

# Chapter 11

## A Structural Approach to Management Teaching for Developing Learning SMEs: Concepts and Proposals for Building Momentum in Medium-Sized Enterprises

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### ABSTRACT

*The chapter proposes a new analytical approach in developing learning small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The specific context looks at various approaches and modeling innovatively structured management teaching and learning processes particularly for medium-sized enterprises which play a key role in economic development. Designed are phases of establishing learning SMEs in changing their complex organizational culture and strategy emphasizing employees, training and awareness, experimentation, making mistakes, innovation, and creativity. Main management teaching methods are revisited. The third section optimizes some variables of management teaching and erudition processes, particularly key methods, projects, seminars, literature, exams, and ranking knowledge. Methodology included SME teaching process modeling techniques, analysis, and comparison of SMEs with teaching programs, project technique of monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the author models specific student/teacher roles and provides recommendations for future research directions in development of medium-sized firms.*

### INTRODUCTION

Management education seems to be in a process of defining more specifically how to prepare students for real business life. Recent studies highlight the value of using life-long learning programs, coupling management education with labor market needs and revisiting the case study method (European Commission, 2015a & European Commission, 2015b). Graduates should possess sound academic and tested knowledge to become business leaders with effective practice (Brown & Duguid, 2000, pp.129-133)

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based on a proven set of soft and hard skills and capabilities (Kanter, 2003, p.56). However, their skills still don't meet the needs of future practical business environment requiring efficient and successful managers. Business Development Bank of Canada (2015) has empirically confirmed that the major challenge for 80% of surveyed mid-sized businesses is difficulty hiring and retaining skilled personnel (p.20). Therefore, some of the key variables of management teaching, and perhaps curriculums as well, need be optimized for specific economic circumstances and for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as employers in particular.

In reaching out to students many universities are facing a complex process of reforms to reflect these changes. New teaching methods and reformed curriculums are becoming an inevitable strategic development pathway. Implicitly comparative advances in management education, techniques, methods and experiences become valuable for both students and learning SMEs. Part of this process requires the application of innovative teaching methods.

Author advocates increased transparency, better decision making and transformation of internal processes in both management schools and SMEs. Key challenges include concerns about curriculum quality and SME learning readiness skills. This can sometimes be constrained by political, economic and social conditions in the government domain. It is thus important to mitigate some of the risks by effectively managing development of teaching methods harmonized with learning SME-friendly legislation put in place.

The present study framework addressed two important sections in contemporary literature from the perspective of learning SMEs and the academia. It is essential for practitioners to recognize the driving factors of learning organizations for the benefit of future SME development as well as to extend knowledge from a new point of view in the academia based on optimizing key variables of management teaching methods. Therefore, the theoretical view presented in this paper is based on the development of a model with planned curriculum content through student activity, teacher activity, time required, monitoring and SME lesson effects. This theory, deepened by author's existing teaching practice, conceives a hierarchy of developed concepts. Author presents the case that modeling can push management schools (Bennis, & O'Toole, 2005, pp. 96-104) to develop longer term visions that may not have been possible without comparative teaching analytics and logical structuring of management education. Arguably, this model could be relevant for management schools and SME development. Author's learning organization conceptual model partly unfolded from framework of Mathews, MacCarthy and Braziotis (2017), while teaching variables were applied from discoveries of Walvoord and Anderson (2011) and observations in own work.

## **BACKGROUND ON SIGNIFICANCE OF LEARNING SMES AND EMERGENCE OF THEIR ERUDITION PROCESS**

The process of introducing the learning organization concept has been defined proceeding from the contemporary management theory. In studying key preconditions needed by SMEs to introduce the concept special attention is dedicated to applying scientific conclusions of professor Senge, author of the Fifth Discipline and his original approach in the functioning of business organizations (Senge, 1990). Support for this hypothesis was recently reconfirmed empirically with emphasis on process improvement (Mathews, MacCarthy and Braziotis, 2017). By a learning SME the author means processes by which an organization of this size tries to foster and sustain in developing all its resources, and especially its

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