Cultural Differentials Modify Change: Comparativeness of the SADC and the US

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ABSTRACT

A mixed research methodology was deployed to show that cultural differences and perceived risk-taking must be considered in charting competences in advancing household enterprises in the Southern African Development Communities and the USA. The consequences were that triumphant households were those that took cognizance of multiculturalism in assessing and measuring performance. Multiple Linear Regression analysis demonstrated that capacity must be customized to suit organizational vision and that the vital predictor of perceived success in the USA was performance orientation while uncertainty avoidance topped the list in the SADC. Results indicate that diversity was understood in all successful enterprises.

Keywords: Family Business Association, Zambezi Valley, Zimbabwe

INTRODUCTION

It will be impossible to use all the tables which were generated in these two independent but mutually exclusive studies that focused on the role of diversity in progressing useful family owned businesses (FOB) or household enterprises (households) in South Africa and Zimbabwe (SADC see Appendix 1) and the USA. In 2011 the Per Capita Index showed the levels of poverty of the SADC member states. Botswana takes the lead at $7600, Mauritius and South Africa follow at $6800 and $5700 respectively and Zimbabwe stood at $1400 (See Appendix 2). Although the figures are nowhere nearer that of the USA during the same period, 2011, at $42000, they illustrate the dynamism of the economy in which FOBs and small businesses contribute more than 80% of sustainable employment (Bureau of Business & Economic Research, 2012). In order to guide the discourse, the questions asked, among many others, were:

What are the competences required in an expanding households sustained mostly by agriculture and other small business pursuits? Are cultural differences relevant in triumphant household enterprises?
The article attempts to answer the first question relating to the Zambezi Valley study in four parts. The first part discusses the research site in Zimbabwe and how data was collected and analyzed using a mixed research regiment. In the second part a charily selected literature is reviewed to ascertain practice and theory prevalent in triumphant household businesses. The second part discusses the study conducted in South Africa and the USA among FOBs owned by Indian ethnic groups. The third part discusses the way forward in growing winning enterprises. The fourth part discusses the limits of the studies and concludes by proposing areas of research that could benefit FOBs.

This research was conducted at the request of the management of a consortium of small agro-businesses owned by families situated in the Zambezi Valley of Zimbabwe. Management desired the knowledge of how to develop and implement competences to advance its goals of poverty alleviation and food security in the Zambezi Valley. It was also concerned about how the identified capability could be built. The initial intervention in which social constructs of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and Community of Practice (COP) were applied was the response to management’s request. AI was deployed to determine the nature of the capabilities required. AI is described in full in the subsequent pages. The secondary problem was to determine how those capabilities would be created and distributed among the people in the organization using the COP approach.

The consortium, which is referred to as the Association, is made up of more than 500 rural small-scale farmers and villagers, of whom 70% are women. The Association has a number of interests in the Zambezi Valley and has become a leading provider of farming equipment and hardware as well as tillage and produce haulage services to granaries and urban markets. From humble beginnings 30 years ago, employing only five general farm hands, the Association in 2005 employed 90 full-time people, who included qualified agriculture instructors and others. The Association has limited farming equipment and technology and in that respect it was a labor-intensive operation that employed appropriate technology. It employed 90 fulltime employees and a further 1500 depending with the rains to assist in corn and cotton harvesting a task that is done using combined harvester technology in South Africa and the USA but available tools in the Zambezi Valley.

**Context-Everything**

**Geographical Historical**

The Association has its head office at Guruve, a small town developed during the colonial era as the last railroad stop where cotton, tobacco, corn and other crops could be collected and transported from the Zambezi Valley to nationwide markets. The Guruve District is situated within the Zambezi Valley, with the Zambezi escarpment to the south, the Zambezi River to the north, and Mozambique to the east. According to National Geographic Maps (2013) Guruve is a low-lying area between 300 and 700 meters above sea level. The area, particularly around the Kanyemba border post, was used as a strategic entry point during Zimbabwe’s protracted political and military struggle for independence by liberation forces based in Mozambique and Zambia.

The Association is akin to the cooperative societies that have been promoted by post-independend governments in the Sub-Sahara African (SSA) region (Mupepi et al., 2013). The associations must be efficient and be able to make a surplus in order to insure sustainability. Most of these organizations focus on self-reliance micro-enterprises and small businesses involved in the production of arts and crafts products, retail and distribution, flour milling, horticulture, cotton and corn production. They endeavor to address the poverty and diseases that directly affect the family unit throughout the Zambezi Valley but its clientele spill into neighboring villages which were only demarcated as a result of the Scramble for Africa 1884/5 (Mupepi, 2010). The population in Zimbabwe and other countries in the SADC face difficult economic sacrifices in an environment where the marginal propensity to consume is very
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