

## Putting Enterprise into Action: Building Capacity for Deep-Scale Entrepreneurship Development in Modernising 'Third World' Contexts

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### Principal Topic

The government of Botswana has set itself the challenge of developing an 'innovative and prosperous nation'. However, 'an over-dependence on diamonds, high unemployment levels, and unacceptably high levels of poverty and inequality - both in terms of assets and income - are persistent problems.' (Clover 2003) One approach to overcoming these problems is to create an abundance of "grass roots" support for enterprising behaviour throughout the nation. Unfortunately, the principal focus of Botswana's current formal education system appears mainly to educate job-takers for the public sector and larger companies. For instance, accounting studies are the most popular programmes in the University of Botswana's Faculty of Business. The concept of "entrepreneurship" as a career is typically seen as an undesirable career objective. Entrepreneurship in Botswana is associated with "make do" subsistence trading activities in the informal economy, rather than as a personal quest for creating significant financial or social capital from scarce resources.

### Methodology/Key Propositions

This case summarises insights developed from the author's experience designing and executing four capacity-building workshops for prospective entrepreneur-enablers (Thompson 2006) whilst he was based at the University of Botswana, Gaborone. The workshops drew on experiential methodologies including problem-based learning. For example, in one workshop the participants were tasked to work in teams focussed on providing practical advice to active entrepreneurs for whom the author had written introductory case study descriptions (Mellalieu 2006a).

### Results and Implications

Through the workshop process, the participants recognised the value of the problem-based learning approach. For instance, they developed confidence in providing advice beyond their subject specialty through working with - or referring to - colleagues grounded in other disciplines. The author's experience of running the first three workshops lead to the design of a robust, scaleable programme format for a three-hour networking and knowledge exchange workshop - branded as Enterprise in Action<sup>o</sup>. One pilot of the Enterprise in Action "reality TV" workshop format was tested and received enthusiastic response from the participants. The workshop format has since been adapted and used in a "second world" developing country, New Zealand, with students of strategy and change, and organisational behaviour.

Botswana - like many "third world" modernising nations - has an urgent need to create an enterprising culture that performs to world-class standards. As a pre-requisite to achieving this outcome, an abundance of competent entrepreneur-enablers must be identified and developed throughout the country. The successful trial of the Enterprise in Action format lays one element of a tested foundation for commencing this initiative. The full paper recommends several additional elements required to achieve deep penetration of the 'message' of entrepreneurship in the context of a modernising 'third world' context.

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