access the books used in keeping the said records in order to ascertain what had been reported by the trainees. The other issues that were put into action were as indicated in Table 11.

Table 11: Implementation of What was Learnt in the Training Sessions

	Learning variable	Before		After	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	Involvement of family	8	33.33	16	66.67
2	Keeping records	10	41.67	24	100.00
3	Value addition	5	20.83	15	62.50
4	Business planning	7	29.17	22	91.67
5	Market searching	16	66.67	24	100.00
6	Food storage	10	41.67	16	66.67
7	Management of people	6	25.00	15	62.50
8	Having specific business location	16	66.67	24	100.00

Despite appreciating the value addition of the lessons they were taught, participants mentioned a number of hindrances that stood in their way to success. Many of these hindrances were almost the same before and after the training, e.g. climatic effects on farm products, lack of storage facilities, lack of some raw materials and communication systems in terms of roads used for transportation of farm products to and from markets. Competition among suppliers which led to low prices was another factor which was often mentioned. The skills and knowledge received from the training did not have an immediate impact on these issues. Table 12 provides a list of the issues that posed as challenges in operating the enterprises.

Table 12: Business Challenges and Risk Management

	Challenge	Before the training		After the training	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	Lack of raw materials	16	66.7	15	62.5
2	Competition	16	66.7	13	54.2
3	Low prices	19	79.2	15	62.5
4	Lack of markets	15	62.5	11	45.8
5	Poor communication	13	54.2	8	33.3
6	Lack of storage facilities	13	54.2	12	50.0
7	Poor land use practices	2	8.3	2	8.3
8	Climatic changes, inadequate	18	75.0	17	70.8

When asked whether they needed any further training in order to achieve better performance in their enterprises, the participants mentioned a number of areas that might need further training. First, following the observation that most of them had established their enterprises using their own and family savings, the scale of most of their business operations were low. They therefore thought more education should be provided on how to access loans from various sources of capital. Secondly, another concern was about the quality and efficiency of the equipment they were using in processing their farm produce, for instance, those involved in beekeeping admitted that processing and packaging their products in line with quality standards was a major challenge. They hinted that some customers who were quality-sensitive refused to buy their products as they thought this products did not meet their standards.

Thirdly, while appreciating the business planning component of the training, they seemed to need more, particularly on matters about marketing research, attracting customers, forecasting sales and coming-up with strategies that would enable them to compete well in the market. Fourthly, managing both personal and business finances appeared to be a challenge to many of them. Given that many of them did not have a bank account and since money for family matters and business operations was kept together, there were always problems of expenditure. As a result, businesses are often affected because money from the business is used to pay for, among other things, school fees, medical bills, foodstuffs and even contributions to facilitate social functions like weddings etc. This way business suffers, and therefore their growth is negatively affected.

Fifthly, the participants also mentioned the cumbersome process involved in registering businesses. It was reported that there were village and ward executives who misused their positions by regularly demanding illegal contributions from some micro and small business operators. Other operators were frequently being harassed by dishonest tax collectors and paramilitary police (locally called *Mgambo*) for issues they could easily protest against if their enterprises were officially registered. In order to explore further the general effects of the teaching and learning process, participants were asked if at all there were significant changes in their overall business performance that they could directly associate with the training programme. About 95.8% admitted that there had learnt a lot, while the remainder 4.2% they hadn't benefitted that much.

One of the participants engaged in processing sunflower oil explicitly said that ...

Before the training I was processing and packaging my sunflower oil in low quality recycled plastic bottles, which are used for packing drinking mineral water. My children were helping me in collecting these bottles (especially one-litre bottles) from the market area and then cleaning them up ready for use. My customers were only people living around here. These days I mostly pack in five-liter bottles, which are bought in bulk by middlemen. My sales have risen, I buy more raw materials and I have added three more workers.

In a similar manner a processor and seller of maize flour disclosed the following:

Instead of waiting for customers who were conveniently coming to my shop for retail and wholesale purchases, I bought two bicycles and employed two boys to help me with the distribution of the maize flour. Nowadays, I pack the flour in bags of 50 kilogrammes each and these boys quickly deliver these to other nearby retailers. My distribution network has expanded, and I am making more sales and have created more jobs.

The changes reported by many of the participants include increases in incomes, purchase of assets like bicycles for use in their businesses, construction of houses, and purchase of production machinery and equipment. There was also quality improvement in terms of processing and packaging sunflower oil and other products, expansion of markets including focusing more on middlemen who bought the products in bulk, and expansion of production facilities. Many of these achievements were verified by the monitoring and evaluation team while visiting the trainees. Despite such achievements, trainees were of the opinion that more efforts should be made to assist them get better working tools, access loans by being linked with banks or microfinance institutions, and support them in controlling pests. They appreciated the training component in which trainers visited them in their business areas for the purpose of providing them with additional technical advice and mentorship.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Following the view that entrepreneurs maximise learning through the use of a combination of structured and unstructured pedagogical frameworks (Gibb, 2002; 2011; Neck *et al.*, 2014), the adopted methodological design and implementation of an entrepreneurship and small business development programme appears to match well with many of the scholarly concerns.

Starting with the contents of an entrepreneurship training programme, scholars have advised that it has to be comprehensive enough and different from any other business management training. In line with the above assertion, Gibb (2011) for instance observes that development of an entrepreneurial mindset requires learning by doing, conversion of knowledge into both strategic and problem solving mind maps as a basis for flexible decision making, ownership of learning, relationship learning and learning by trial and error. Although this requires greater effort to achieve, in the current study attempts were made to ensure that mixed methods were used in delivering the contents of the training. These included the use of appropriate case studies which stimulated discussions, use of guest speakers from business regulatory and tax authorities as well as hands-on learning activities like developing marketing plans. All these aimed at enabling the trainees to internalise the issues they were exposed to.

Moreover, in line with Kolb (1984), the training adapted an experiential learning approach in which apart from learning from the classroom context, the trainees were provided the opportunity to visit some practicing entrepreneurs who were relatively advanced, and who were nearby Sokoine University of Agriculture (where the training was conducted). Such opportunity enabled the trainees to link what they learnt in the classroom with what actually happens in real life. The trainees were able to ask questions and get solutions to challenges related to their own enterprises. The depth of coverage of the course, as presented above, also entailed most of the issues advocated for a balanced entrepreneurship training programme (see for instance Garavan and O'Connell, 1994; Nieman, 2001). It focussed on matters about self-awareness of the trainees, the opportunities and challenges surrounding each of them, an understanding of key business management skills needed to address

such matters, as well as taking into account the influences of political, economic, social-cultural, technological, environmental and legal issues in operating their enterprises. In the light of such reflections, the process culminated into the trainees practically developing business plans for their own enterprises. Three months after the training, the monitoring and evaluation exercise which encompassed on-site business diagnosing and counselling further added value to the trainees as the findings above have indicated.

Further, in order to assess the impact of the experiential entrepreneurship training on performance of enterprises of the trainees, Gibb's (2011) and Kolb's (1984) concern about usage of experiential learning were taken into account. The major concern was that ideas are not fixed, immutable elements of thought, but are formed and re-formed by experience; that is, learning is a process whereby concepts are derived from and continuously modified by experience. Neck *et al.* (2014) for instance argue that entrepreneurship should be taught as a portfolio of practices, including acquisition of skills, knowledge, and mindset through deliberate hands-on, action-based activities that enhance development of entrepreneurial competencies and performance. The training greatly met these requirements, in that trainees came to the training centre while having their own experiences (good and bad) on how to carry out business in their enterprises. However, upon interacting with the training facilitators (in terms of listening to presentations, taking part in group discussions and presentations) as well as going to the study tours that were arranged, the trainees thoughts were modified, leading to personal reflections and planning about how they could do better in their enterprises. The experiential teaching and learning processes that were conducted can therefore be summarised as shown in Figure 2.

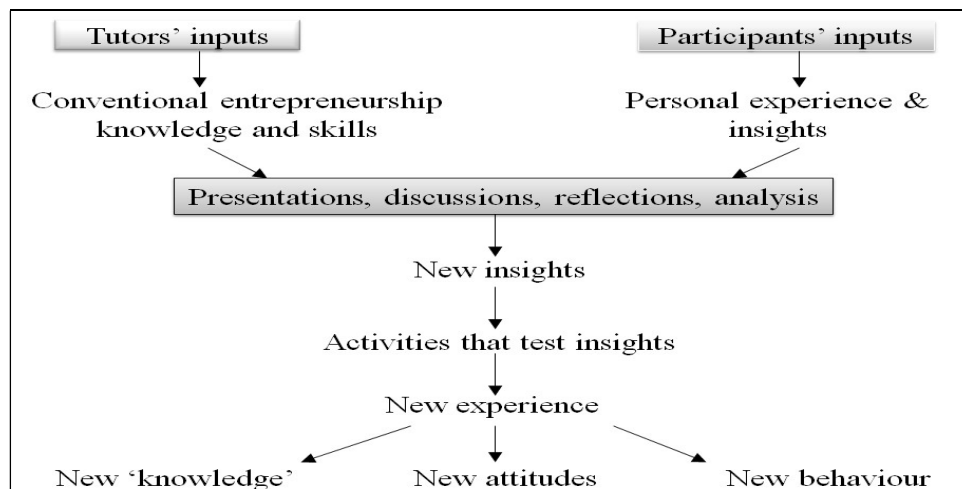


Figure 2: Adaptation of Tutors' Inputs and Participants' Experiences to Enhance Experiential Entrepreneurship Learning

The findings from the monitoring and evaluation process provided some empirical evidence indicating that the gained new knowledge and skills modified the attitude, and developed positive entrepreneurial behaviours of the trainees. Changes in the entrepreneurs' performance were exhibited in terms of changes in customer bases, distribution process, packaging materials to enhance quality of the products, acquisition of new assets for production and distribution, as well as employment of new workers. These all suggest that indeed meaningful learning took place.

In order to assess change in perception of the trainees about relevance of the entrepreneurship and small business development training in their business activities, trainees were asked to provide written feedback on the last day of the training. Noyes and Brush (2012) emphasise the need for a different approach and logic to engage students in entrepreneurship education, one focussed on action, iterative market experimentation, as well as an entrepreneur's self-understanding and engagement of self-selected stakeholders. In the current study over 90% of the trainees appeared to be very satisfied about both content and methodology of the training. The researchers examined the trainees' positive responses by comparing these with what was actually taking place at the enterprises. For instance, in order to examine the level of satisfaction and appreciation of a trainee about how record keeping issues were taught, the monitoring and evaluation team would ask for the books of records and check the quality of record keeping that was been done. All these validation processes cemented the arguments that the training was a worthwhile undertaking for the benefit of the trainees, their families and the community at large.

Despite the positive outcomes of the training, trainees had some pending issues that were not adequately addressed. These included, as highlighted earlier, lack of reasonable financial resources that would enable them to operate at a relatively higher level. Access to sources of financial credit remained unaddressed. The second issue was that trainees found it difficult to formally register their enterprises so that they could operate without worries about tax organs and regulatory officials including the Tanzania Food and Drugs Authority (TFDA) and Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS). These remain to be areas for further research and intervention.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings and discussions, the following conclusions and recommendations are relevant in order to enhance quality of the content and pedagogical matters about entrepreneurship and small businesses development training programmes in the context of developing economies like Tanzania. First, the content of an entrepreneurship and small business development training programme has to be based on the needs of the trainees. This implies that a thorough training needs assessment is vital in making the training effective and efficient. This is because it enables the training facilitators to focus on value addition aspects, which will make the trainees appreciate such a programme. For the current study, familiarity with the trainees' businesses was established in advance, in the form of knowing the nature of the enterprises, age and education level of trainees as well as their experiences.

Secondly, the trainers have to possess the appropriate experience and interest in working with micro and small enterprises. They also have to be conversant with adult teaching and learning methods. In the current study the trainers were all knowledgeable in their various topics and had vast experience in working with micro and small enterprises. This supports the use of both structured and unstructured approaches, action-oriented as well as hands-on teaching methods, which provide more value for entrepreneurs. Jones and English (2004) support this by opining that a different learning environment is required to support the study of entrepreneurship, by essentially adapting a teaching style that is action-oriented, which encourages experiential learning, problem solving, project-based learning, creativity, and which is supportive of peer evaluation. Moreover, as Mandel and Noyes (2014) observe, experiential entrepreneurship education by its nature, deviates from a customary academic approach of classroom based learning. Therefore trainers must show comfort and competency in guiding highly unstructured and unpredictable learners' experiences.

Thirdly, adoption and application of pedagogical frameworks which put the trainees at the centre of the learning processes are instrumental and should be encouraged. This follows the observation, and as the case was in this study, that most of the trainees are adults. Such trainees have experiences that they need the trainers to appreciate while being informed about some best practices or conventional knowledge and skills. The trainees have to be convinced about the new knowledge and logic of relinquishing what they already have and believe in. Short of that they may leave the training centres without having benefited much. This is because unless there are changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours, learning will not have taken place. This is supported by Higgins and Elliott (2011) who emphasise learning outcomes that are specifically derived from the enactment of an activity, rather than from the traditional classroom environments.

Lastly, collaboration and networking with the local communities are important for experiential entrepreneurship learning programmes to succeed. For the current study, this was made possible due to the relationships that AICAD had developed with some local entrepreneurs who volunteered to act as hosts and hostesses during study visits. AICAD had also developed networks with various training institutions which served as sources of trainers. Garavan and O'Connell (1994), and De Faoite, *et al.* (2003) advise that while evaluating entrepreneurship training programmes, collaboration and networks create an ecosystem for mutually beneficial experiential learning relationships. Such arrangements link and benefit the training institutions, the trainees, the learning facilitators, and some entrepreneurs in the local communities who serve as role models or cases for study visits.

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