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Capacity building modules for public libraries to support small-scale business enterprises in Meru County, Kenya

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The lack of well-structured capacity building programmes is a serious drawback to the effective development of small-scale business enterprises (SBEs) in Kenya. Public libraries as community information centers can collaborate with other stakeholders in facilitating the required skills. This study investigated the training needs of SBE traders and public library staff with the aim of proposing capacity building modules that can be considered by public libraries in Meru County, Kenya in their endeavor to support the SBEs. In implementing the study, a mixed methods approach was used and the survey research design adopted. Cluster and systematic sampling techniques were used in getting 355 SBE traders while census was used on twenty-one library staff and on two staff from Meru County government. Interviews and questionnaires were used to collect the required data. The response rate was 83.4% and 95% for SBE traders and public library staff respectively. Descriptive statistics and thematic techniques were used to analyse the data. We used the findings of this study and the scholarly insights from previous studies to propose two sets of capacity building modules: for SBE traders and for the public library staff. The training areas comprise business information literacy, technology competency, and nature of information in the business domain. We recommend the adoption of the proposed modules in public libraries in Kenya in elevating support and value contribution in the development of the small business community. We further recommend a training policy for SBEs and the recruitment of experienced, skilled and knowledgeable business librarians.

Keywords: Capacity building programmes, business training programmes, public libraries, SBE training, user education programme