

CALL FOR PAPERS

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR SMEs AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**Organised by:
OECD LEED Programme and Danish Business Authority (DBA)**

28 November 2012, Copenhagen – Denmark

Venue

**Danish Business Authority
Dahlerups Pakhus
Langelinie Allé 17
DK-21 Copenhagen Ø**

Deadline for submission

2 November 2012

Rationale

Workforce skills and the skills of business owners are crucial to the economic competitiveness of a place. There are, however, barriers to the development of such skills in the market. Training in SMEs is notoriously low, informal sources of learning such as the use of expert advice and consulting are often neglected by small businesses, and many nascent entrepreneurs do not possess the basic competences and skills that will enhance their chances of survival and growth. There are a range of programmes across OECD countries that seek to address such barriers, including monetary and non-monetary incentives to SME training, continued professional education, entrepreneurship education, mentoring and coaching schemes, etc. This international workshop intends to examine existing barriers to the development of workforce skills and entrepreneurship, current policy good practices and possible policy scenarios for the future.

Focus themes

We are looking for papers and presentations discussing issues and policies in three different but related areas:

- Upgrading workforce skills in small businesses (morning session)
- Entrepreneurship skills for growth-oriented businesses (afternoon parallel session)
- Entrepreneurship skills for socially inclusive self-employment (afternoon parallel session)

Papers may discuss the preliminary results of ongoing research or the key findings of recently completed research projects.

Upgrading workforce skills in small businesses

The lack of workforce skills is a particular problem for small businesses. They devote fewer resources per head to training than their larger counterparts and they suffer from more important externalities

problems as employees shift companies, leading to greater reliance on the public sector in providing external training solutions. At the same time, public vocational education and training programmes do not always achieve the hoped-for results in furnishing SMEs with mid-level technical and professional skills because of a lack of correspondence between the design and accessibility of public programmes and the needs and modes of functioning of SMEs. More understanding is needed of the variety of formal (e.g. training) and informal (e.g. work-based learning and learning via interaction with external firms and consultants) channels through which workforce skills can be promoted in SMEs by policy, and how such policies can best be delivered.

Relevant papers and presentations will deal with one or more of the following questions:

- What are the workforce skills crucial to strengthening the competitiveness of SMEs?
- What are the challenges faced by SMEs in developing such skills?
- What are the main barriers to training provision in SMEs?
- How can national and local policies address such barriers?
- What are the main informal sources of workforce skills development in SMEs?
- How can national and local policies promote such informal learning?
- What are the existing good policy practices in workforce skills development?
- What is the evidence on the impact of workforce skills development policies at national and local level?

Entrepreneurship skills for growth-oriented businesses

Similarly to workforce skills, entrepreneurship skills will boost the competitiveness of local businesses thanks to the improved strategic and management competences of the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship skills for growth-oriented businesses will include both the basic management skills and technical skills needed for business operation and the strategic skills (e.g. business planning, risk assessment, team building and negotiation) that are crucial to the growth of the company. Both universities and vocational training institutions play important roles in helping impart entrepreneurship skills to individuals who are interested in starting businesses in the near future or the longer run. Mentoring programmes, online resources and a variety of other approaches also make a difference.

Relevant papers and presentations will deal with one or more of the following questions:

- What are the skills necessary for successful entrepreneurship?
- What are the best methods to instil such skills?
- What are the current practices in entrepreneurship training at universities and vocational education institutions? Are they different?
- To what extent should entrepreneurship training be integrated with business creation support?
- How can local/regional policies promote growth-oriented entrepreneurship skills?
- What are the existing local/regional policy good practices in the promotion of growth-oriented entrepreneurship skills?
- What is the evidence on the impact of such programmes?

Entrepreneurship skills for socially inclusive self-employment

The largest majority of enterprises are run without special growth ambitions. While these businesses are not those that create most jobs or generate most of the aggregate turnover, they are an important instrument of labour market integration. In the current economic scenario, then, self-employment programmes can contribute to reducing unemployment and alleviating social exclusion. Sometimes necessity-driven businesses are owned by members of social groups that are disadvantaged in the labour market or underrepresented in entrepreneurial activities, such as ethnic minorities, the unemployed or the youth, in which case self-employment programmes may require further adaptation and tailoring.

Relevant papers and presentations will deal with one or more of the following questions:

- To what extent is self-employment a solution to reduce unemployment and social exclusion? What is the evidence in this respect?
- What are the basic skills that every business owner should have? And how much are they different from those of growth-oriented entrepreneurs?
- Is the difference between necessity-driven and growth-oriented entrepreneurs only one of quantity of skills (more skills) or also of quality of skills (different skills)?
- What are the current methods used to impart self-employment skills?
- What is the role of vocational education institutes in the promotion of self-employment skills?
- Does the provision of self-employment skills tend to be part of a wider package of support that includes other tools (e.g. coaching, mentoring, etc.)?
- What are the existing local/regional policy good practices in the promotion of self-employment skills?
- What is the evidence on the impact of such programmes?

Report

Selected papers might be included in a final OECD report that investigates issues and policies in the three relevant fields identified above.

Deadline

If interested, please send a one-page abstract, a power-point presentation, or a full paper by 6 November to: marco.marchese@oecd.org

Costs

Participation at the workshop is free, but travel and accommodation is at the cost of the participants.

For further information

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