

# Skills, Practices, and Aspirations of Small-scale Entrepreneurs in Low-income Settings

Julius Rüschepöhler

UC Berkeley, CEGA

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# Lecture Overview

## 1 PART I: Lecture

### *Business Practices and Training*

- Business Practices Around the World
- Classical MSME Training
- Extensions of the Classical Approach
- Measurement of Firm Performance
- Mechanisms
- Alternative Approaches

## 2 PART II: Paper

### *Curating Local Knowledge*

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References

- Bloom and van Reenen (2010, 2019): Business practices, motivation (Bloom, Mahajan, McKenzie, and Roberts, 2010; ?)

# Heterogeneity in Business Practices

- Bloom and van Reenen (2010): Heterogeneity (Bloom, Mahajan, McKenzie, and Roberts, 2010)

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- Bloom and van Reenen (2019): Correlation with productivity (?)

# Business Practices in Small Firms

- McKenzie and Woodruff (2009, 2017): Heterogeneity and predictiveness (?McKenzie and Woodruff, 2017)

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# Business Practices of Small Firms

- McKenzie and Woodruff (2009, 2017): Example categories and practices (?McKenzie and Woodruff, 2017)

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# Best Practices for Small Firms

- McKenzie and Woodruff (2017): Portable best practices (McKenzie and Woodruff, 2017)

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# History and Prevalence

- At least **USD 1 billion per year** (to 4-5 million beneficiary entrepreneurs; ?)
- Classical training programs *precede* evidence that business practices vary and are predictive for productivity
- Examples:
  - Start and Improve Your Business (ILO)
  - Business Edge (IFC)
  - EMPRETEC Entrepreneurship Training Workshop (UNCTAD)

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# Typical Training Program

## Content

- Training is delivered by 600 local certified trainers and by a pool of approximately 60 international master trainers. All trainers are also entrepreneurs.
- Empretec Training Workshops offer different levels of instruction that include:
- 6-day courses (48 hours); 32-hour (usually spread over 4 days) for micro-entrepreneurs with low levels of literacy; Interactive coaching based on real business challenges of participants.

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# Typical Training Program

## Delivery



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# Evidence on Impact

- First wave (Karlan and Valdivia, 2011, Field, et al., 2010; Bruhn & Zia, 2013; Bulte et al., 2017; Anderson, Chandy, and Zia, 2018) (?) (?) (Bruhn and Zia, 2013) (?) (Anderson, Chandy, and Zia, 2018)

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# Evidence on Impact

- Econometric and implementation issues (McKenzie and Woodruff, 2014)

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# Evidence on Impact

- Recent evaluations (McKenzie, 2020) (?)

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# Targeted Training

## Female entrepreneurs

- Example: Gender and Enterprise Together (GET Ahead, ILO; ??)
- ?

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# Targeted Training

## Young entrepreneurs

- Entrepreneurship programs in school and university
- Example: University final year course in Tunisia (?)
- ?

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# Targeted Training

## ■ Gazelles

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# Specific Domains

- (Anderson, Chandy, and Zia, 2018)

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# Specific Domain

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# On-site Consulting

- Bloom, et al. (2013); Karlan et al. (2015); Bruhn, Karlan, and Schoar (2019)
- Large firms: (Bloom, Eifert, Aprajit, McKenzie, and Roberts, 2013); SMEs: (Bruhn, Karlan, and Schoar, 2018)
- (?) (?)

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# Multimedia delivery

## TV shows

- Examples: Ruka Juu in Tanzania (?) and El Mashroua in Egypt (?)
- ?

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# Multimedia delivery

## Text messages

- (?) (?)

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# Complementary Constraints

- McKenzie cash JDE paper

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# Imprecision of Outcome Measures

- Confidence Intervals, pic?

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# Reliability of Self-reports

- Self-reports of aggregate (?)

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# Reliability of Self-reports

- Disaggregating quantities in self-reports (?)

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# Reliability of Self-report

- Direct measures (?)

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# Sales vs. Profits

■ (?)

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# Heterogeneity of Impact

- Heterogeneity of treatment effects poorly understood across different approaches
- Potential constraints are manifold, and likely context-dependent
- Some already mentioned in passing:
  - Credit constraints (see, e.g., ) McKenzie cash paper
  - Gender norms and constraints
  - Age-related network and knowledge/skill constraints

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# Education and literacy

- Drexler, Fischer & Schoar (2014) (Drexler, Fischer, and Schoar, 2014)

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# Family Commitments



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# Identity Concerns



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# Aspirations



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# Local Relevance of Best Practices



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# Rules of Thumb

- Drexler, Fischer & Schoar (2014) (Drexler, Fischer, and Schoar, 2014)

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# Rules of Thumb

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# Entrepreneurial mindset

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# Local Knowledge

- Cai and Szeidl (2019), Brooks et al. (2018), Lafortune et al. (2020), Seither (2020), Abebe et al. (2020)?

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# Role Models

- La Ferrara et al. (2012); Chong and La Ferrara (2009); Berg and Zia (2013); Riley (2018)

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# Role Models

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# Questions

Any questions?

.. before we move on to our paper?

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# Curating Local Knowledge

Experimental Evidence from Small Retailers in  
Indonesia

Patricio S. Dalton<sup>1</sup> Julius Rüschepöhler<sup>2</sup> Burak Uras<sup>1</sup>  
and Bilal Zia<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Tilburg University

<sup>2</sup>UC Berkeley, CEGA

<sup>3</sup>The World Bank

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- Motivation
- Our Approach
- Data and Design
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion

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# Background

- Micro and small firms (MSEs) are typically the main **source of employment** in the developing world
- In **Indonesia**, MSEs represent ..
  - .. 99% of all firms
  - .. 94.5% of employment
- Understanding the factors fostering efficiency and growth of MSEs is an important research and policy goal

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# A Growing Focus on Management

- **Classroom Training:** Field, et al. (2010); Karlan & Valdivia (2011); Bruhn & Zia (2013); McKenzie & Woodruff (2014, 2017); Bulte et al. (2017); Anderson, Chandy & Zia (2018); Lafortune et al. (2018)
- **Consulting:** Bloom, et al. (2013); Karlan et al (2015); Bruhn, Karlan & Schoar (2019)
- **Mobilizing Peer Knowledge:**
  - Brooks et al. (2018) → Local mentors (market information)
  - Cai & Szeidl (2018) → Business meetings
  - Abebe et al. (2019) → Management experience matching

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# Harnessing Cross-Firm Heterogeneity

## Some stylized facts about business practices in small firms

- Vast heterogeneity in business practices and performance across similar businesses (?)
- Variation in practices accounts for more than 20% of variation in productivity within the same firm in the US (?)
  - Research has largely overlooked this heterogeneity in program design and implementation

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# Harnessing Cross-Firm Heterogeneity

## Some stylized facts about business practices in small firms

- Vast heterogeneity in business practices and performance across similar businesses (?)
- Variation in practices accounts for more than 20% of variation in productivity within the same firm in the US (?)
  - Research has largely overlooked this heterogeneity in program design and implementation

Our idea is to **make productive use of this heterogeneity** in research design:

- Use cross-firm variation to identify **practices associated with business performance**
- **Curate local best practices**
- Test different **modes of delivery**, and their cost-effectiveness

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# Selecting Local Best Practices

- Detailed **qualitative interviews** with local business peers:
  - Understand and codify their practices (record-keeping, financial planning, stocking-up, marketing, and joint decision-making)
  - Identify implementation norms and beliefs regarding each practice (e.g. whether they are complicated, necessary, etc.)
  - Document locally relevant tips and rule of thumbs
- Baseline **quantitative survey**
  - Measure practices and outcomes
  - Quantitative association of business practices with profits and sales

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# Disseminating Knowledge

## ■ Handbook

- **Pure information:** Which practices, how to adopt, and why?

Supplemented with two types of experiential learning:

## ■ Movie

- **Psychological and emotional involvement** → social learning is possible through **observing the successful experience of similar others**.
- Bernard, et al. (2014); La Ferrara et al. (2012); Chong and La Ferrara (2009); Berg and Zia (2013).

## ■ On-site Assistance

- **Hands-on involvement** → social learning is possible through own **experience, with a small nudge** (Kolb, 1984).
- Facilitated by local lay person

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# Research Questions

## ■ Adoption

- Do retailers adopt these practices once peer best practices are aggregated and made common knowledge?
- If so, ...
  - Does the type of experiential involvement matter?

## ■ Impact

- Does firm profitability increase?
- If so, what are the channels?

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# Sample

- Listing of 2042 small retail businesses from 29 administrative communities (Kelurahan) in urban Jakarta
- Selection criteria for firm listing:
  - At least  $4m^2$  in size
  - At least two different product categories on offer
  - At least 30 meters distance to next business in sample → to minimize spillovers
- Random sample of 1301 from the list
- Randomization to treatment arms stratified by
  - Gender
  - Firm space ( $4-6m^2$ ,  $6-10m^2$ , 10 and above  $m^2$ )
  - Composite score of business practices above or below median
  - Kelurahan

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# Experimental Design

- Three types of information provision:
  - Handbook with best practices and tips
  - Movie with successful peers
  - Best-practice on-site implementation assistance
- Five experimental groups
  - 1 Handbook only (N=260)
  - 2 Handbook and invitation to movie screening (N=260)
  - 3 Handbook and offer of two assistance visits (N=260)
  - 4 Handbook and both movie and assistance (N=260)
  - 5 Control (N=261)

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# Timeline

- 1 September 2015: **Qualitative** Interviews
- 2 January 2016: **Firm listing** (→ survey instrument)
- 3 Feb-Apr 2016: **Baseline** survey
- 4 Oct-Nov 2016: **Interventions**
- 5 Apr-May 2017: **Midline** survey
- 6 Apr-May 2018: **Endline** survey

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# Typical Business in the Sample



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# Typical Business in the Sample



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# Best-practices Handbook



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## Why you should try these best practices in your shop

*Evidence from a large-scale study  
on Jakarta-based retailers*



### RECORD-KEEPING

Shop owners who keep business records report 28% higher monthly sales and 26% higher monthly profits than those who do not keep business records.

Shop owners who track their customers' debts report 40% higher monthly sales and 36% higher monthly profits than those who do not track their customers' debts.



### STOCK-UP SCHEDULING

Shops that maintain stock-up schedules earn 26% more in monthly sales and 25% more in profits than those that do not maintain stock-up schedules of their primary products.

Shops that stock up daily rather than weekly earn 48% more in monthly sales and 37% more in monthly profits.

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# Handbook Content



## A step-by-step guide to record-keeping

### Step 1: Separating household and business finances

The best way to start keeping records is by establishing a clear separation between your personal and business finances. We do not mean this in the strictest sense of keeping your business cash away from your personal life completely, rather we advise you to not lose sight of your cash flow.

The most convenient and effective way to separate your personal and business finances is by **physically separating the funds into two different cash boxes, purses, or drawers. Label them clearly**; use one compartment for business purposes and another for personal.

Use only your business compartment to follow this handbook from this point forward. Make sure that money in your business compartment is used only for business purposes. Be meticulous about it - this is the first step to get your finances organized!

There is an activity at the end of this section that requires an additional compartment. If you have one more cash box, purse, or drawer available, please reserve it for this activity (**record-keeping, extra step**).

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# Movie with Successful Peers



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# Implementation Assistance for Business Practices



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# Summary Statistics

	Control	HB only	HB & MOV	HB & HELP	F
	N = 261	N = 260	N = 260	N = 260	
<b>Firm Owner Characteristics</b>					
Gender (Male=1)	0.28	0.3	0.29	0.3	
Age	45.22	45.27	45.28	45.16	
Education (Years)	9.1	9.52	9.36	9.42	
Risk Preference (0 - 10 "Perfectly Risk-Seeking")	3.74	3.76	3.88	3.6	
Time Preference (0 - 10 "Perfect Patience")	5.19	5.07	5.21	5.25	
<b>Firm Characteristics</b>					
Firm Age (Years)	12.76	13.77	14.03	13.98	
Family Member Is Business Partner	0.56	0.6	0.63	0.59	
Total Number of Workers	2.03	2.05	1.9	1.99	
Business Has Tax ID	0.2	0.21	0.2	0.15	
Total Sales Last Month (USD PPP)	4454.37	4730.64	4840.55	4761.4	
Total Profits Last Month (USD PPP)	889.58	961.1	926.78	825.25	
Applied for Bus Loan in Last 12 Months	0.2	0.17	0.15	0.22	
Obtained Bus Loan in Last 12 Months	0.18	0.15	0.14	0.18	



# Movie: Take Up and Assessment

	(1)	(2)
	HB & MOV	HB & MOV & HELP
	(A)	(B)
	N=260	N=260
Attendance		
Business Owner or Partner Attended Film Screening	0.52	0.49
Evaluation (1-4 Scale):		
Has Learned Something New	3.34	3.21
Feels Inspired	3.31	3.30
Feels Hopeful	3.60	3.42
Feels Bored	0.83	0.97

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# Assistance: Take Up and Assessment

	(1)	(2)
	HB & HELP	HB & MOV, & HELP
	(A)	(B)
	N=260	N=260

## Attendance

Business Owner or Partner Attended 1st Session	0.77	0.78
Business Owner or Partner Attended 2nd Session	0.68	0.68

## Evaluation (1-4 Scale)

Has Learned Something New	2.88	2.89
Feels Inspired	2.76	2.83
Feels Hopeful	2.88	2.97
Feels Bored	0.59	0.43

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# Impact on Business Practices

## Aggregate Scores

	Record Keeping (1)	Planning (2)	Stocking-up (3)	Marketing (4)
Assigned Handbook	0.025 (0.209)	0.027 (0.273)	-0.007 (0.694)	-0.011 (0.694)
Assigned Handbook & Movie	0.057*** (0.009)	0.043 (0.107)	0.038 (0.117)	0.040 (0.166)
Assigned Handbook & Assistance	0.065*** (0.004)	0.034 (0.166)	0.011 (0.664)	0.039 (0.166)
Assigned All Three	0.054*** (0.009)	0.068*** (0.009)	0.053** (0.020)	0.061** (0.032)
R-squared	0.204	0.192	0.187	0.150
Sample Size	2205	2204	2205	2205
Dependent Variable Mean of Control	0.196	0.402	0.471	0.250
Dependent Variable SD of Control	0.252	0.310	0.270	0.320
F-tests (p-value):				
Book = Book & Mov	0.069	0.487	0.014	0.028
Book = Book & Assistance	0.025	0.754	0.304	0.030
Book = All Three	0.096	0.073	0.001	0.002

# Business Profits

	Profits last month (win 5%) (1)	Profits last month (IHS) (2)
Assigned Handbook	-91.307 (78.400)	-0.067 (0.088)
Assigned Handbook & Movie	110.378 (86.841)	0.055 (0.092)
Assigned Handbook & Assistance	310.455*** (89.488)	0.261*** (0.096)
Assigned All Three	191.088** (84.662)	0.199** (0.094)
R-squared	0.179	0.211

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# Business Sales

	ITT Sales last month (win 5%) (1)	TOT Sales last month (win 5%) (2)
Assigned Handbook	-396.976 (314.252)	-417.198 -417.198
Assigned Handbook & Movie	335.489 (337.881)	601.221 (606.634)
Assigned Handbook & Assistance	836.755** (372.924)	1031.692** (457.015)
Assigned All Three	807.462** (358.384)	1558.326** (696.317)

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# Other Outcomes

- No significant impacts on:
  - Business expenses
  - Size of the shop
  - Number of employees
  - Number of customers
  - Business credit

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# Efficiency Gains?

Unpacking impacts on business practices → **efficiency practices**:

- Adjust stocks based on product profitability
- Negotiate lower prices with suppliers
- Consult with former customers
- Offer discounts
- Make joint decisions
- Review performance to identify ways to improve
- Make anticipated budget for upcoming costs

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→ **Non-record-keeping practices**

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→ **Non-record-keeping practices**

→ Causal-mediation analysis: **Stocking up and marketing practices** drive performance effects

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- Review performance to identify ways to improve
- Make anticipated budget for upcoming costs

→ **Non-record-keeping practices**

→ Causal-mediation analysis: **Stocking up and marketing practices** drive performance effects

→ Variance in profits among treated firms does not converge

→ **Efficiency gains**

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# Knowledge or Aspirations?

- Our interventions could have increased business performance and practice adoption through an increase in business aspirations rather than (or on top of) business knowledge.
- We directly measure business aspirations at baseline, midline, and endline for all shop owners in the sample.
- We elicit short (one year) and long-term (ideal) aspirations on various business dimensions:
  - sales
  - shop size
  - number of customers
  - number of employees
- No treatment effects on aspirations

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# Business Stealing?

Do treated businesses improve performance at the expense of the control?

- Sales and profits of **control businesses do not decrease** from baseline to endline (roughly equal)
- Sales and profits of control businesses **closer to treated shops do not decrease by more** than those further away
  - **No evidence for business stealing**

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# Cost-Effectiveness

## Small costs (per firm):

- Cost Handbook alone: USD 100
- Cost Handbook & Movie: USD 125
- Cost Handbook & Assistance: USD 125
- Cost Handbook & Movie & Assistance: USD 150

## Substantial Benefits

- Up to USD 330 per month in profits
- Adoption of top practices by retailers

Research design likely **scalable and portable**

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# Takeaways

- Curating local knowledge has value for business growth
- Information alone does not have impact, only combined with behavioral interventions
- Mechanism likely knowledge-based, not aspirations-based
- Behavioral interventions are inexpensive and scalable  
→ Attractive for policy!

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