

State, Market, and Women's Business: Some Field Evidences from Kerala

ISED Discussion Paper



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ISED Small Enterprise Observatory

jointly with

ISED Centre for Enterprise Development

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PREFACE

While the state of Kerala has a longer history of integration of gender issues in the development agenda, as also of gender budgeting, the experience of the State in the subject area is likely to be critical in taking such a direction forward. What has been the experience of the State relating to entrepreneurship development among women? 1) What are the critical constraints? 2) What is the way forward? Answers to these questions need to be grounded on the live experience at the grassroots level.

This study is based on a large research initiative at the ISED, on the theoretical and methodological aspect of 'Gender and Enterprise', as an evolving constituency. The field evidences, forming the backbone of this research, come from the State of Kerala.

As this title come out as a joint output of the Observatory and the ISED Centre for Enterprise Development, the Institute wishes to thank, without fail, the pains and efforts of the authors, and all who have supported it through inputs and suggestions. ISED has taken best efforts to ensure the quality and reliability of this paper. However, for the findings and views, the authors alone are responsible.

Cochin
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P.M.Mathew
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ABSTRACT

While the state of Kerala has a longer history of integration of gender issues in the development agenda, as also of gender budgeting, the experience of the state in the subject area is likely to be critical in taking such discretions forward. What has been the experience of Kerala relating to entrepreneurship development among women. 1) What are the critical constraints? 2) What is the way forward? Answers to these questions need to be grounded on the live experience at the grassroots level.

KEY WORDS: State, market, gender, entrepreneurship, India, Kerala.

1.0. Introduction

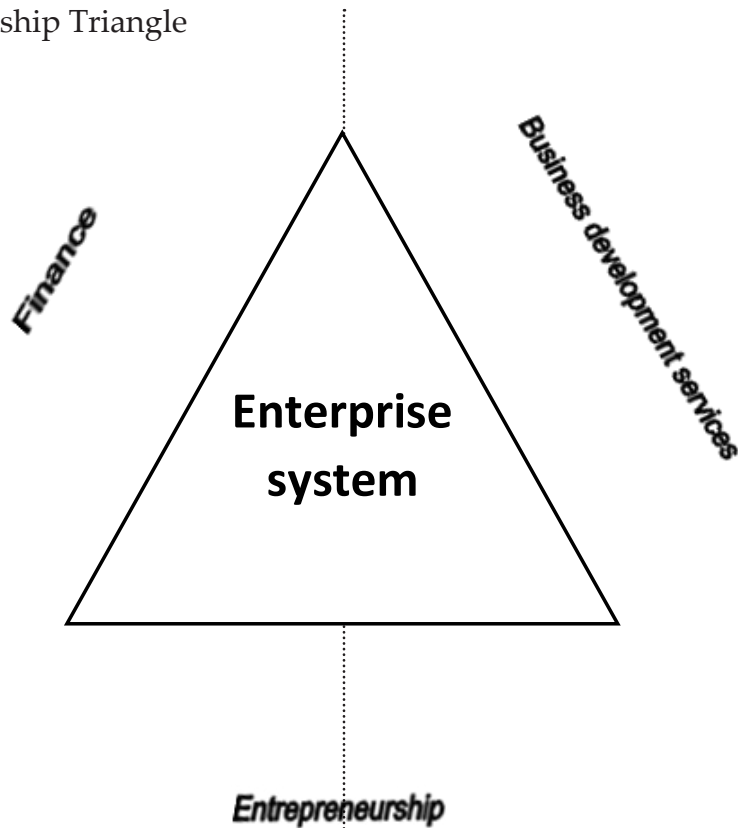
While women entrepreneurship development is a key area of policy priority, there are serious gaps in our evidence base. Such gaps arise due to two reasons: 1) Lack of appropriate and meaningful set of Key Performance Indicator (KPIs), on the basis of which, public programmes are developed and are evaluated at the mid-term and post project stages; and 2) limited understanding at the policy level, regarding the domain of entrepreneurship development, and of strategic approaches and best practices elsewhere. This poverty of strategy, in the context of Kerala, is reflected in the flood of studies on the subject area, but of doubtful use from the point of view of action for entrepreneurship development. For instance, entrepreneurship modelling and Business Development services are two critical and operationally useful areas where, studies are absolutely scarce. The key purpose of this research, therefore, is to put forth an agenda of a study, as to how to study women entrepreneurship. Hence, with all the constraints of data quality and availability, we need to link the various data sources. Our purpose, therefore, is to bring together the

various available evidences from the field, in the form of sample study, case studies, and peer level feedback.

2.0. Basic Model of an Enterprise System

In order to have an overall understanding of our subject of discussion, it is necessary to have some insights into what constitutes an enterprise system, and as to how it works. This can be explained in terms of a basic concept, i.e., the concept of an 'Enterprise Triangle'. The concept of an enterprise triangle need to be discussed at two levels: 1) conceptual level; and 2) operational level. At a conceptual level, the enterprise triangle involves, at its three sides, entrepreneurship, finance, and business development services, interacting and contributing to the process of enterprise creation and sustenance. If there is a gap in the free flow of any of these three variables, it is likely to affect the enterprise system adversely. Such adverse impact can be both at the firm level as well as at the industry level, as the firms constitute the industry, on the one hand, and the developments in the industry affect the firm, on the other.

Fig: 1-Entrepreneurship Triangle

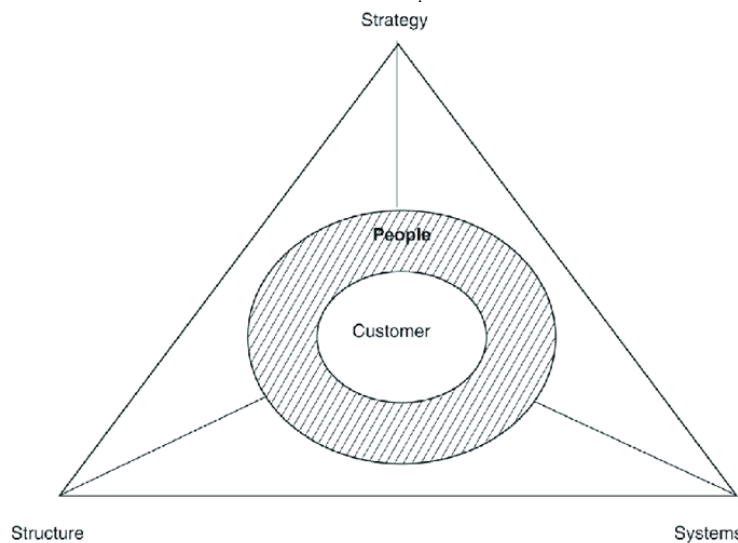


At the operational level, beyond economic variables, it is strategic factors that are critical in contributing to the growth or otherwise, of the enterprise system. Such an operational level model has been proposed by Sushil(2008). According to his concept of 'flexible entrepreneurship',

the enterprise is supposed to be highly adaptive, responsive and agile. The SSS (Strategy-Structure-Systems) framework is used as a basis to propose the concept of a 'flexible enterprise'. It provides a selective review of various aspects of flexibility in the enterprise. A flexible enterprise is

Fig: 2- Flexible Entrepreneurship Model

Sushil focuses on three strategic variables, i.e., Structure, Systems, and Strategy, the interplay of which shapes the market opportunities and customer base of an enterprise.



supposed to have flexibility at the levels of strategy, structure, systems and people. The various types of flexibility in an enterprise, such as strategic flexibility, organizational flexibility, human resource flexibility, marketing flexibility, financial

In the wake of globalization of business,

flexibility and information systems flexi-