



MSM-ESAMI RTA DBA Research Program

1. Introduction to the MSM-ESAMI RTA DBA Research Program

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the question how firms in emerging economies can be better integrated in the global economy (Altenburg, 2006; Levy, 2008). Such firms face the challenge to become internationally competitive, while they often lack the necessary resources to do so (Mesquita & Lazzarini, 2008). Hence, donor programs for private sector development increasingly focus on supporting local producers in different value chains by providing training and technical assistance, strengthening horizontal and vertical relations and subsidizing pilot-projects (DCED, 2007).

The value chain approach is particularly suited to examine the position of firms from emerging economies in the global economy (Bair, 2005). Value chains refer to “the full range of activities which are required to bring a product or service from conception, through production processes, transportation, storage, extension services, to the final consumer and final disposal after use” (Kaplinsky, 2000: 121). By engaging in more value-adding activities, both industries and individual firms can strengthen their position in the global and regional value chain (Gereffi, 1991; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2001) and become more competitive.

In the DBA research program within the Round Table Africa framework and developed in cooperation with ESAMI, we focus on the process of upgrading of different value chains in East African countries with the aim to contribute to their sustainable economic development. Hence, the overall research question of the DBA research program is formulated as follows: What interventions in value chains are desirable and feasible to enhance sustainable economic growth in East Africa? In order to answer this research question, the DBA program focuses on (1) Competitiveness & Value Chains and (2) Partnerships & Value Chains within the empirical settings of agriculture, mining and tourism.

1.1. Theme 1: Value Chains and Competitiveness

Enterprises in value chains are often concentrated in clusters and each cluster has its own level of development and dynamics (Sverrisson & van Dijk, 2003). Similarly, value chains can be emerging, stagnant or dynamic and for each of these stages it is possible to not intervene and leave the developments to the market or to develop a value chain upgrading strategy (Guilani et al., 2005). If such a strategy is developed it is important to address the focal organization responsible for the upgrading strategy: an association of entrepreneurs, a local enterprise support institution or local government agencies (Altenburg, 2006). In the DBA research program, we are interested in the interface between clusters and value chains and how it affects value chain competitiveness (Van Dijk, 2006).

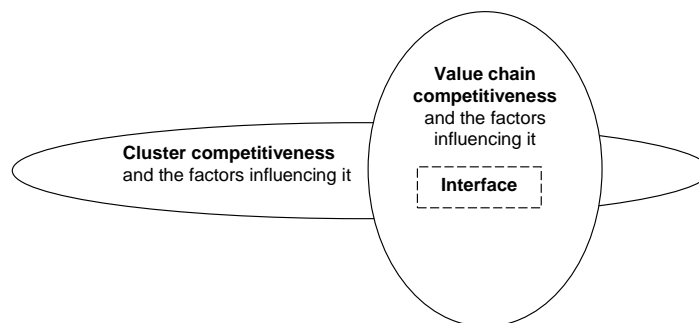


Figure 1: Visualization research theme 1



1.2. Theme 2: Value Chains and Partnerships

Primary producers and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) face a multitude of constraints that prevent them from benefitting from local and foreign market opportunities. Apart from adverse climate conditions, limitations in infrastructure, and health and education issues, market oriented activities are hampered by the lack of an appropriate institutional business environment. Especially the rural poor often have no proper access to, for instance, credit, technology, or land titles, while their market prospects are insecure (Markelova et al., 2009; Poulton et al., 2006).

Partnerships for value chain development (hereafter: value chain partnerships) are increasingly considered to be useful vehicles to tackle these limitations, evidenced in the active promotion of particularly bi-partite partnerships between companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Partnerships are defined as voluntary and collaborative arrangements between actors from two or more societal sectors that have an institutionalized, yet non-hierarchic structure, and strive for a sustainability goal (Glasbergen et al., 2007). The synergy derived from partnership cooperation can overcome failures resulting from unilateral action by actors confined within one of the societal sectors (Kolk et al., 2008). By addressing the institutional business environment, partnerships can play a pivotal role in enhancing the chances for primary producers and SMEs to turn themselves into viable suppliers of local or global value chains (Bitzer et al., 2010) in support of sustainable, local economic development. In the DBA Research program, we are interested in the role of partnerships in upgrading value chains.

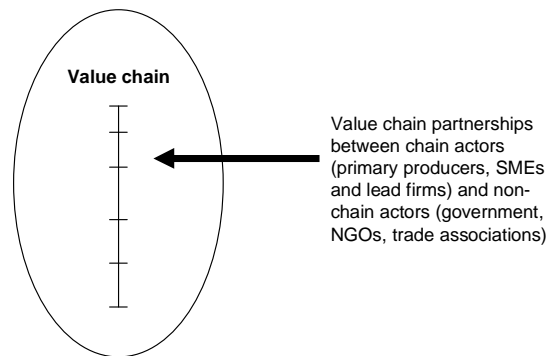


Figure 2: Visualization research theme 2

2. Overview of the 4-year DBA Research Program

Year	Description	Output
1	Education, literature study and research proposal	Research proposal
2	Description of research setting (thesis chapter on value chain under study), refinement of theory and methodology (final thesis chapters) and data collection	Stakeholder Meeting I to identify major issues in value chain & establish interest in research among stakeholders
3	Data analysis	Submission of conference paper based on preliminary findings
4	Conclusions & Design of upgrading options (including feasibility assessment and writing of advice)	Stakeholder Meeting II to present research findings (validation) & discuss recommendations (implementation of projects). Defense of thesis



2.1. First Year Course Work of DBA Research Program

The first year of the DBA program is structured along four modules. These modules are set up as 10-day courses and help the DBA students to structure their proposal writing process. The meetings will be organized by different supervisors, thereby also enhancing regular exchange of ideas and knowledge among these professors.

Module 1	Description
Research Question Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part 1: Introduction to Value Chain Analysis, Competitiveness and Partnerships. - Part 2: How to conduct a literature review and identify the gap in the literature? What constitutes a sound research question? <p>A reader with key articles will be provided. All students have to read the articles on value chain analysis a la Gereffi & Kaplinsky as these have a broad value chain (governance) perspective. Depending on their interest, students also include the articles on Competitiveness or Partnerships in their literature review.</p> <p>Output: First draft Theoretical Framework (Chapter 2 MPhil) and Research Question (Chapter 1 MPhil)</p>
Module 2	Description
Introduction to Research Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part 1: Introduction to research approaches and research designs - Part 2: Proposal writing <p>A reader with key methodological articles will be provided. Also research methods text books will be provided.</p> <p>Output: First draft of Research Setting (thus requiring initial data collection in mid January), Research Approach & List of core concepts (Chapter 3 MPhil)</p>
Module 3	Description
Quantitative & Qualitative Research Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part 1: Conceptual model & Operationalization of concepts - Part 2: Data sources & data collection & Measurement tools (questionnaires / interview topic lists) <p>Using methodology text books, the most common research designs found in VCA will be presented and discussed. Based on student's initial research designs, sub-groups will be formed to gain an in-depth understanding of particular topics within these designs (for instance, a parallel workshop will be organized on surveys with 'best' and 'worst' practice examples and one on interviewing).</p> <p>Output: First draft of Research Design (Methods Chapter in MPhil)</p>



Module 4	Description
Quantitative & Qualitative Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part 1: Introduction to data-analysis (SPSS & Coding of texts and talks) - Part 2: Work on MPhil thesis within the thesis group (Competitiveness or Partnerships) & individual feedback sessions <p>In this model, students will exercise with the use of SPSS and coding of texts and talks. Only by actually working with materials, students will gain an understanding how qualitative and quantitative research techniques look like. We will use an existing data base to practice with the SPSS program and statistical techniques. Students further need to bring their first interview transcripts/policy documents to class in order to practice the coding of texts. By the end of this module, students have a sound understanding of research methods and are able to finalize their research proposals.</p>

Date	MPhil Defense
February 1 st / August 1 st	Submission of MPhil thesis
June/ December	MPhil defense

2.2. Other Course Work during DBA Research Program

Year	Description
2	Writing an article for publication Output: Submission abstract for conference & outline paper
2	Together with supervisor work on conference paper & presentation Participation in conference (& meet supervisor there)
3	Refresher Course Research Methods (focus on data-analysis only)
3	Submission Journal Article (based on conference paper and final data-analysis)
4	Supervisor Meeting on Findings
4	Regional Stakeholder Meeting