



Rural Enterprise Business Development Support Programme Delivery Approaches

Samson Mtisi

National University of Science and Technology, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Zororo Muranda

Chinhoyi University of Technology, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe

Abstract

This study, which was part of a bigger doctoral study on rural enterprise business development programmes in Zimbabwe by first author, sought to investigate the programme delivery approaches that are utilised by Zimbabwean nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in delivering rural enterprise business development support programmes they run. The study was purely qualitative wherein 13 NGOs were selected with 32 in-depth interviews being conducted for data collection. The study found a variance in terms of the delivery approaches that are commonly discussed in the literature and what was being practiced on the ground. While in the literature there is discussion of approaches such as the hub and spoke approach, personal business advisors, mentoring and others, on the ground NGOs were found to be using private sector partnerships, government departments and local community institutions as means of delivering business development support services to rural enterprises. The embedded services approach was the only exception in that it is advocated for in the literature and is also to some extent practiced on the ground. The study recommends for the adoption of the business extension model to business development support services delivery to rural enterprises riding on the successes of the agricultural extension model.

Key words: Rural Enterprise, Programme Delivery, Business Extension, Market Development

JEL Classification: R00, O10, M00

Paper Classification: Research paper

Introduction

The importance of entrepreneurship development for national economic development cannot be overemphasised as evidence from across the globe has proved this relationship to be so. Also, rural entrepreneurship can be of equal importance to the improvement of economic fortunes of rural households (Emery, Wall and Macke, 2004; Korsching & Allen, 2004). Specifically, micro, small and medium size enterprises (MSMEs) have been found to revitalise economic growth and the development of rural areas (Liedholm, 2001; Smallbone, 2009). Rural enterprises help create employment in the rural economy (Anadan, 2014; Atterton and Affleck, 2009) and thus promote growth of the rural economy and curtailing rural unemployment in the process. Since



rural enterprises promote improved rural incomes through employment creation, they thus help stem rural poverty (Manyani, 2014; Boateng, 2011). The fact that rural enterprises have been used as an antipoverty tool in rural areas has promoted their development through various support mechanisms by nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and national governments alike, especially in Africa (Boateng, 2011; Irwin, 2011).

The paper investigates the aspects of support delivery mechanisms to rural enterprises, using a sample of NGOs drawn from Zimbabwe, the study country. There is a generally acknowledged knowledge gap in terms of the study of rural enterprises in general (McElwee and Smith, 2014; Pato and Teixeira, 2016) and in Africa in particular (Pooe & Mafini, 2012; Mugobo & Ukpere, 2012). The paper seeks to help bridge that knowledge gap by specifically looking at delivery approaches for rural enterprise business development support programmes run by NGOs. It tries to answer the question, how are rural enterprise business development support programmes successfully delivered? The paper adopts, for its theoretical framework, the Market Development Approach of support services delivery (Committee of Donor Agencies for Small Enterprise Development, 2001) which basically advocates for market based approaches in programme design and delivery.

Literature Review

By way of a conceptual definition and according to Meihlbradt & McVay (2003a, p.2), “Business Development Services (BDS) refer to the wide range of services used by entrepreneurs to help them operate efficiently and grow their businesses with the broader purpose of contributing to economic growth, employment generation and poverty alleviation.” This definition of business development services or business development support (as applied in this paper) resonates very well with the role that rural enterprises play in the rural economy which justifies their need for support.

Despite the general lack of academic literature on rural entrepreneurship (Asitik, 2016; Pato and Teixeira, 2016) and on business development services (BDS) (Chileshe, 2013; Rijneveld, 2006), discussed in the following subsections are some of the available options programmes can consider in delivering services to supported enterprises that emerged from the available literature. These are, however, not specific to rural enterprises only.

The Hub and Spoke System

There are different delivery models that are proposed in the literature. Lambrecht & Pirnay (2005) and to a lesser extent Goyal, Sergi & Esposito (2018), suggest a ‘hub and spoke’ system of delivery where there are two categories of service providers i.e., client expert consultants who provide a general diagnosis of client enterprise situation, thus determining the support needs of the enterprise. Then the other category is what they call solution expert consultants, who have skills in the specific support need areas, e.g., accountants, lawyers, etc. The two act as a hub and spoke system as the client expert consultants are considered the hub which determines the general enterprise support needs and then handover the client to the solution expert consultants (considered the spokes) who do the actual service provision.

The Consultancy and Extension Models

Massey (2003) makes reference to the Consultancy and Extension models of delivery. The consultancy model is where an enterprise initiates its own efforts towards developing the enterprise and hires a consultant to come in and assist. This is mostly common with large

enterprises that value consultancy, something that micro, and especially rural enterprises, are not that much keen on as they lack the self-drive, mostly due to lack of resources.

The same author (Massey, 2003) makes reference to the Extension Model of enterprise development, where a service provider contacts the client enterprise with a proposal to render services, perhaps as part of a government/NGO initiated programme with service usually being free to the enterprise (public good). This approach is borrowed from agricultural extension and is a more relevant model than the consultancy model, given their large inability to pay for services.

The Enterprise Developer Approach

Massey (2003) goes on to propose a matrix that gives four possible approaches (models) to enterprise development, i.e., delivery of support programmes. It is based on two major variables, i.e., whether the support service being given is seen as a private good (paid for by the client enterprise) or as a public good (paid for by the state) on one hand, and whether the client is involved in the enterprise development process (participatory approach) or is passive (technology transfer approach) as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Complementarity of Different Extension Paradigms

Participatory Approach	<p align="center">Private Good</p> <p>New Wave Consultant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of multiple content disciplines • Aware of multiple processes for developing organisations & individuals • Fee paid by client to consultant • Target client: organisations & individuals within context of organisations 	<p align="center">Public Good</p> <p>Enterprise Developer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of multiple content disciplines • Aware of multiple processes for developing organisations & economies • Fee paid by purchaser of service to delivery agency • Target client: organisations & industries within context of local economies
	<p>Traditional Consultant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually trained in single content discipline • Primarily skilled in one process for developing organisations & individuals • Fee paid by client to consultant • Target client: organisations & individuals within context of organisations 	<p>Extension Agent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually trained in single content discipline • Primarily skilled in one process for developing organisations & economies • Fee paid by purchaser of service to delivery agency • Target client: single organisations within context of local economies
Transfer of Technology Approach		

Source: Massey (2003), p.134

In the context of the BDS field, and in line with developments therein over the years, the Extension Agent and Enterprise Developer approaches are more in line with the Traditional Approach to the delivery of BDS where facilitators in the form of government or NGOs would pay for the provision of services to client enterprises by BDS providers, i.e., giving a free or largely subsidised service (public good). On the other hand, the Traditional Consultant and New Wave Consultant approaches incline themselves more with the Market Development Approach which promotes private sector involvement in the direct provision of services, rather than the facilitators going direct (Committee of Donor Agencies for Small Enterprise Development, 2001; Tanburn, 2004). However, for weaker BDS markets (Smallbone, Xiao & Xu, 2008), like is typically the case with rural markets, the Enterprise Developer approach would persist given this market’s inability to pay for services.

Embedded Services Approach

Embedded services are BDS that are provided as part of larger commercially viable transactions and are usually provided for free (Catholic Relief Services (CRS), 2015). This normally occurs where a buyer of products or seller of inputs also provides free services as part of the business transaction (Kahan, 2007). For example, when an agricultural input supplier offers free information and technical services to agricultural inputs retailers or when the input retailers offer the same to farmers (Meihlbradt & McVay, 2003b), those are rightfully considered embedded services.

The Embedded Services Approach has been found to be quite effective in reaching out to poor rural enterprises, given their inability to pay for services (OECD, 2006). The approach reduces the risk and cost of providing the services as they are shared with anchor value chain players which are financially well-off and can afford to provide the service for free as part of their commercial transactions (Hitchins, Elliot & Gibson, 2004).

Follow-up/One-on-One

Follow-up, though not a stand-alone approach as the name suggests, is another delivery aspect that is considered important, especially in the provision of business development support services to do with training. It helps clients value the training that would have been provided for customer retention, thus promoting sustainability and acting as some form of quality control (Olming, 2004a). Olming (2004a, p.19) emphasises the importance of follow-up, especially for the poor rural clients segment where he asserts that "...without follow-up to poor clients, BDS will get a bad reputation and will not be able to sell again." He further opines that follow-up actually helps tangibilise the intangible business development support service that would have been delivered.

In fact, site visits are usually viewed favourably by client firms as they promote strong client-advisor relationships (Mole, 2002; Massey et al., 2007), which are critical when dealing with poor rural clients. The importance of follow-up is also underscored by the realisation that if learned skills are not put into practice regularly, they would gradually fade away (Boateng, 2011), thus the need for follow-up as a reinforcement, especially with target groups of low education, typical of rural enterprise operators, youths and women in general.

The issue of follow-up is also related to the need for face-to-face or one-on-one meetings with clients (Mole, 2002; Lambrecht & Pirnay, 2005). Such meetings have been found to build trust and faith in service providers (advisors) by the clients (Smallbone, Baldock & North, 2003). This is a necessity for effective delivery of business development support to rural enterprises, especially in the early stages of assistance. Also, service providers find one-on-one site visits to bring more clarity and reality to the support provision process (Nwako, Akunuri & Madichie, 2010), as opposed to support provided off-site where there are no opportunities of cross-checking and clarifying issues. Thus, this makes follow-up and one-on-one approaches an absolute necessity, especially for providing training related support to rural enterprises, leading towards an approach called mentoring.

Mentoring

This is another approach in business development support provision that has found prominence. It is considered to be "...at the longer-term, collaborative end of the advice continuum" (Bisk, 2002, p. 263). This is because implied in the approach are long-term relationships between the mentor (advisor) and the mentee (client/enterprise). Besides, it is collaborative and interactive



in nature, meaning that the client becomes part of the advisory process (Massey, 2003), thus having a clear advantage over group processes.

For rural enterprises, Smallbone, Baldock and North (2003) contend that there is no realistic alternative besides having face-to-face meetings with clients. Whilst other programmes have explored the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (Smallbone, 2009; Atterton & Affleck, 2009), this is not so successful in rural areas, moreso in the context in which this study was undertaken due to poor advancement of ICTs in rural Zimbabwe. Mentoring sessions help create stronger personal ties between the advisor and the client, something that is considered critical in small business support provision and moreso for the rural segment (Smallbone, Baldock & North, 2003).

Business mentoring has several advantages as a method of training and offering business development support (Barrett, 2006), as it allows mentees to learn from what others would have experienced. It helps address issues to do with lack of time and resources as enterprise operators can sometimes hardly spare a day to go and attend a formal group training programme (Atterton & Affleck, 2009; Mtisi, Dube & Dube, 2017). It also helps the mentees experience hands-on business training which is immediately applied to the enterprise. However, for these benefits to accrue in a mentoring exercise, there is need of appropriately matching the mentor with mentee as the success of mentoring as a support delivery option has been proved to hinge a lot on personal relationships (Barrett, 2006).

Personal Business Advisors/Peripatetic Advisors Approach

The Personal Business Advisors' (PBAs) approach is the approach that the UK small business programme, Business Links, used where the PBAs basically worked as facilitators who would offer initial general business advice to small businesses before signposting them to specialist services if there was need (Mole, 2002). This is similar to Lambrecht & Pirnay's (2005) hub and spoke approach discussed earlier. Therefore, advisors would mostly undertake diagnostics of clients' needs and assist in managing relationships between clients and contracted specialist third parties as part of their signposting service (Lowe & Talbot, 2000b). The PBA approach is similar to what Smallbone, Baldock and Bridge (1998) called Personal Business Mentors (PBM), farm business development adviser (McElwee & Annibal, 2010) and peripatetic advisors (Smallbone, 2009). These provide support to rural businesses as a way of trying to effectively reach out to sparsely located rural businesses which are many times left out from most publicly funded business development support programmes. The peripatetic approach ensures that rural businesses are not disadvantaged by location and distance (Centre for Rural Economy, 2006).

However, Mole (2002) highlights one of the disadvantages of the PBA approach as being that PBAs are not specialised nor are they sector-specific, but are generalists in their provision of advice. However, this is mitigated by signposting to contracted specialist service providers (Lambrecht & Pirnay, 2005).

Institutionalised Delivery/Business Centre Approach

Whilst the discussions above on follow-up, one-on-one site visits and mentoring seemed to point towards individualised delivery approaches, the use of institutionalised group approaches are also considered as a delivery approach of support services. Given the geographical spatial distribution of enterprises in rural areas and the associated low uptake of business support services, the Business Centre Approach (UNDP, 2004; Boateng, 2011) may be more desirable



where services can be delivered from a common centre (Olming, 2004a), thus the rural business centres can be important service delivery hubs which bring with them economies of scale in delivery. According to the Centre for Rural Economy (2006) and Smallbone et al. (2002), group/cluster approaches can result in the reduction of procurement costs, can be a boost to sales, given opportunities of cross-selling and the group can also derive benefits from collective knowledge.

Research has also shown that working through institutions such as associations and existing business clubs can overcome the disadvantages of dispersion of enterprises in rural areas and the lack of critical mass for support programmes (Phillipson et al., 2002; Lowe & Talbot, 2000b). This brings the aspect of the use of local institutions and individuals in delivering support (Committee of Donor Agencies for Small Enterprise Development, 2001) as an approach that promotes improved access to services and, more importantly, sustainability (Gero, Murta & Willetts, 2017). The use of local institutions and membership organisations also has the advantage of being closer to their members (Kahan, 2007) as providers would be resident within the community/district (Boateng, 2011), bringing with it properly targetted need-based services. It also helps build the capacities of local institutions and individuals (Hitchins, Elliot & Gibson, 2004), thus promoting sustainability as already pointed out.

Having looked at the delivery approaches as per different literature sources, the paper goes on to explore the methodological aspects that were employed in the execution of the study.

Methodology

The methodology of the paper is located in the interpretivist paradigm (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhil, 2016), thus it utilised purely qualitative research methods with the qualitative case study research strategy (Stake, 1995) being employed. The study took Yin's (1994) multiple case study or Stake's (2005) collective case study design for study execution. Some 13 nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) that run rural enterprise business development support programmes or have rural development programmes that had a component of rural enterprise development were purposively selected for study (Guetterman, 2015) with criterion sampling being the specific sampling technique used (Patton, 2015) as inclusion was based on the criterion of them running a rural enterprise development programme. Thus, the organisation (NGO) was then taken as the empirical unit of analysis with the support programme being the theoretical unit (Piekkari, Welch & Paavilainen, 2009).

Data was collected through one-to-one, face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews (Saunders & Townsend, 2016) wherein 32 participants were again purposively sampled from the selected organisations. These were the programme managers/officers (13) as well as field officers and/or contracted service providers (19) who were providing services to enterprises on behalf of the support organisations. It was important to collect data from the people who are directly involved in designing and delivering the business development support programmes to get to learn from their lived experiences (Denscombe, 2004) of the phenomenon under study.

In terms of data analysis, firstly, all the 32 tape recorded interviews were transcribed into text (Stucky, 2014) before uploaded into NVivo 11 as the computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) that was used to aid the analysis. Then thematic content analysis was used where there was a combination of thematic analysis (Ngulube, 2015) and qualitative content analysis (Elo et al., 2014; Cho & Lee, 2014) to help identify patterns inherent in the data. Using the matrix query in NVivo yielded the analysis output as given in Table 1.

The numbers in the table show the NVivo coding references yielded on each emerging sub-theme under each case. A zero denotes that the particular subtheme was not mentioned by the particular case against which it is entered. Whilst column data shows some form of within-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989) as well as the information richness of each case (Paton, 2015), the row data gives some form of cross-case analysis. The last column gives the number of cases mentioning a given subtheme.

Findings

Table 1 is an NVivo output that summarises the findings as proffered by the study participants from the selected case organisations. It is interesting to note that there was not that much variability in terms of responses, resultantly yielding only nine sub-themes (approaches) for a qualitative study of this nature. The rest of this section discusses the major approaches in the subsequent subsections.

Table 1: NVivo Output-Programme Delivery Approaches

SUBTHEMES (Codes)	TOTAL	Case A	Case B	Case C	Case D	Case E	Case F	Case G	Case H	Case I	Case J	Case K	Case L	Case M	TOTAL
Case Participants (N)	(32)	(4)	(1)	(4)	(4)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(2)	(3)	CASES/13
1 : Private Sector Involvement	28	2	1	3	5	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	13
2 : Local Partners	21	4	1	2	3	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	13
3 : Government Departments	16	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	11
4 : Own Field Staff	12	2	0	2	0	1	2	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	8
5 : Facilitator Role	7	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	5
6 : Business Extension	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
7 : Outsource	5	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
8 : Workshops	5	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
9 : Follow-up-Mentoring	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
TOTAL CASE REFERENCES	102	17	3	13	12	14	6	9	6	7	2	5	4	4	n/a
TOTAL SUBTHEMES/CASE	n/a	7	3	7	5	5	4	6	4	6	2	5	3	3	n/a

Source: Author developed from primary data

Private Sector Involvement

Private sector involvement is important in the design and delivery of rural enterprise business development support programmes. It is therefore of little surprise that it was mentioned as one of the major approaches that is used in delivering support services. The fact that NGOs also claim to use market-based approaches makes them more inclined to involve private sector players in the delivery of their programmes.

According to the participants, private sector involvement comes in at three levels, that is, acting as input and output markets, and also provision of extension services. Thus, the private sector plays a critical role in programme delivery and success.

In terms of inputs and outputs markets, that is one of the key roles of the private sector which is pivotal to programme success as illustrated below:

So, with that in mind now, as soon as we have created a good business case around a value chain as much as is possible, we try to link the communities with an appropriate private sector

player, so that they have access to inputs, right, and if possible, they can get some loans or they have an output market so that it attracts farmers, it is more sustainable. FF1-160428

In fact, the above quote is an almost all inclusive one in terms of private sector involvement as it touches on both their input and output market role together with their ability to actually extend loans to the enterprises involved. This whole process acts as an incentive to the mostly agriculturally based rural enterprises and promotes long-term sustainability of the programmes as long as the relationships subsist.

Private sector players are also involved in training, advisory and extension support provision, especially those that are involved in contract farming as illustrated below:

Or it's a service where you have embedded services, you have a private sector company, you engage them, facilitate the contract farming arrangement and then they provide extension because once they put their inputs there, they want to have an interest. They will then provide their extension people to provide extension and then they buy the produce. So that's the other side, the providing of a market for the farmers. PF-160425

Ideally, their involvement in extension services is to ensure that the quality of the produce meets their standards as they are the off-takers of such produce. It is interesting to note that the services are embedded, meaning that they are delivered as part of a complete package from the contracting private sector firm at no extra cost to the beneficiary enterprise.

However, one major outcry that was mentioned by the case participants which is really of concern is the private sector's rather negative attitude towards participating in the rural economy, their skepticism. They do not understand properly how to deal with rural communities in order to gain meaningful business out of them as illustrated below:

But, the private sector players, they also have a long way to go in understanding community dynamics and engaging those communities and making and formulating a meaningful market out of whatever will be taking place in those communities. FC1-160419

This has resulted in private sector players receiving capacity building from NGOs to help increase their interest and reduce the risk they possibly face in participating in the rural economy.

Local Partners

Besides involving the private sector in delivery of programmes, all the participating case organisations mentioned implementing their enterprise development programmes through local partners. These have a better understanding of the local situation and would ensure that the capacity and skills gained from implementing the programmes remain with the community for sustainability of programmes. One case participant put it in a succinct way, when they talk of a principle they call "subsidiarity" as illustrated below:

Uu-u-m, one of our guiding principles at "J" (name of organisation) is subsidiarity. What I mean by subsidiarity, we believe in empowering local partners or smaller organisations so that we provide them with an opportunity to increase their capacity through our support. We normally don't prefer implementing on the ground. We prefer to work through partners. Yes, so we provide capacity to the partners in terms of implementation of that particular project. But, ya-a, where the donor specifies, in such a case, ya-a, we will be forced, but that's not really our modus operandi. PJ-160516

As alluded above, using local partners promotes sustainability of programmes as local institutions, once capacitated through what they call the “principle of subsidiarity” (where a larger NGO supports smaller local organisations through which they implement their programmes), can continue with the programmes after support has ceased, especially where a market development approach would have been taken in the implementation of the programme. One organisation uses what they call “local capacity builders” to help in the implementation of their programmes, which in a way is still the same principle of subsidiarity as illustrated below:

Number 2, we, because we can't be on the ground entirely, we work with a model of what are called local capacity builders. These are local organisations, individuals as well, who can do the same work that “A” (name of organisation) can do. They have got the expertise, we are able to subcontract work, believing they can deliver the same quality of work. The advantage of that is they can deliver the same quality of work, but, even for local organisations, they can continue with the same work even when the programme has ended because they have created that link with the communities or the... with the enterprises that we work with. PA-160323

Also, the issue of partnerships, especially when it comes to consortiums rather than at local partnerships level, is motivated by trying to capitalise on the different strengths that respective partners to a programme would be having for better results. This is illustrated in the quote below:

We have our field teams in the partners that are within the consortium. Right, I forgot to mention that we are a consortium of organisations. So what we basically do is we're on each other's key competencies and we maximise on that. And we as “I” (name of organisation), our technical area of specialisation is nutrition. We also have partners for ICT and business development. They are the ones that also work on the other side of things. FI2-160517

Government Departments

These are again a common vehicle of rural enterprise business development support programme implementation as mentioned by 11 of the 13 case organisations. The expectation would have been for all to mention government departments because there are hardly any programmes that do not go through the government system. This is illustrated in the quote below from Case L:

We are also encouraging these farmers to register so that they can penetrate formal markets. So we are working hand in glove with the Ministry of SMEs and some of these have already received training and are registered as multi-purpose cooperatives. So, we are always working with the government departments in all our activities. We are even reporting to them on a monthly basis, the DAs (District Administrators) and the Councillors and all that stuff. PL-16-0517

In actuality, government is taken as the custodian of development, hence, development organisations are there as facilitators and try to capacitate the relevant government departments to more effectively do their work through their assistance. Thus, all programmes will then, one way or the other, be linked to a government department as is also illustrated below:

I think the role of government there, government are the custodians of development. Whatever enterprise development intervention is going to be... is being undertaken, government will play the key role, they should be the custodians. For example, the enterprise programmes, we are not directly implementing. Ours is a facilitator role, and capacity building role where we are capacitating agriculture personnel, the brand ambassadors, they are part of... they are farmers in reality, but they are working with Agritex to roll out the programme. FE-160421

Finally, government is incorporated into implementation of programmes to promote sustainability as some of the participating organisations only see government involvement as the easiest route to sustainability. The argument is that government structures permeate through to the lowest levels in a given community, hence, their involvement will ensure that programmes stay within the community even after support from a given NGO has ceased.

Own Field Staff

Besides delivering programmes through the involvement of the private sector, local partners and government departments, NGOs also use their own field staff who complement and work with these other partners. This is because the partners cannot work alone without the core staff of the supporting organisation being involved, unless if the programme would have been weaned and handed over.

The involvement of own staff will depend on whether the supporting organisation is doing direct implementation or just building capacities of the implementing partners. For where there is direct implementation, the support organisation staff would be more heavily involved hands-on as illustrated below:

But where we are implementing on our own, we have project officers and in some projects where the donors are flexible, we don't have project officers, but we work with Agritex and LPD (Livestock Production Department), but we have a project team that is dedicated to deliver the project. PF-160425

Where direct implementation is not being done, the support organisation is more like playing the role of capacity building of the implementing partners as has been discussed earlier under the principle of subsidiarity as per one of the participating case organisations. The following quote also illustrates this point:

For example, the enterprise programmes, we are not directly implementing. Ours is a facilitator role, and capacity building role where we are capacitating agriculture personnel, the brand ambassadors they are part of... they are farmers in reality, but they are working with Agritex to roll out the programme. FE-160421

The Facilitator Role

Following from the above quote is an interesting aspect that was mentioned by seven case participants from five case organisations, that of playing a facilitator role, where they stated that they are there to facilitate/coordinate development rather than actually doing development work themselves, for that is what the communities themselves together with government and the private sector should actually be doing. This is illustrated below:

Yeah, we are, we actually... we define ourselves as facilitators because the moment we become actors, that thing will crumble when we leave. It creates even worse damage than what it was before. PF-160425

So, there is the idea of trying to cultivate the local people's capacity to implement projects for themselves for sustainability rather than having everything done for them, which is obviously not sustainable. One case participant put it across that the communities do not actually need the NGO people to be implementing the enterprise development programmes and any other development programme for them, but would be better off if they engage in implementation by themselves as illustrated below:



And in my mind they don't need us on the ground, I think we., there is so much, so many people going into the field that we disturb the community, they don't need us. I think if they are going to develop, the less and lesser they see the NGOs, the better for them. But at the moment you know.... PI-160415

The facilitator role of the NGO in development is often seen as one like a "go between" where they are there to broker long-term developmental relationships between the problem holder (community) and the private sector players, especially where market-led approaches are used to deliver enterprise development programmes.

Other Delivery Approaches

The other rural enterprise business development support programme delivery approaches that were mentioned are as per Table 1, where the business extension approach was mentioned, but more of as a recommendation than as a practice that is currently under implementation. This is where the same approaches as for agricultural extension are used, but this time for business skills delivery. There is also the aspect of outsourcing, where external people are contracted to offer enterprise development support services on behalf of the support organisation. Also, related to this is the aspect of follow-up and mentoring which are considered a key success factor, especially for training related business support services as alluded to in previous discussions.

Discussion

The main aim of the study was to examine the approaches and mechanisms that are used in delivering rural enterprise business development support programmes. In the literature review section, various approaches or models of delivery were discussed, including the hub and spoke system (Lambrecht & Pirnay, 2005; Goyal, Sergi & Esposito, 2018), the consultancy and extension models, the enterprise developer approach (Massey, 2003), the embedded services approach (Meihlbradt & McVay, 2003b; Goyal, Sergi & Esposito, 2018) and mentoring (Bisk, 2002), among others.

The findings of the study show that varied mechanisms are used in support programme delivery, but are not exactly following any of the specific models that were reviewed in the literature as summarised above. The involvement of the private sector, local partners, government departments and use of own staff were found to be the most prominent approaches or mechanisms used in programme delivery.

Since most of the organisations claimed to use market-based approaches in their programme design and delivery, seemingly in line with the Market Development Approach, private sector involvement was the most cited mechanism to programme delivery. The involvement of the private sector ensures that enterprises have access to both input and output markets, one of the major characteristic constraints of rural enterprises as per the literature (Mugobo & Ukpere, 2012; Saxena, 2012). Besides, as previously discussed, private sector involvement also becomes a means towards programme sustainability if the relationships brokered by the NGOs between the enterprises and the private sector are long-lasting. Therefore, results affirm the involvement of the private sector as a key consideration to successful business development support programme delivery. In any case, in the literature, private sector players were also recognised as among some of the providers of business development support services (Hitchins, Elliot & Gibson, 2004). They were also found to provide embedded services as they conduct business with the rural enterprises (Kahan, 2007), as was reportedly happening among some of the private sector players and the rural enterprises for some of the studied programmes.

Although private sector involvement is key in programme delivery, it was disheartening to note that most organisations reported that the participation of the sector in their programmes could be better as they seem to display a risk averse attitude to participating in the rural economy. They would only participate once the NGO has made certain undertakings to cushion their involvement to the extent of even receiving capacity building from the NGO as a way of promoting their participation in the programmes. In that regards, the private sector players would need to have a paradigm shift to where they adopt business models that can best be in a position to enable them to capitalise on the rural business opportunities created by the development organisations.

The involvement of local partners is another delivery approach that was found to be common among participating case organisations as it was mentioned by all of them, just like private sector involvement. Local partners were found to be heavily involved in programme delivery as they have an advantage of being part of the community and have a better understanding of the local enterprise situation. This is where the principle of subsidiarity comes in as reported by one of the case organisations and that of local capacity builders. The use of local partners, like the private sector, also assists in promoting programme sustainability as once the programme has come to an end, the local partners may still be in a position to continue with the supply of services without the involvement of the NGO anymore. In the literature, it is noted that the involvement of local partners is important as it promotes improved access to services and and more importantly, sustainability (Boateng, 2011). Access to services is improved in the sense that service providers are within close proximity of the enterprises (Kahan, 2007). The involvement of local institutions also brings the advantage of having their capacities being built by the support organisations that they would be working with as is once again pointed out in the literature (Hitchins, Elliot & Gibson, 2004).

The use of government departments was also found to be another approach to programme delivery. Again, this is hardly surprising as development is always taken to be a preserve of government, hence, NGO activities are then often seen as an extension of government work programmes. To this end, almost all development programmes go through government systems in one way or the other. The involvement of government is mostly motivated by the need to build-in sustainability of the programmes as the expectation is that once the NGO programmes come to an end, then government should take over and continue with the enterprise support services. This is, however, seemingly against the spirit of the Market Development Approach as it discourages direct government involvement in programme delivery, but to create an enabling environment that can promote commercial provision of services, thus promoting functional markets for BDS (Committee of Donor Agencies for Small Enterprise Development, 2001; Meihlbradt & McVay, 2003a). However, governments and facilitators can still be justified in providing services directly using the weak markets argument (UNDP, 2004; Meihlbradt & McVay, 2003a) where intervention is then taken as a way of trying to develop the market.

An interesting approach to programme delivery is what some of the participating case organisations referred to as the facilitator role, where they consider themselves as facilitators or catalysts in the design and delivery of rural enterprise business development support programmes. This stems from the fact that they do not consider themselves as the main actors of development, but their role is to facilitate the key players of development, i.e., government, the community (enterprises) and the private sector to engage and be the main actors on the ground. This is obviously motivated by the need for sustainability of the programmes as the NGO will not always be around to render support. Again this gives credence to the involvement of the private

sector and local partners/institutions in programme delivery as discussed in previous sections. Once again, this is very much in line with the dictates of the Market Development Approach as the NGOs, being the facilitators, are supposed to help develop commercial markets for BDS in line with the literal meaning of the word, facilitators!

One other delivery mechanism that was mentioned is mentoring, which some simply referred to as follow-up. This was not a popular delivery approach as it was only mentioned by three of the 13 participating case organisations. Given that training (business and technical) is one of the support services that is commonly offered to rural enterprises (Meihlbradt & McVay, 2003a), then the issue of mentoring and follow-up becomes important as rural enterprises need a lot of scaffolding if they are to implement what they would have learnt in these training programmes, given their low levels of education.

Finally, in the literature, it was noted that embedded services are another approach to delivering services where services are provided for free as part of large commercial transactions between enterprises and private sector players (Tanburn, 2004; Meihlbradt & McVay, 2003b). The findings of the study show that while this was not specifically mentioned as a deliberate approach to programme delivery, there are certain programmes where this is happening, especially where contract farming is involved as the contracting private sector firm would offer all the required services to the contracted rural farming enterprise for free to ensure the quality of the output for which they are the sole buyer. The embedded services approach resonates very well with rural enterprises, given many times their inability to pay for services as discussed in the literature (Kahan, 2007; Meihlbradt & McVay, 2003b).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Whilst the study concludes that in terms of programme delivery, the use of the private sector players, local community partners as well as the involvement of government departments and the support organisations' staff, are the more prominent ways of delivering rural enterprise business development support programmes, at least in the Zimbabwean context, it is important to consider the recommendation the paper makes, in the following paragraphs, as part of its contribution to practice.

In light of the findings of the study and the foregoing discussions, the paper recommends the adoption of the agricultural extension model for delivering business development support to the rural enterprises, especially in the Zimbabwean or developing country context as further explained. With agricultural extension in Zimbabwe, there are extension officers up to ward level; the same parallel structure can be developed for business extension as the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Cooperative Development already has officers stationed at district level and all that may need to be done is to cascade this down to the ward level. Alternatively, district SMEs Ministry staff can be beefed up to offer services to all the wards in the district as a strategy of trying to contain payroll costs.

Also, the agricultural extension system has lead farmers who help develop other farmers. The same approach can be adopted to have lead business persons in every district who can then be "contracted" to offer business development support to other enterprises in the area as business development support is best offered by another business person. This will make business development more hands-on given the low educational levels that are often associated with rural enterprise operators which can be a hindrance to rural enterprise business development support services delivery.



The study found the use of local institutions and local capacity builders as important for programme success and sustainability. The recommendation the paper makes here is again very much informed by this finding. Besides, a few of the participating case organisations already have similar structures in their programming although mainly on technical services and the lessons so far learnt have proved this to work to some extent. All that will need to be done to ensure quality service is to capacity-build all the business extension officers (training of trainers – ToT) who will then capacity-build the enterprises on the ground. It can then be made a requirement that every business extension officer must be running a rural enterprise of their own so that they will offer capacity building services on what they themselves have already experienced. Backstopping support can then be offered periodically to the business extension officers, perhaps from a hired highly skilled and experienced external consultant or the support organisation's qualified and experienced officer(s).

Alternatively, if a parallel business extension structure proves costly, then the existing agricultural extension officers can as well be capacity-built to multi-skill them to where they can offer both agricultural extension and business extension. The only drawback, though, would be normally if a person has a passion for one thing, they will give it their best at the expense of the other, and consequently, good impact may then not be registered on the other side where there is not as much passion. That is why a parallel structure would work best in terms of results though perhaps costly, hence, the need for a contribution from the participating enterprises in line with the dictates of the Market Development Approach of business development support provision.

References

- Anadan, V. (2014). Entrepreneurial motivation among the promoters of small scale industries, *International Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Business Management*, 2(9), 19-25.
- Asitik, A.J. (2016). *Entrepreneurship: A means to poverty reduction in rural northern Ghana?*. (PhD Thesis, University of Central Lancashire). Available at: <http://clock.uclan.ac.uk/15482/>. [Accessed 23 August 2016].
- Atterton, J. and Affleck, A. (2009). *Rural Businesses in the North East of England - Final Survey Results 2009*. Newcastle: Centre for Rural Economy, Newcastle University. Available at: www.ncl.ac.uk/media/wwwnclacuk/centreforruraleconomy/files/ne-survey-results.pdf. (Accessed on 16 April 2014)
- Barrett, R. (2006). Small Business learning through mentoring: evaluating a project, *Education and Training*, 48(89), 614-626.
- Bisk, L. (2002). Formal entrepreneurial mentoring: the efficacy of third party managed programs, *Career Development International*, 7(5), 262-270.
- Boateng, N.A. (2011). *Promoting Rural Enterprise Growth and Development: Lessons From Four Projects in Sun-Saharan Africa*. Rome: IFAD. Available at: <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/35168ae1-eeca-4b11-a703-303ae546d919>. (Accessed on 9 March 2014)
- Catholic Relief Services (CRS) (2015). *A Guide to Strengthening Business Development Services in Rural Areas*, Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Available from: <http://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/>. [Accessed 30 December 2017].
- Centre for Rural Economy (2006). *Study to Inform the Mainstreaming of Business Support in the Rural North East*. Newcastle: University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Available at: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/media/wwwnclacuk/centreforruraleconomy/files/mainstreaming-biz-support.pdf>. (Accessed on 16 April 2014)
- Chileshe, C. (2013). *Bringing Entrepreneurship Into Business Development Services - A Developing Country Perspective*. Paper Presented at The International Conference on Knowledge, Innovation and Enterprise, UK.



- Cho, J.Y. and Lee, E. (2014). Reducing Confusion about Grounded Theory and Qualitative Content Analysis: Similarities and Differences. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(32), 1-20.
- Committee of Donor Agencies for Small Enterprise Development (2001) *Business Development Services for Small Enterprises: Guiding Principles for Donor Intervention*. Washington DC: World Bank Group. Available at: <https://www.enterprise-development.org/wp-content/uploads/BDS-Guiding-Principles-2001-English.pdf>. (Accessed on 9 March 2014)
- Denscombe, M. (2004). *The Good Research Guide*, Glasgow: McGrawhill.
- Eisenhardt, K.M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *The Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532-550.
- Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Tarja, P., Utriainen, K. and Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative Content Analysis: A Focus on Trustworthiness, *SAGE Open*, 4(1), 1-10.
- Emery, M., Wall, M. and Macke, D. (2004). From Theory to Action: Energizing Entrepreneurship (E2), Strategies to Aid Distressed Communities Grow Their Own. *Journal of the Community Development Society*, 35(1), 82-96.
- Gero, A., Murta, J. and Willetts, J. (2017). *Business development services for enterprises: A rapid review of global literature*. (Enterprise in WASH - Working Paper 5). Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney. Available from: http://enterpriseinwash.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Working-Paper-5_Business-Development-Services-Rapid-Literature-Review.pdf. [Accessed 10 January 2018].
- Goyal, S., Sergi, B.S. and Esposito, M. (2018). Business development services for micro, small and medium enterprises – literature review of past trends and future directions. *World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development*, 14(3), 312-332. Available from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277814049>. [Accessed: 06 January 2018].
- Guetterman, T.C. (2015). Descriptions of sampling practices within five approaches to qualitative research in education and the health science. *Qualitative Social Research*, 16(2), 1-16.
- Hitchins, R., Elliot, D. and Gibson, A. (2004). *Making Business Markets Work For The Poor in Rural Areas: A Review of Experience*. Durham: The Springfield Centre For Business Development, DFID, UK. Available at: <http://www.springfieldcentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2004-06> (Accessed on 26 June 2014).
- Irwin, D. (2011). Learning from business support in Africa. *Management Research Review*, 34(2), 207-220.
- Kahan, D.G. (2007) *Business Services in Support of Farm Enterprise Development: Case Studies*, Rome: AGSF-FAO. Available from: www.fao.org/docrep/016/ap306e/ap306e.pdf. [Accessed 23 July 2014]
- Korsching, P.F. and Allen, J. (2004). Locality Based Entrepreneurship: A Strategy for Community Economic Vitality. *Community Development Journal*, 39(4), 385-400.
- Lambrecht, J. and Pirnay, F. (2005). Evaluation of public support measures for private external consultancies to SMEs in the Walloon Region of Belgium. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development: An International Journal*, 17(2), 89-108.
- Liedholm, C. (2001). *Small Firm Dynamics: Evidence from Africa and Latin America*, Washington D C: The World Bank Institute, Stock No.37189.
- Manyani, O. (2014). An investigation into venture financing. A case study on small to medium scale enterprises in Bindura urban, Zimbabwe (2013-2014). *Elite Research Journal of Accounting and Business Management*, 2(2), 10-25.
- Massey, C. (2003). Enterprise assistance: responses from the public and private sectors. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 10(2), 128-135.



- Massey, C., Lewis, K., Ashby, M., Coetzter, A. and Harris, C. (2007). Business Assistance For SMEs: New Zealand Owner Managers Make their Assessment. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 14(4), 551-566.
- McElwee, G. and Annibal, I. (2010). Business support for farmers: an evaluation of Farm Cornwall project. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 17(3), 475-491.
- McElwee, G. and Smith, R. (2014). Researching Rural Enterprise. In Fayolle, A. (ed.) *Handbook of Research on Entrepreneurship: What we know and what we need to know*(pp. 307-334). Massachusetts, USA: Edward Elgar (EE) Publishing.
- Miehlbradt, A.O. and McVay, M. (2003a). *Developing Commercial Markets for Business Development Services*. Turin: ILO-SEDP, Annual BDS Seminar Primer. Available at: www.ilo.org/empent/Publications/WCMS_143127/lang-en/index.htm. (Accessed on 8 July 2015)
- Miehlbradt, A.O. and McVay, M. (2003b) *Business Development Services - Testing the Guiding Principles*, Turin: ILO-SEDP, BDS Update, Fourth Annual BDS Seminar. Available at: www.value-chains.org/dyn/bds/docs/87/ILO_BDS_Reader_2003_Update.pdf. (Accessed on 8 July 2015)
- Mole, K. (2002). Business Advisor's Impact on SMEs. *International Small Business Journal*, 20(2), 139-162.
- Mtisi, S., Dube, A. and Dube, T. (2017). Assessing the challenges faced by rural agro-dealers in Matabeleland North. *African Journal of Business Management*, 11(9), 183-193.
- Mugobo, V.V. and Ukpere, W.I. (2012). Rural Entrepreneurship in Western Cape. *African Journal of Business Management*, 6(3), 827-836.
- Ngulube, P. (2015). Qualitative data analysis and interpretation: systematic search for meaning. In Mathipa, E.R. and Gumbo, M.T. (ed.) *Research challenges: Making headway for developing researchers*. (pp. 131-156.) Mosala-MASEDI Publishers & Booksellers : Noordwyk.
- Nwako, S., Akunuri, J. and Madichie, N. (2010). Supporting black businesses: narratives of support providers in London. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 16(6), 561-580.
- OECD (2006) *Promoting Pro-Poor Growth: Private Sector Development*, Paris, France: OECD Publishing. Available from: <https://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/green-development/43514554.pdf>. [Accessed 23 July 2014]
- Olming, K.O. (2004a) *Commercially sustainable BDS to Poor Customers*, Colombo: ILO SIYB-Sri Lanka. Available from: http://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/start-and-improve-your-business/WCMS_159405/lang-en/index.htm [Accessed 19 May 2014].
- Pato, M.L. and Teixeira, A.A.C. (2016). Twenty Years of Rural Entrepreneurship: A Bibliometric Survey. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 56(1), 3-28.
- Patton, M.Q. (2015) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 4th edition, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publication Inc.
- Piekkari, R., Welch, C. and Paavilainen, E. (2009). The Case Study as Disciplinary Convention - Evidence From International Business Journals. *Organisational Research Methods*, 12(3), 567-589.
- Pooe, R.I.D. and Mafini, C. (2012). Business development challenges in a rural district municipality in South Africa: A case of Fezile Dabi District Municipality. *The Southern African Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management*, 5(2), 89-109.
- Rijneveld, W. (2006). *Business Development Services: A Sector Analysis*, Woord Daad. available from: www.bibalex.org/Search4Dev/files/371995/209966.pdf. [Accessed 23 August 2016]
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research Methods for Business Students*, 7th edition, Harlow: Pearson Education.

- Saunders, M. and Townsend, K. (2016). Reporting and justifying the number of interview participants in organisation and workplace research. *British Journal of Management*, 27(4), 836-852.
- Smallbone, D. (2009). *Fostering entrepreneurship in rural areas*. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Available from: www.oecd.org/site/cfecpr/42203059.pdf. [Accessed on 23 April 2014]
- Smallbone, D., Baldock, R. and North, D. (2003). Policy support for small firms in rural areas: the English experience. *Environment and Planning : Government and Policy*, 21(2), 825-841.
- Stake, R. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Stucky, H.L. (2014). The first step in data analysis: transcribing and managing qualitative research data. *Journal of Social Health and Diabetes*, 2(1), 6-8.
- UNDP (2004). *Business Development Services: How To Guide*. Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Bratislava Regional Centre. Available from: www.pintoconsulting.de/Images/pdf/10_business_dev_services_2004.pdf. [Accessed on 16 July 2015]
- Yin, R.K. (1994). *Case Study Research - Design and Methods*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Authors' Profile

Samson Mtisi is a Research Fellow and final year Doctoral candidate at the National University of Science and Technology in the Graduate School of Business in Zimbabwe.

Zororo Muranda is Pro Vice Chancellor (Business Development and Resource Mobilisation) and is a full Professor of Business. He has worked for the past twenty four years as a University Lecturer and Professor. Professor Muranda's first call of duty as an academic was in 1992 when he joined the University of Zimbabwe as a Lecturer in 1992. He served the University of Zimbabwe up to February 2003. Whilst with the University of Zimbabwe, Professor Muranda had served as Chairman of the Department of Business Studies in the Faculty of Commerce between 1996 and February 2003. His first promotion in academia was in 2002 when he was promoted to the rank of Senior Lecturer. In March 2003 Professor Muranda moved to Midlands State University in the position of Executive Dean. He served Midlands State University up to April 2004. During his service with Midlands State University Professor Muranda worked hard to establish the MSU MBA programme and the Banking and Finance programmes. In April 2004 he moved to Chinhoyi University of Technology as Executive Dean. He served as Dean up to July 2006. In August 2006 up to December 2008 he was the Acting Pro Vice Chancellor of the university. From January 2009 up January 2013 he was with the University of Botswana. At the University of Botswana he served as Chairman of the Department of Management from January 2010 to December 2012. He rejoined Chinhoyi University of Technology in March 2013 as Dean of the School of Entrepreneurship and Business Sciences. Professor Muranda has now cumulatively served Chinhoyi University of Technology for eight years, five as Dean and three as Acting Pro Vice Chancellor. Professor Muranda is currently serving as an External Examiner for the National University of Science and Technology, Africa University, Zimbabwe Institute of Public Administration and Management, University of Namibia and University of the North West in South Africa. He has served as an External Examiner for Solusi University, ABM University College in Botswana, and formerly Masvingo State. Professor Muranda is a prolific researcher. He has published more than 40 articles comprising a book, journal articles and refereed conference proceedings. His research interests are in International Marketing, Internationalisation, Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Governance, and Entrepreneurship.

