Nature of Entrepreneurship Culture among Successful Business Owners in Eldoret Town, Kenya

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper was to assess the nature of Nature of Entrepreneurship Culture among Successful Business Owners in Eldoret Town, Kenya. The study was undertaken in Eldoret town using interview schedules and therefore the study was qualitative in nature. The collected data were analysed thematically before they were reported in narrations. Organizational culture appeared to be a significant issue for successful entrepreneurship. In addition, the vision of the entrepreneur contributed to its success and as such entrepreneurs with vision seemed to be successful. Stakeholder relationship was also associated with success in entrepreneurship.Furthermore, entrepreneurship training enabled entrepreneurs to start a new business or expand an existing one. The study concluded that development of entrepreneurship culture including having a vision and mission, training, and motivation enhances success*

Keywords: *Nature, Entrepreneurship Culture, Business Owners*

I. Introduction

Entrepreneurship culture is described as a culture embodying and championing entrepreneurial characteristics and attributes. These have included risk-taking, innovation, and creativity. An entrepreneurial culture has been suggested as the opposite of bureaucratic or administratively-oriented organizations (Bradley, Wiklund, & Shepherd, 2011). Entrepreneurial culture characteristics and attributes have also been positively linked to firm performance (Flamholtz, 2001; Flamholtz&Kannan-Narasimhan, 2005).

In broader conceptual models, entrepreneurial culture has also been identified as a necessary component of a firm's architecture in order to successfully pursue an entrepreneurial strategy that is, engaging in opportunity-seeking and advantage-seeking activities (Ireland et al., 2003; KetchenJr, Ireland, and Snow, 2007). There has also been little exploration of the relationship between the entrepreneurial culture concept and the firms that are supposed to demonstrate this phenomenon. In particular, it is unclear which firms possess an entrepreneurial culture and to what degree they possess it.

The importance of entrepreneurship to economic development has beenhighlightedby many researchers (Davidsson et al, 2006) andit is now well-recognized that education and training opportunities play a critical role in cultivating future entrepreneurs and in developing the abilities of existing entrepreneurs to grow their business to greater levels of success(Henry et al, 2003).

A lack of conceptual clarity around entrepreneurial culture and the existence of competing definitions indicate that the field possesses a disjointed perspective. This makes the study and accumulation of knowledge in this area difficult. Related to the lack of conceptual clarity around entrepreneurial culture is the absence of psychometrically sound instrumentswith which to assess the construct. As a result, there has been a paucity of empirical examinations of entrepreneurial culture. This study therefore investigated the nature of entrepreneurship culture existing among successful business owners in Eldoret Town, Kenya.

II. Methodology

The study consisted of interviewing successful entrepreneurs who was picked from a convenience sample of successful entrepreneurs in Eldoret town. The entrepreneurs was contacted and voluntarily agreed to be interviewed.

The entrepreneurs were interviewed using semi-structured interview techniques where a series of questions were developed in advance. Follow-up prompts or questions were asked where there appeared to be more insights to gain. The interview questions began with "grand tour" type questions about the origin of the business, the respondent's involvement, and the original opportunity. Questions about the hiring of early stage employees and the development of culture at the organization were also asked. The interview concluded with a discussion of any final thoughts the respondent might have on the culture in general, such as how it had changed over time and what future culture concerns he might have. The interview was conducted at the entrepreneur's place of business. The interviews lasted on average for 60 minutes and yielded a tremendous amount of data.

The analysis process consisted of transcribing data. Each transcript was then read through multiple times, each time analysing evidence (quotes) of particular central themes using codes, such as "background" (e.g., education, family, work experience), "entrepreneurship" (such as entrepreneurial culture, thoughts on

entrepreneurship), "culture issues" (such as, culture change, core values). The codes were based on the investigators' own interpretation of the data.

III. Results

In addition to its importance in understanding the entrepreneurial culture, the interview data helped to provide much needed context, nuance, and clarity to the broader entrepreneurial culture picture in addition to specific thoughts and insights around entrepreneurship. The participant discussed hisperceptions of how and why his cultures developed as they did, the salient features of their particular cultures, and the importance of core values in the organization. Organizational culture was clearly an issue that the participant thought about, was concerned about, and had put a great of effort into shaping or managing, as best he could.

The Nature of Entrepreneurial Culture

To begin the interviews, the participant was asked a series of broad questions about his definition of organizational culture and what he thought the culture of his organization was like. The participant was also asked if an "entrepreneurial culture" meant anything to him and what that might be.

The purpose of these general questions was to get a sense for what the respondents thought about culture (if at all) and how culture was perceived by him and by extension, their organization. When asked these questions the respondent reported a variety of ideas and opinions. For example, culture was the "personality" of the company, "how we do things", an "extension of the founder", how people "behave inside and outside the organization", and "how people think and act." Although not expressed in the same words, collectively these ideas describe a central sense of culture that closely matches (Snow, 2007) view of culture. Namely that values and beliefs underlie the behaviours and actions of people within the culture.

When asked about what an "entrepreneurial culture" was specifically, there were also several consistent themes. Specifically the notions of taking risks, being flexible, dealing with challenges, and showing initiative were prominent. These thoughts on entrepreneurial culture were also framed by the concept of opportunities. In other words, risk, flexibility, overcoming obstacles, creating new ideas, and taking action were all in service of opportunities for the organization.

The sentiments expressed by the entrepreneur corresponded to expectations held about entrepreneurship described in past literature. Considering that notions of risk taking, flexibility, and adaptability have typically been highlighted as some of the core properties of being entrepreneurial. However, the entrepreneur added some important cultural context to these broad properties. This context primarily concerned the notion of the team and the broader organization. The entrepreneur saw values and objectives as something "we have to do", "we are building something" and "to look outside what we are today." Leadership and setting examples were certainly important, but entrepreneurial culture was clearly a collective endeavour, something that they had to work on and towards as a group.

To this point, the entrepreneur was asked if he felt their organization currently possessed an entrepreneurial culture. By the entrepreneurs' own definitions and understanding of the concept, at least he felt that his organization needed some work developing or strengthening entrepreneurial culture. This suggested that an entrepreneurial culture was something that needed some form of deliberate effort and attention within the organization.

Organizational Enthusiasm

This aspect was approached by asking the entrepreneur about the vision of the company, whether the employees knew about that vision, and whether they were passionate about it. These questions were designed to tap into the organization's vision and direction and to what degree the entrepreneur and the employees were committed and engaged with them. The underlying motivation was to investigate the relationship between enthusiasm and passion for these goals and the ability to generate and/or act on opportunities. The respondent was eager to discuss their vision and passion for their business and what they were trying to accomplish. Particularly, the respondents' visions and goals for their organizations, was ranging from improved growth targets to larger scale visions such as being the biggest or best firm in their field in the country. Cooney pointed out that creating a vision of, and empathy with, the way of life of the entrepreneurial person enhances success of an entrepreneur. This implies a strong emphasis upon the employment of educational pedagogies stimulating a sense of ownership, control, independence, responsibility, autonomy of action and commitment to see things through while living, day by day, with uncertainty and complexity of the entrepreneurship.

Stakeholder Alignment

To explore stakeholder alignment aspect respondent were asked about his relationships with stakeholders (such as., customers, suppliers, partners, investors) and how he thought he was perceived by these groups. I was still greatly interested in probing the nature of the relationships between these firms and their

stakeholders. What role might these stakeholders play in firms' short- and long-term plans? How had these relationships evolved? Ultimately, the core question was tounderstand the relationship between the treatment of organizational stakeholders andopportunities and how the former might influence the latter. The respondents generally had a great deal to say about customers, suppliers, and partners. Overall, stakeholder relationships seemed critical to the organization. Moreover, the entrepreneur made a point of infusing the importance of these relationships into the culture, particularly with customer relationships. The entrepreneurs commented on the importance of building long-lasting and "win-win" relationships with stakeholders whenever possible.

The entrepreneur also articulated that good stakeholder relationships facilitated their growth and allowed them to capture opportunities for themselves and provide opportunities for others. The entrepreneur supported the existing literature in that stakeholder alignment was an important aspect of entrepreneurial culture. Strong, long-term relationships with stakeholders facilitate the ability to capitalize on opportunities, through new and existing customers, access to material inputs and financial resources, or cooperative partnerships, for example. The results from the data appear to support this perspective. The examples highlighted here describe instances of how the entrepreneur had built these relationships and leveraged them over time. These were always to the benefit of their firm but in many cases, to the benefit of the stakeholder as well (such as mutual growth opportunities, better customer experience). Furthermore, these feelings were shared throughout the organization through communication and example setting, particularly with respect to dealing with customers.According to Stakeholder theory of organizational management and ethics, stakeholder consideration and their relationships with the leads to end results that are implicitly value and moral-laden (Phillips et al., 2003). Therefore the a good entrepreneur-stakeholder relation enhances successes.

Learning and Development Support

The aspect of learning and development support was approached by broadly asking respondent about professional development and the opportunity for people to learn new things in the organization. These broad questions were anticipated to lead towards more focused questions about prevailing attitudes towards individual and team learning and professional growth, as well as mechanisms of support in the organization. The purpose of these questions was to get a sense of how the organization approach learning and development from a cultural perspective. Furthermore, I was also interested in exploring the relationship between a culture of learning and development and opportunities.

The expectation was that fostering a culture supportive of learning new things (such as., new skills and knowledge about employees' jobs or professions, latest industry or product developments) would have positive implications for opportunities in/for the organization. The response from the entrepreneur on professional development was generally supportive of encouraging learning and development opportunities for employees. The respondent acknowledged and highlighted the value and benefits of extra training and development. The fundamental aim of training is to help the enterprise to achieve its purposes by adding value to its key resource (human resource). According to Kithae (2013) Entrepreneurship training is designed to develop skills, knowledge and attitude which enable entrepreneurs to start a new business or expand an existing one. It has been found to be a major determinant in the growth of enterprises. Performance of enterprises depends on number of factors including internal and external factors. Entrepreneurship training is an internal factor that has influence on performance of small enterprises. This further supports the work of Mayuran (2016) who found out that training had a positive impact on performance of Small Enterprises (profits, revenues and size).

Opportunity Driven Change

Traditionally, views on entrepreneurial culture have emphasized the importance of the values of innovation and change in organizations. However, these notions towards innovation and change have often been abstract. For example, is valuing "continuous change" merely valuing change for its own sake? To what end are new ideas, experimentation, and creativity encouraged? The entrepreneur was asked to talk about their organizational culture with respect to innovation and change, and whether people were comfortable with change. The purpose of these questions was to explore the notions of innovation and change together and ultimately, how the organizational culture incorporated values and beliefs about them with organizational opportunities. Responses from the entrepreneur indicated that their cultures were generally amenable to innovation and changing in order to adapt to new market conditions or other circumstances. While valued in the abstract as well (such as "innovating" was perceived as important activity), the entrepreneur had a clearly functional view of innovation and change with respect to pursuing opportunities. Innovation and change were valued in the capacity to help the organization alter or reorganize itself to pursue a potential opportunity or to better execute on an existing opportunity.Entrepreneurs need to search purposefully for the sources of innovation, the changes and their symptoms that indicate opportunities for successful innovation and they need to know and to apply the principles of successful innovation (Drucker,1985). However, innovation does not happen automatically; it is driven by entrepreneurship.

Cohesiveness

The aspect of cohesiveness was addressed by asking a number of questions broadly related to employee morale. This included questions about describing morale at the firm, whether people generally got along or "gelled" together, were honest with each other, and communicated well. The purpose of these questions was to explore perspectives in not only how employees worked together (such as., effectiveness) but also whether they supported one another.

The underlying thinking of this dimension was that a key element of an entrepreneurial culture was that the employees of the firm had a shared bond and commitment to one another. It was this cohesiveness that allowed the organization - through its employees to survive and thrive under adversity, crisis, or strain. Whether negative, morale draining impacts such as staff reductions or dwindling resources, or more positive but still stressful challenges such as dealing with extreme growth or times of rapid change, it is this sense of cohesiveness that is thought to win the day.

Cohesiveness was thus expected to help organizations to engage opportunities. The cohesiveness concept was broadly described in the data by an amalgamation of recurring themes. These themes included the importance of rigorous selection and hiring criteria, the importance for job applicants to fit or integrate with the existing culture, and strenuous demands on employees of time, loyalty, and mutual respect. Collectively, these themes described a kind of team work concept that emphasized individual accountability through shared struggle. The entrepreneurs provided insights into the nature of this shared struggle. The results from the interview largely met expectations that cohesiveness would be an important aspect of organizational life. Motivations which is related to morale of the employees and the business owner does have significant influence on Entrepreneurial Passion and Entrepreneurial Success. These findingsare similar with the study by Alam, Janiand Omar (2011) which also confirms the role of motivations inentrepreneurial success.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the data presents several key insights into the nature of entrepreneurial culture. Organizational culture was thought to represent the values and beliefs which underlie actions and behaviours in the firm, or colloquially, "the way we do things" and the reasons behind them.

An entrepreneurial culture, echoing the core attributes of entrepreneurship, incorporate notions of risk taking and flexibility, among others, in the service of opportunities. Finally, entrepreneurial culture is a group endeavour which may be hard to come by, even in firms where such a culture would be expected to be found. These sentiments, taken as a whole, align with the proposed conceptualization of entrepreneurial culture. These ideas appear to support the view of entrepreneurial culture as an organizational culture focused on opportunities and the things that are necessary to identify/develop them and ultimately act on them.

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