

≈ SUMMARY ≈

**A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST SKILLS
ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM FOR ENTREPRENEURS**

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Principal Topic

Background 1: SIYB – a global entrepreneurship education program

Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) is an entrepreneurial training program created, sponsored and disseminated by the International Labour Organization. SIYB is, arguably, the world's largest skills enhancement program for entrepreneurs. SIYB has been in operation since the early 1970s and currently operates in almost 80 countries. During the last decade, more than 100,000 entrepreneurs, thousand of trainers and hundreds of small enterprise development organizations around the world have participated in it (Samuelsen 2003). Surprisingly for an education program of this magnitude and potential global importance, there has been relatively little program evaluation performed. What evaluation has been conducted has been unsystematic, un-quantitative and unsatisfactory.

Background 2: SIYB in Botswana

Meanwhile, in the nation of Botswana, since the mid seventies, there has been a huge growth in programs devoted to the training of small and medium entrepreneurs. The SIYB program has formed a significant component of this entrepreneurial training effort in Botswana (ILO 1996). SIYB training was initially supported by the United Nations and later by the Botswana government. Since its introduction into Botswana in 1983, the SIYB program has only been evaluated once, in 1993 (IFS 1993). The methods used (subjective questionnaire administered to an unsystematic sample of past participants) fails to provide a satisfactory evaluation of the program. So, in Botswana and worldwide, the world's largest entrepreneurial training program continues to run in the absence of any knowledge concerning its efficacy. The study articulated in this abstract forms the first phase of a research project that seeks to fill this gap in our knowledge.

Objectives of the research

The study will:

- Deconstruct the essential attributes of the SIYB education program in Botswana;
- Perform a review of the entrepreneurship education literature that culminates in a set of prescriptions constituting the generic essentials of a successful entrepreneurial education program;
- Compare the deconstruction with the mandates;
- Form some preliminary suppositions about the efficacy of the SIYB program;
- Use the results to inform the design of a formal, quantitative program evaluation of the SIYB.

Methodology

Procedure

The existence of quality data on the SIYB program makes Botswana an ideal country in which to conduct a systematic, quantitative program evaluation of SIYB. The initial phase of the project will comprise a comparison of the *actual attributes* of the SIYB program with the *mandates* prescribed by any extant theory of entrepreneurship education. The actual attributes of the SIYB program will include both its *inputs* (design, curriculum, teaching instructions, course materials, modes of instruction etc) and its outputs (measurements in terms of entrepreneurs' skill enhancement and performance enhancements of the businesses they control). The prescribed mandates (if any) of a theory of entrepreneurship education can only be determined through a process of review and distillation of the literature of entrepreneurship education.

Initial suppositions

The research begins with two suppositions:

- (1) The SIYB program will not comport strongly with the best practice principles articulated in the entrepreneurship education literature;
- (2) The comparison between SIYB program attributes and the entrepreneurship education literature will facilitate the design of a quantitative program evaluation study through provision of concepts, constructs and variables which can be measured using data available in the Botswana archives of the operation and results of the SIYB program.

Results and Implications

The most obvious outcome of the project will be the ability to design a detailed program evaluation of the SIYB program.

At the very least, the research will provide interesting insights into the areas where the world's largest entrepreneurship education program in current operation comports or does not comport with theoretical mandates.

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