

COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN
GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship training syllabus for Polytechnics in Ghana has remained the same in content and delivery for decades. This syllabus has been described as theoretic and white collar job oriented. This study examined the effect of Competence-Based Approach to entrepreneurship education on the acquisition of relevant entrepreneurial skills. The study employed questionnaires and interviews to collect data and used percentages and graphs for the analysis. The results of the study revealed that competency based entrepreneurial education gives self-confidence and optimism to start a business, increases the desire to take risks and the willingness to accept change. The study thus recommends that Competency-Based Approaches to entrepreneurship education is a path to achieving the desired goals of creating jobs through entrepreneurship training.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship education, Entrepreneurial skills, Competencies*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship education is important towards enhancing development because entrepreneurship education equips students with the relevant skills to start and operate businesses. According to Stokes and Wilson (2006), entrepreneurship is both learned and developed. Its core activities are innovation and creativity. They noted further that it is not limited to special individuals with certain personality traits because it is the combination of personality, environment, experience, acquired attitude and learning on the competitive behaviors required by entrepreneurs to drive the market process. However, youth and graduates from tertiary institutions are not equipped with the skills with which to exploit the natural resources available (Arogundade, 2011). This is because the entrepreneurship education programme is bookish, theoretic and 'white color jobs in nature (Ajodela, 2006).

The concept of competencies is attributable to McClelland in (1973) who probably was seen as the initiator of the competency movement. The importance of competencies was extracted from Behavioural Event Interviews in general and specifically in the field of entrepreneurship (McClelland, 1987). The concept of competence has been applied to selecting and recruiting employees in the field of business. But from an educational perspective, it is concerned with the development of individual level competencies (Bird, 2005). With competency based learning, the students are entrepreneurially literate and learn for entrepreneurship and not learn about entrepreneurship.

Being entrepreneurially competent does not only refer to the know-how to write a business plan, but it also implies recognizing and acting on opportunities, taking initiative and action, for instance by convincing investors to invest money in a project, and relate to potential suppliers and buyers. It implies that the competent entrepreneur is actually able to identify and further exploit an opportunity within a specific context, including its management and evaluation in the long run. Moreover, entrepreneurial competencies are put into practice and further developed by learning through experience, for instance through reflection on critical incidents (Cope and Watts, 2000).

The main objective of this paper is to examine the role of competency-based training (CBT) on the teaching of entrepreneurship. Specifically, the objective of this paper is to examine the effects of Competence-Based Approach on the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills.

The paper is divided into five sections. Section one is the introduction. Section two is review of literature. Section three presents a conceptual framework and methodology. A discussion and summary of findings is presented in section four. Finally, section five provides a conclusion and recommendation of the study.

Literature Review

In contemporary entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship may be viewed from three different angles, namely as a matter of culture or state of mind, as a matter of behaviour, or as a matter of creating specific situations (Fayolle and Klandt, 2006). As noted by Gibb (2002) and Honig (2004), the focus of entrepreneurship education in the past was on venture creation. However, it is argued that the real challenge for entrepreneurship education lies within the development of learning for entrepreneurship, rather than learning about entrepreneurship.

Interpretation of competence in entrepreneurship education stresses the interrelatedness of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Fiet, 2001; Hayton and Kelley, 2006; Man, 2006; Markman, 2007). According to Sandberg (2000), competency-based entrepreneurship education acknowledges the importance of the work context. In her conceptual model of entrepreneurial competency, Bird (1995) viewed competence from a learning perspective. She asserted further that developing a model for entrepreneurial competence without considering the fact that these competencies should be learnable is not useful.

Furthermore, entrepreneurial competencies are put into practice and developed by learning through experience, reflection on critical incidents alongside experimentation or observation (Cope and Watts, 2000; Mulder et al., 2007). In higher and vocational education, competence serves as a powerful theoretical construct for the development of learning environments and trajectories that aim at learning for entrepreneurship (Delamare le Deist and Winterton, 2005; Stoof et al., 2002; Wesselink et al., 2007).

Studies conducted on the contribution of entrepreneurship education indicate that it contributes significantly to risk taking attitudes, formation of new businesses and propensity to be self employed (Charney and Libecap, 2002; Garavan & O’Cinnelde, 1994). Competency based entrepreneurship education has a positive effect on the perceived feasibility of entrepreneurship, or on entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Alberti et al., 2005; Hytti, 2008, Lepoutre et al., 2010). According to Peterman & Kennedy (2003), positive entrepreneurship education impacts are stronger among students with a positive prior exposure to entrepreneur’s concrete experiences. Findings by several researchers have indicated that the best way to teach entrepreneurial skills is through student centred and active experiential and not just didactically as most other general subjects can be taught (Garavan & O’Cinnelde, 1994; Greene and Rice, 2002; Ferreira, 2011).

It is worth noting that the concept of competence still seems to be surrounded by confusion and ambiguity (Mansfield, 2003) although several frameworks are being developed to combine current thinking on entrepreneurship and competencies (Collins *et al.*, 2006; Fuller-Love, 2006; Hayton and Kelley, 2006). This ambiguity is caused by the different components of competence, different levels of analysis and the different cultural/historical contexts. Defining competencies, have been classified as broad personal characteristics necessary for superior behavior. Two perspectives have been identified in attempts at describing and formulating competence. They are the behavioural approach to competence (worker oriented) and the functional approach to competence (work oriented) (Sandberg, 2000; Delamare Le Deist and Winterton, 2005; Bolden and Gosling, 2006).

A stream of thought on competence, according to Cheetham and Chivers (1996) which is less known in entrepreneurship research, can be traced back to the UK, where competencies were embraced by the national government for Vocational Education and Training (VET) leading to the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) framework. They asserted that in this framework, competencies were viewed as job-specific outcomes and operationalised through functional-analysis. Subsequently, performance criteria were defined which form the basis of assessments, with range indicators provided for guidance (Delamare Le Deist and Winterton, 2005).

Marques and Albuquerque (2012) in their study found that an appropriate methodology for teaching Entrepreneurship should be practical, active, dynamic and social oriented. They noted that the “learning by doing” methodology has a positive impact on the youth skills development. Further, they opined that life competencies such as self-confidence, different thinking, planning, opportunity seizing, relational skills, know-how, responsibility and teamwork capacities were required in addition to business skills. Additional results indicated that practical and dynamic methodologies give young people a new perspective on learning and future life, since they learn useful skills and competencies for the future.

Methodology

The target population for the study was 276 students. This comprised the 2011 academic year final students of Wa Polytechnic. The departments involved were Secretaryship and Management Studies, Building and Technology, Mechanical Engineering, Accountancy Studies and Agricultural Engineering. The remaining are Information and Communication Technology, Civil Engineering and Estate Management. Entrepreneurship training was organized for these final year students. Out of the 276 students, 147 students participated in the training. The questionnaires were administered to all the final year students. Responses for those who participated and those who did not participate were considered for the analysis. Graphs and percentages were employed.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

A total of 276 (83%) respondents are males with 48 (17%) being females. Majority (96%) belong to the age group of 18-35 with the least age group of 36-45 (4%). Respondents belong to three religious groups (Christianity, Islam and Traditional) with the highest being Islam (51%) slightly followed by Christianity (44%). The least represented the Traditional with (5%). This is shown in Figure 1.

Entrepreneurial Competencies Acquired

Out of a total of 276 final year students, 147 respondents participated in a training to equip them with entrepreneurial skills. Respondents agreed or disagreed to the extent to which they acquired important entrepreneurial characteristics mostly found in successful entrepreneurs. Also, for competencies acquired, some answered in the affirmative, others otherwise. Out of 147 respondents who took part in the training, respondents showed the level of competency acquired to the statement that they have self-confidence and optimism to start a business. Majority (61%) responded that they strongly agreed. (29%) of respondents agreed, (2%) strongly disagreed, (3%) disagreed and (5%) said they were not sure. Out of the 129 respondents who did not participate in the training, (2%) strongly agreed to the statement, (5%) disagreed, (40%) strongly disagreed, (37%) disagreed and (16%) said they were not sure. (89%) out of those who participated strongly

agreed to the statement that they are determined and goal-oriented to start and run a business. (6%) agreed, (3) strongly disagreed, no one (0%), disagreed and (2%) were not sure.

Respondents who did not participated in the training constituted 129 and out of that, (2%) strongly agreed, (5%) agreed, (53%) strongly disagreed, (39%) disagreed and (0.8%) respondent was not sure. Those who participated (84%) strongly agreed to the attribute that they were eager to learn, (9%) agreed, (1%) strongly disagreed and (2%) disagreed and (3%) said they were not sure. Out of 129 non participated respondents, (35%) strongly disagreed to the statement that they were eager to learn, (38%) disagreed, (5%) strongly disagreed, (9%) disagreed and (13%) responded they were not sure. Participated respondents who responded ‘yes’ to the statement that they were ready to take loans from financial institutions represented (89%) and (11%) responded ‘no’ to the statement. Majority (91%) of non participated respondents responded ‘no’ to the statement and (9%) responded ‘yes’. Figure 2 below shows the competency levels of respondents.

Figure 1: Demographic Profile of the Study

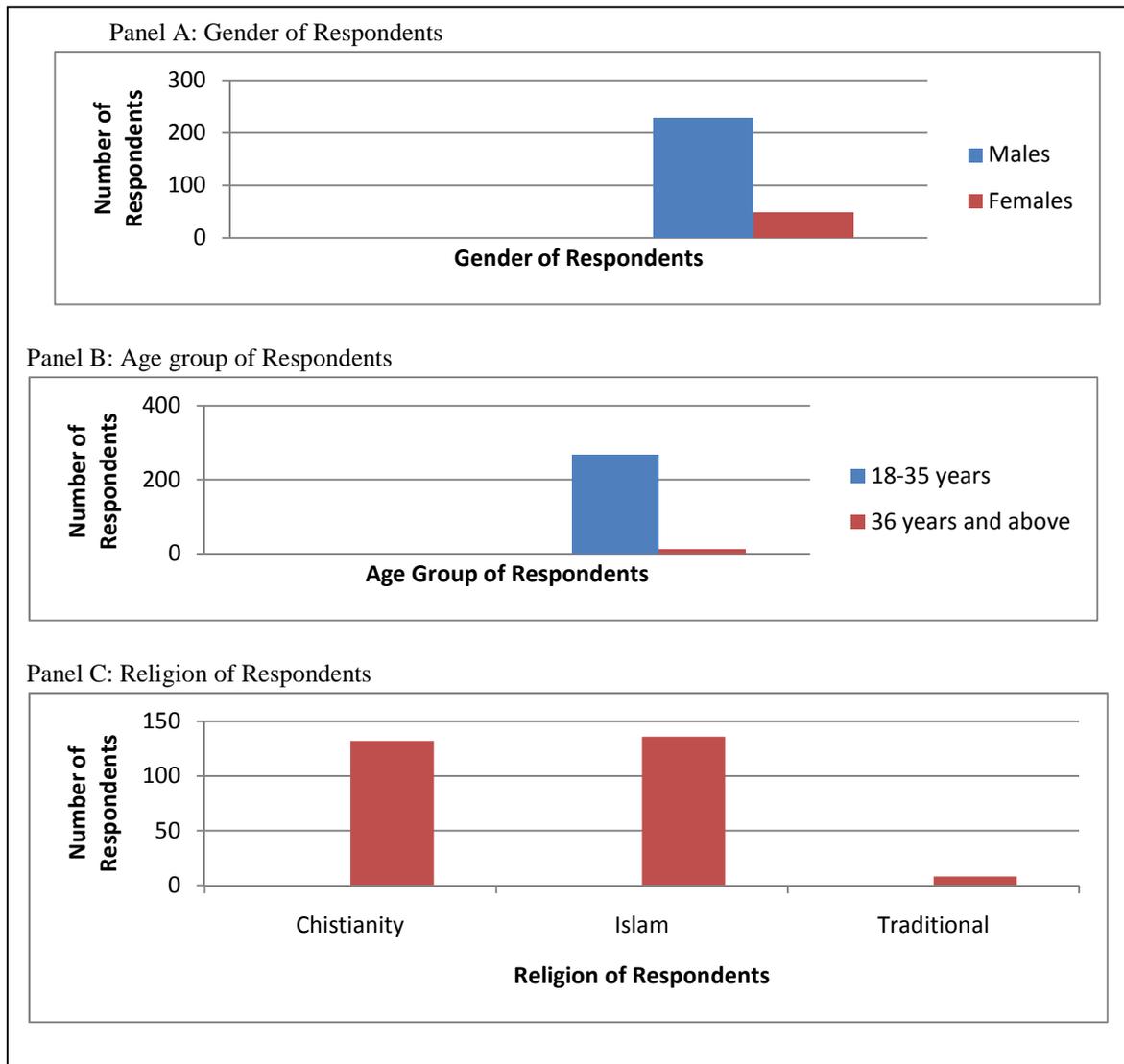
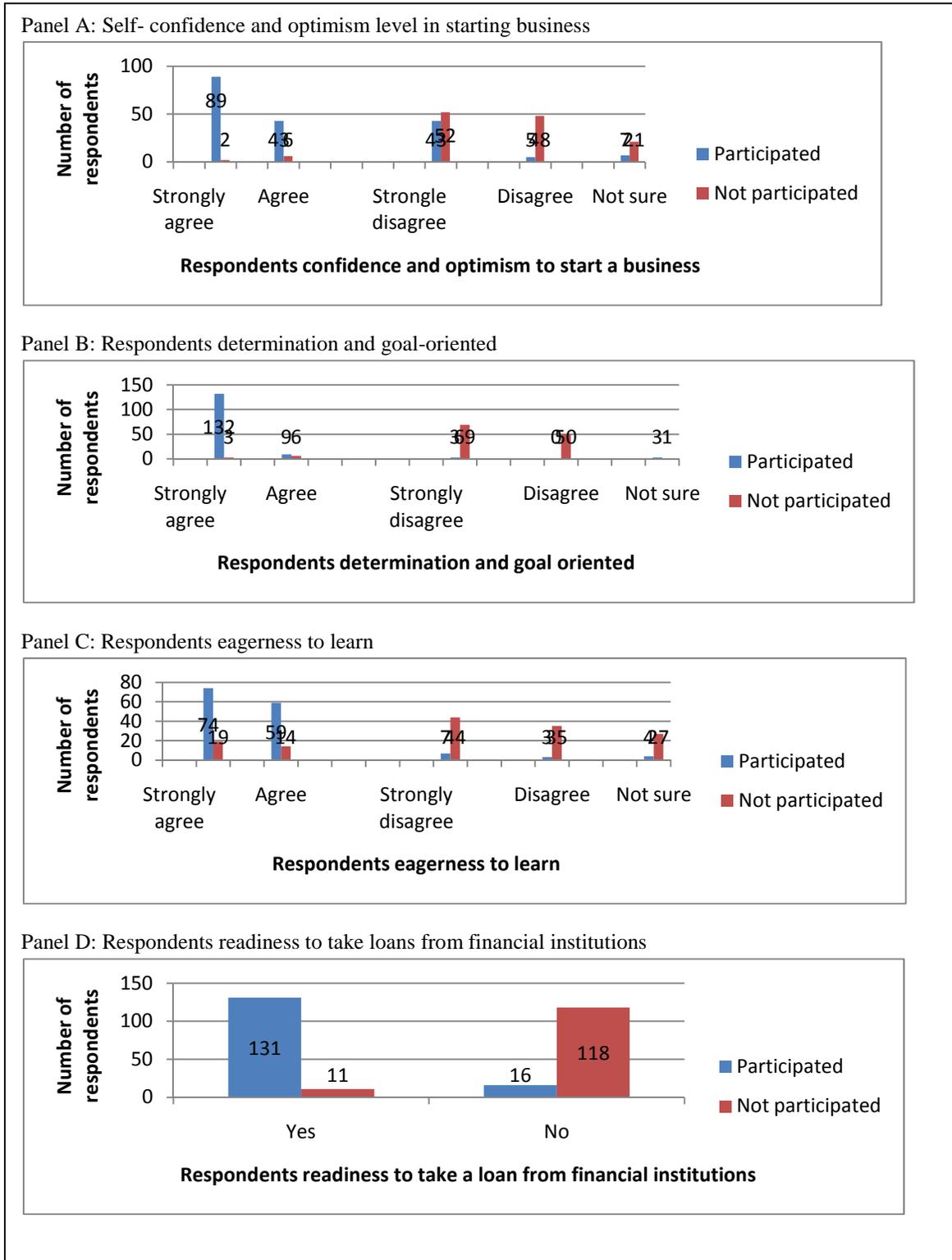


Figure 2: Respondents Competencies or Skills Acquired



Conclusions and Recommendations

The importance of entrepreneurship education towards enhancing sustainable development cannot be overemphasised. Meanwhile, the syllabus for entrepreneurship has been described as theoretic and white collar job oriented. It is thus noted that competency based entrepreneurship education will equip students with the relevant skills to be self-reliant in starting and running their own businesses. The results of the study revealed that competency based entrepreneurial education is the best option for students to acquire relevant entrepreneurial skills. The findings from the study supports the existing literature on qualities and attributes of a successful entrepreneur. Among these, the study revealed that competency based training instilled self confidence and optimism to start a business, increased the desire to take risks and also the willingness to accept change to students. It is recommended that competency based approach to teaching entrepreneurship is the best option to train students as potential entrepreneurs.

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