Training in entrepreneurship and business-based skills can improve employment opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa

**What is this research about?**

In many sub-Saharan African countries, schools and colleges struggle with the challenge of creating and delivering up-to-date, practical training programs for in-demand skills such as how to run a small business. The “Education for Employment” program pairs Canadian community colleges with educational institutions in developing countries to create new education and training programs, specifically designed to meet the needs of the local community. This program is run by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, and is funded by the Canadian International Development Agency. Three Canadian community colleges began working with the Kihonda Regional Vocational Training and Service Centre in Morogoro, Tanzania in December 2009, and the program continued through to May 2012. Since 80% of the Tanzanian economy is based on agriculture, a main goal of this program was to provide technical training in agri-business, small business management, and entrepreneurship. A competency-based education and training approach was taken so that learners could develop and demonstrate the skills they needed, instead of simply learning the theory behind the skills.

**What did the researchers do?**

After deciding on project goals and timelines, a joint team of Canadian and Tanzanian project members met in June of 2010 to conduct a “needs assessment”. This process established a number of objectives for the program, including identifying the barriers and opportunities for potential learners, speaking to community business leaders about which worker skills were needed, and identifying the top two or three subject areas most in demand by potential learners. Interviews were carried out with industry leaders, non-governmental organizations, international aid organizations, government officials, farmers, entrepreneurs, and women’s groups.

**What you need to know:**

An assessment of education and training needs in Morogoro, Tanzania identified several agriculture and small business skills that would improve the employment opportunities of program graduates. Offering short courses, on-site training, and child care can encourage youth, women, and the already employed (including farmers) to upgrade their skills.
What did the researchers find?

Horticulture (crop farming) was identified as the most attractive training program to potential learners in Morogoro, Tanzania. Obstacles to the development of agribusiness in the region were found to include: a lack of seed varieties adapted to African environments, high costs of transportation, lack of marketing organizations, and crowded, unclean market centres. More training is needed in female-oriented trades relating to agriculture such as food processing, farm management, and operation of collective kitchens. Life skills such as financial planning, nutrition, and stress management should be an important part of all training programs. Short courses and on-site training could help reach learners with time-consuming responsibilities such as childcare.

How can you use this research?

African educational institutions can use this research to identify skills and subject areas that are needed in their local communities, as well as some of the challenges facing potential learners.

International aid organizations can use this research to better support educational institutions in developing countries.

Keywords:

Education, international development, training, job skills, employment, agriculture, small business, entrepreneurship, Tanzania

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