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An Effective Learning and Development (L&D) Model for Meatball Culinary Entrepreneurs in Malang: A Practical, Community-Based, And Periodic Approach through Peer Learning and Mentoring

Sinollah[1], Sopiah[2], Ludi Wishnu Wardhana[3]

[1] Doctoral Programme in Management Science, State University of Malang, Indonesia
[2,3] Faculty of Economics and Business, State University of Malang, Indonesia

*Coresponding Author: sinollah.2404139@students.um.ac.id

Abstract

An effective Learning and Development (L&D) model has a crucial role in increasing the capacity of small-scale culinary entrepreneurs in Indonesia, including meatball business actors in Malang. This article aims to explore a practical, community-based, and periodically conducted L&D model, with peer learning and mentoring approaches as the primary methods of capacity building. This study uses a conceptual-qualitative approach based on the latest scientific literature and local case studies to identify adaptive and relevant strategies. The results of the analysis show that practical approaches that prioritize hands-on experience, community learning, and continuous training cycles can improve technical skills and entrepreneurial adaptation to market dynamics. Peer learning has been proven to strengthen the horizontal learning process between business actors, while mentoring plays a role in providing long-term strategic direction. This article concludes that the integration of these five components is the foundation of a contextual, applicative, and real-world L&D model in improving the competitiveness of culinary MSMEs in the digital era.

Keywords: Learning and Development, peer learning, mentoring, meatball entrepreneurship, community, MSMEs, Malang.

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INTRODUCTION

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary sector play an important role in local economic development in Indonesia. Malang City, as one of the cities of education and tourism, has great potential in the development of culinary entrepreneurship, especially meatballs which have become local culinary icons. However, many business actors in this sector face challenges in terms of product innovation, digital marketing, and sustainable business management (Setyaningrum, 2021). To answer these challenges, a capacity development approach that is appropriate, contextual, and easy to implement by business actors is needed.

Learning and Development (L&D) is a systematic process of improving individual competencies, knowledge, and skills in the context of work (Noe, Clarke, & Klein, 2014). In the context of culinary entrepreneurship, especially community-based ones such as the meatball seller association in Malang, an effective L&D model must pay attention to local social and cultural characteristics. This model should ideally be practical (direct practice), community-based (communal and collaborative), and carried out periodically (sustainable and gradual), so that it is in accordance with the needs and capabilities of micro and small business actors (Lai, Pratt, Anderson, & Stigter, 2020).

Furthermore, two approaches that are considered very suitable and effective in the context of MSMEs are peer learning and mentoring. Peer learning allows business actors to learn from fellow business partners through best practices, experience sharing, and open discussions (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2014). Meanwhile, mentoring provides direct guidance from more experienced parties, such as senior entrepreneurs or academics, who can provide strategic direction and ongoing mentoring (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2013).

Against this background, this article aims to outline and examine an effective L&D model for meatball culinary entrepreneurs in Malang with a practical, community, and periodic approach, as well as the integration of peer learning and mentoring methods. In addition to referring to the latest academic literature, this study also raises concrete examples from local practices in Malang City as an illustration of the success and challenges of implementing this model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning and Development (L&D)

Learning and Development (L&D) is a systematic process in an organization to improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of human resources in order to adapt to

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changing environaments and achieve strategic goals (Noe et al., 2014). In the context of entrepreneurship, L&D does not only focus on formal training, but also includes experiential learning, social learning, and entrepreneurial character development (Garavan, McGuire, & O'Donnell, 2004). According to Swanson and Holton (2009), effective L&D is one that is able to integrate the needs of individuals and organizations through a flexible and sustainable approach.

Practical L&D in the Context of Culinary Entrepreneurship

The practical approach in L&D emphasizes learning activities that are directly applied in daily business activities, such as cooking training, simple financial management, or the use of social media for promotion. Research by Nabi, Liñán, Fayolle, Krueger, and Walmsley (2017) shows that an applicative L&D approach is more easily accepted by MSME actors because it is in accordance with real needs in the field and does not require complex theoretical understanding. This practice-based training also increases the confidence and independence of business actors in managing their business.

Community Approach in L&D

The learning community is an important forum in supporting the growth of micro and small business actors. According to Wenger (1998), communities of practice are social groups that are naturally formed based on shared interests and goals, which allow for informal exchange of knowledge and experience. In a study by Lai et al. (2020), the business community proved to be a strategic place for collaborative learning that strengthens solidarity, innovation, and business sustainability. The community approach in L&D also enhances a sense of belonging and commitment to the learning process.

Periodic and Sustainable L&D

The effectiveness of L&D is also determined by its periodic continuity. Learning that is carried out in a repetitive and structured manner over the long term results in more consistent capability improvement than one-time training (Camps & Luna-Arocas, 2012). The periodization of L&D is important to update knowledge and respond to rapidly changing market dynamics, especially in the culinary sector which is heavily influenced by consumer and technological trends (Martin & Sunley, 2015). Therefore, a periodic approach ensures that business actors are always in a state of readiness to adapt to change.

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Peer Learning in the Context of MSMEs

Peer learning is a method in which individuals learn from and together with peers through dialogue, observation, and shared experiences (Boud et al., 2014). In the context of MSMEs, especially culinary entrepreneurs, peer learning is an effective means to share best practices, solve problems together, and increase the confidence of business actors (Tynjälä, 2008). In addition, this approach creates a horizontal learning environment that reduces psychological barriers and increases the active involvement of business actors.

Mentoring as a Capacity Building Strategy

Mentoring in the context of entrepreneurship is defined as a relationship between a novice entrepreneur and a more experienced mentor to accompany the business development process. According to Eby et al. (2013), mentoring has a positive impact on decision-making, managerial skill development, and business success. A study by Cull (2006) shows that mentoring programs for micro-entrepreneurs can improve business sustainability and prevent business failure in the early years. The combination of formal and informal mentoring provides flexibility and depth in learning that other methods do not have.

METHOD

This article was prepared using a conceptual-qualitative approach based on systematic literature review which focuses on studies on the Learning and Development (L&D) model, peer learning, mentoring, and capacity building of micro and small entrepreneurs in the culinary sector. This approach was chosen because it is in line with the goal of formulating a relevant and contextual conceptual model of L&D in the development of meatball culinary entrepreneurship in Malang.

The main data sources in this study include scientific articles published in reputable journals (Scopus and Web of Science), MSME policy research reports, and academic publications published in the last five years (2018–2023), with the exception of some seminal works such as the concept of communities of practice by Wenger (1998). The literature search process is carried out through databases such as ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar, with the keywords "learning and development", "peer learning", "mentoring", "small business", "culinary entrepreneur", and "community-based learning".

The analysis was carried out by grouping important findings from the literature into main themes, namely: (1) practical L&D models; (2) Community-based L&D; (3) periodic

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approach; (4) peer learning; and (5) mentoring. The results of this synthesis were then analyzed descriptively and contextualized into the case of meatball culinary entrepreneurship in Malang.

According to Snyder (2019), the conceptual literature review approach is important to use in emerging fields of study or when cross-disciplinary theoretical integration is needed to formulate a new framework. Therefore, this approach is suitable to answer the need for an L&D model that is applicable and responsive to the reality of MSMEs in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Practical L&D Model: The Real Needs of Culinary Entrepreneurs

Meatball business actors in Malang generally come from a non-formal educational background with business experience that relies more on intuition than modern management theory. Therefore, the practical L&D model—which emphasizes the direct application of skills in the workplace—is much more effective than theory-based or lecture-based training (Nabi et al., 2017). For example, a training program on the packaging of hygienic and attractive meatball products with hands-on practice results in a significant change in product appeal and increased sales.

In a study by the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2021), hands-on training such as digital marketing practices or simple bookkeeping simulations showed better results than classroom-based training. This shows that L&D must be developed with an orientation to real needs in the field, for example training on making contemporary meatball menu variants, calculating the cost of goods sold (COGS), and the introduction of digital payment technology.

This kind of practice is in line with the experiential learning principle of Kolb (1984), which emphasizes the importance of learning through concrete, actively reflected experiences. Thus, a practical L&D model not only improves technical skills, but also encourages a process of reflection and continuous learning among business actors.

Community-Based L&D: Empowering Collective Learning

One of the keys to the success of micro business development such as meatballs in Malang is active involvement in the business community. This community is a space to share experiences, discuss common challenges, and inspire each other among fellow business actors. The concept of communities of practice from Wenger (1998) emphasizes the importance of learning that lies in everyday social practice, not just in the classroom.

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In the context of the meatball business, the community of meatball traders who often meet for informal discussions has proven to be an effective means of exchanging information, for example about raw material price trends or menu variant innovations.

Research by Lai et al. (2020) shows that community-based learning models encourage the creation of a collaborative atmosphere, strengthen member engagement, and create a social support system that accelerates business growth. In Malang, for example, the Culinary MSME Community of Lowokwaru District routinely holds monthly meetings that serve as a forum for micro-training and discussion of operational issues, such as business license management or seasonal marketing strategies.

Community-based L&D not only strengthens solidarity, but also creates a network of businesses that expand the market through collaboration, such as cross-outlet promos or the procurement of collective raw materials to reduce prices. This shows that learning in the community is contextual, dynamic, and able to respond directly to the specific needs of business actors.

Periodic and Sustainable L&D: Driving Innovative Adaptation

The sustainability of L&D programs is critical in the fast-changing world of culinary business. The one-time training model tends not to be imprinted for a long time and is less able to form new behavior patterns in business management. Camps and Luna-Arocas (2012) emphasized that business capability development must be cumulative and repetitive in order to form long-term competencies.

A concrete example in Malang is a phased training program facilitated by the Cooperatives and SMEs Office (2022), where basic entrepreneurship training is provided first (for example, microfinance management), then gradually continued with advanced modules such as digital marketing or branding of local culinary products. The program lasts for six months with biweekly meetings, allowing participants to implement the material gradually and get direct feedback from facilitators and peers.

A longitudinal study by Martin and Sunley (2015) suggests that repetitive learning in L&D encourages gradual innovation and dynamic adaptation to market changes, especially in labor-intensive sectors such as culinary. The periodic approach also helps business actors form a pattern of self-evaluation and consistent reflection on the development of their business.

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Peer Learning and Mentoring: Strengthening Competencies Horizontally and Vertically

In the context of meatball culinary entrepreneurship, the peer learning approach has proven to be very effective because of its egalitarian and experience-based nature. Boud et al. (2014) state that peer learning allows individuals to learn from each other in a supportive atmosphere, with a more contextual and relevant exchange of real-life experiences. In Malang, this practice is often found in informal activities, such as casual discussions between meatball cart owners in strategic locations during break hours. They exchange tips on managing raw materials, overcoming customer complaints, or strategies for maintaining taste quality.

In addition, mentoring programs also have a significant impact on assisting start-up business actors. Eby et al. (2013) said that mentoring provides benefits in the form of emotional support, knowledge transfer, and long-term strategic guidance. An example is the "Mentor Bakso Malang Hebat" program, a local initiative that brings together senior meatball entrepreneurs with new business actors. The mentors guide the fostered partners directly, starting from the selection of business locations, techniques for making distinctive meatball sauce, to strategies to build customer loyalty.

The combination of peer learning and mentoring creates a holistic learning model—horizontal and vertical—that builds technical skills while increasing business resilience in the face of competition.

Practical Implications

Based on these findings, there are several important implications:

- For Regional Governments: It is necessary to design a community-based culinary MSME development program that is periodic and applicative, involving senior business mentors and local facilitators.
- For Training Institutions or Business Incubators: Must adapt the training curriculum to the specific needs of meatball business actors, use demonstrative and simulative methods, and encourage collaboration across business actors.
- For the Culinary MSME Community: It is recommended to strengthen the peer learning system through regular forums, online discussion groups, or tandem mentorship programs between old and new actors.
- For Researchers: Further studies can be directed to longitudinal evaluation of the impact of this L&D model on revenue growth, product innovation, and business sustainability.

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Through a structured yet flexible L&D strategy, meatball entrepreneurs in Malang can not only increase their business capacity, but also contribute to the growth of the local economy in an inclusive and sustainable manner.

CONCLUSION

The effective Learning and Development (L&D) model for meatball culinary entrepreneurs in Malang is a model that prioritizes practicality, community-based, and is carried out periodically. This approach has proven to be more acceptable to micro business actors because it suits their daily context, both in terms of time, resources, and experience. Practical learning allows business actors to directly apply new skills in daily operations, which accelerates the process of adoption and the formation of new habits (Kolb, 1984; Nabi et al., 2017). When L&D is done within a community framework, the learning process becomes more contextual, collaborative, and mutually reinforcing (Wenger, 1998; Lai et al., 2020). In addition, sustainability and periodization of training are crucial to ensure that competency development takes place gradually and accumulatively (Camps & Luna-Arocas, 2012). Peer learning and mentoring approaches have proven to be effective because they create horizontal and vertical learning spaces that build skills, reflection, and resilience of efforts (Boud et al., 2014; Eby et al., 2013). The combination of these elements creates an empowering and adaptive learning ecosystem, especially in the face of market challenges and technological dynamics in the culinary world.

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