



Higher National Diploma Students' Perception of Entrepreneurship Development Course: Evidence from Tamale Polytechnic

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Citation: Daud Osman Kere and Dadson Awunyo-Vitor (2012). Higher National Diploma Students' Perception of Entrepreneurship Development Course: Evidence from Tamale Polytechnic. Journal of Asian Business Strategy, Vol.2, No. 6, pp. 110-116.



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Abstract

The study examined Higher National Diploma (HND) students' perception of the entrepreneurship development course in Tamale Polytechnic. Data for the study were obtained from HND students from four schools within Tamale Polytechnic namely School of Business, School of Engineering and School of Applied Sciences. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS). The study revealed that, facilities for teaching and learning of entrepreneurship were inadequate except lecture halls and furniture. Generally, the respondents perceive instructional strategies and assessment techniques to be ineffective. Similarly the findings suggest that, the recommended teaching and learning methods as well as the assessment techniques were not effectively utilized, as teaching tends to be more theoretical. The study concludes by suggesting that the provision of adequate resources is very necessary to effective teaching and learning the Entrepreneurship Development Course.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship development, HND students, tamale polytechnic, perception, Ghana

Introduction

The demands on public institutions for improved performance and accountability have brought into focus "organizational effectiveness" and the need to achieve it. The government, educational administrators and teachers are under increased pressure from concerned citizens and parents to guarantee results through organizational effectiveness. The Ghana tertiary education system has had a reputation for producing highly qualified manpower. However, of late the effectiveness of the system is being challenged. In response to the challenge, the structure and curricula of the system have undergone some reforms in order that the education and training programmes could have an impact on the nation's manpower development. The reforms considered reappraisal of programme orientation, course content and types of institutions within the tertiary system (Government of Ghana 2002).

The governments of many developing countries, including Ghana, consider the vocational and technical education sector to be an important component in their development agenda. The training institutions in this sector help to equip citizens with the skills needed by industry to enable them make meaningful contributions to the economy and at the same time help to reduce unemployment.

In this connection, the reforms in the Ghana education system in general and to the tertiary system in particular, have been structured to help shift emphasis of employment from the public and formal sectors to the private and info-

rmal sectors. The education system is expected to supply quality labour force with relevant skills to address production deficiencies in the informal sector. Therefore, the focus and emphasis in training are on science and technology related programmes as well as entrepreneurship skills development, in order to develop capacity and promote interest in the youth to establish small-scale businesses and manage them successfully (Kerlinger, 1973; Wiatroski, 1995).

Bani (2003) observed that the economy of Ghana has been growing at a moderate rate (between 5-8%) since the introduction of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) in 1983. The unemployment problem somehow reflects a mismatch between supply and demand of labour. Anderson (1995) also argued that the formal training sector of the country must be demand driven and it should also be able to provide enterprise culture. This, he believed, will offer the youths a wider range of employment opportunities.

In the Ghana National Development Vision 2020 Policy Framework, the government articulates an accelerated level of economic growth. The growth is expected to be championed by the private sector. Entrepreneurship development has, therefore, become critical at this stage of Ghana's industrial and economic development; and so there is the need for wide spread creation of an enterprise culture at all levels of the educational system. Bani (2003)

concluded that “in order to achieve the emergence of a more widespread enterprise culture in the long run, there is the need to integrate business, self-employment and entrepreneurship concepts into education and training programmes” (p. 14).

The aims for upgrading the Polytechnics in Ghana include improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching in the Polytechnics in order to increase trained personnel at the technician level. The graduates from these institutions are expected to ease the unemployment situation in the country by creating their own jobs. Therefore, it is hoped that by offering training in entrepreneurship to the Polytechnic students, it will encourage small enterprise development and self-employment in the informal sector.

Aggrey (1993) explained that the unemployment situation in the country is due to the use of less relevant education curricula, which had, hitherto, placed emphasis on general education and the acquisition of skills for white collar- jobs. As a result, many people come out of the educational system without finding job to do, even though there are enough opportunities for wage employment in both the formal and informal sectors which require technical skills (Ary, Jacob, & Razaviel, 1990; Gay, 1992). It is against this background that efforts are being made to develop entrepreneurial skills on the HND programmes in the Polytechnics. It has been decided that the HND programme shall include a compulsory Entrepreneurship Development Course (EDC.)

Statement of problem

The teaching and learning of a planned curriculum, in almost every sphere of life, is often fraught with problems. The curriculum is not implemented strictly according to the specifications in the plan, or changes are made in the content or in extreme cases, the curriculum is abandoned due to some difficulties. The curriculum may not be executed along the ways suggested by the designers. Some relevant principles underlying the curriculum, which will contribute positively towards the achievement of the goals of the curriculum, may not be properly understood.

The EDC has a multidisciplinary concept which draws on psychology, sociology, economics, and business management. The issue of concern is the reconciliation of the teaching methods and effective use of teaching and learning materials as well as the assessment criteria used by the lectures. Though teaching aids or materials (such as Textbooks, Television and Video) that will add to the effectiveness of teaching are generally inadequate in the Polytechnics (GOG, 2002). nevertheless, efforts have been made to ensure that EDC is taught satisfactorily in Tamale Polytechnic. For example, in early 2004, the Polytechnic became involved in entrepreneurial project when the

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) decided to support an “unsolicited project proposal from Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC)” and Canadian Executing Agency (CEA) to assist with developing rural entrepreneurs in the three northern Regions of Ghana (Nova Scotia Agricultural College Developing Rural Entrepreneurship Project [DREP] in 1996.

The question then is; with these efforts how do the students perceive the Entrepreneurship development course in Tamale Polytechnic? Through the assessment of students’ perception of this programme, effectiveness of teaching and learning would be revealed. Consequently improvement in the course delivery can be planned to achieve course objective. It is against this background that this study was carried out. The general objective of this study is to examine HND student perception of the Entrepreneurship development course in Tamale Polytechnic in relation to availability of resources and their effective utilisation for the EDC, instructional strategies being used and techniques being used

Materials and method

The target population was defined and restricted to include all HND students of Tamale Polytechnic for the 2010 / 2011 academic year because they were taken through entrepreneurship development course. The sample size was determined following Yamane (1967) as

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)} \dots\dots\dots 1$$

Where *n* is the sample size; *e* = error level (1 – confidence level), and *N* is the estimated total number of HND final year students who took the EDC as compulsory core course. Available statistics from the office of the Coordinator of the EDC put the overall target population at 2,250. Assuming 95% confidence level, *e* = 0.05 and a population of 2,250 give a sample size of approximately 162. This was proportionally distributed across three schools within Tamale Polytechnic based on number of students in each school. The sample comprises 116 students from School of Business, 32 students from School of Engineering and 14 Students from School of Applied Sciences. Simple random technique was used to select the respondents for the study.

The instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and interview guide. These instruments asked for specific factual information concerning the respondents’ perception about the entrepreneurship development course in term of availability of resources, effective utilisation of available resources effectiveness of the instructional strategies, and assessment techniques. A three –point likert scale was developed to assess the respondents’ perception on issues relating to

entrepreneurship development course. The data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) version 16.

Results and Discussion

Availability of facility for EDC

Table 1 presents responses as to whether certain facilities are available for the EDC. The facilities considered are lecture halls, furniture, library facility and means of vehicular transport. The data show that lecture halls are available for delivery of the EDC since as many as 151 (93.2%) of the respondents indicated that they were available. The majority of the respondents 147 (90.7%) generally agreed that the Polytechnic has available furniture for the Entrepreneurship Development Course (EDC). Again a high percentage 139 (85.8%) of the respondents said that library facility is available and being utilised for the EDC. Lastly, from the table it was found that a number of the respondents, 97 (59.9%) were of the view that means of transport are available and can be accessed for the delivery of the EDC.

In fact, Umoru and Outu (2001) hold the view that the quality of an educational institution must be expressed in terms of the quality and quantity of its inputs. Those inputs, according to Umoru and Outu (2001) include the facilities, resources, equipment and educational materials. Therefore, the availability and utilisation of some of these facilities by students in pursuing the EDC in Tamale Polytechnic is bound to promote its effectiveness.

Curriculum materials and usage

The data on the usage of curriculum materials as stipulated in the EDC programme of study are presented in Table 2. It exhibits the results of responses on the use of course outline, academic journal, electronic media and textbooks. According to the result, there is evidence to suggest that majority of the respondents, 94 (58.0%), often used the course outline, whilst another 59 (36.4%) of them indicated that it was rarely used as curriculum materials. The results of the data analysis on Table 2 suggest commonality among the use of academic journal as a curriculum material of EDC. The data show that 85 (52.5%) of the respondents, being the majority, indicated that they often used academic journal, whilst 60 (37.0%) agreed that it was rarely used. On the use of television as an instructional aide as recommended by the EDC programme of study, analysis did not find any appreciable number of respondents indicating that they used the electronic media (television) as an instructional aide. As many as 59 (36.4%) of the respondents indicated that they never used electronic media (television) as an instructional aide, out of 162 sample size.

Undoubtedly the use of computers by EDC students as recommended in the programme of study is very relevant for effective teaching and learning. However as indicated in Table 2 only 41 (25.3%) of the respondents indicated that they often use computers, whilst 78 (48.1%) being close to 50% of the respondents indicated they rarely use the electronic media (computer) as one of the recommended curriculum materials.

The use of videos as instructional material in EDC lesson delivery enables the students to view role model entrepreneurs delivering speeches on how they were able to establish their own businesses; hence it promotes effective teaching and learning. Unfortunately, there is evidence in Table 2 to suggest that a clear majority of the respondents, 96 (59.3%) agreed that they never used the electronic media (video) as require in the programme of study. The use of textbooks by students as an effective teaching and learning material cannot be over emphasised. However, the results show that quite a number of the respondents 74 (45.7%) rarely used textbooks as one of the recommended curriculum materials. With inadequate usage of EDC textbooks, students were denied access to reading materials before, during and after tuition to reinforce their understanding of the course materials. Moreover, this situation created opportunity for the lecturers to prepare and sell handouts (which may be of poor quality) at exorbitant prices to students. Undeniably, the importance of the textbooks to the successful implementation of any curriculum cannot be overemphasised.

Adequacy of Lecturers and period allocated on time-table

Table 3 compares respondent's perception of adequacy of EDC lecturers, and the period allocated on the time-table by schools. The Table shows that out of the total number of 116 respondents from the Business School, 102 (87.9%) of them were of the view that lecturers for EDC were not adequate, whilst 14 (12.1%) agreed that the EDC lecturers were adequate for the school. Also, 71 (61.2%) of the respondents believed that the period allocated on the time table for EDC was inadequate, whilst 45 (38.8%) were of the view that period allocation on time - table was adequate.

In the case of the School of Engineering, out of the total number of 32 respondents, 28 (87.5%) were of the view that lecturers for EDC was not adequate, whilst 5 (15.6%) agreed that the EDC lecturers were adequate for the school for the school. Furthermore, 27 (84.4%) of the respondents from the school, believed that the period allocated on the time table for EDC was inadequate. Out of the total number of the 14 respondents from the school of Applied Sciences, 11 (78.6%) were of the view that EDC lecturers were not adequate, whilst 3 (21.7%) of the respondents were of the view that the EDC lecturers were adequate, in

the school. Furthermore, almost all the respondents 12 (85 %) agreed that period on time-table allocation was inadequate.

Instructional Strategies for EDC in Tamale Polytechnic

Table 4 shows the frequency of usage of seven different instructional strategies by the EDC lecturers. These are lecture method, group discussion, project method, discovery - learning method, fieldwork method (industrial visit), interaction with entrepreneurs, and with agencies that give support to small scale industries.

Lecture method. In Table 4, 108 (66.7%) being the majority of the respondents, were of the view that the lecture method was often used by the EDC lecturers, whilst 47 (29%) indicated that it was rarely used. The lecture method is one of the oldest methods of teaching, long before printing was invented. Today, the lecture method has undergone a complete transformation. The teacher selects a topic from the course content, states his own view points on the issue, and substantiates as well as criticises other viewpoints from various sources. In view of the large number of students in class, the lecture method is seen as one of the best means of transferring knowledge to students quickly, hence its popularity with the EDC students in Tamale Polytechnic.

The data in Table 4 suggest that 53(32.7%) of the respondents were of the view that group discussions is often used by EDC lecturers. However significant number of respondents, 70(43.2%) stated that they rarely use group discussion as an instructional method. In this type of classroom discussion, the teacher raises a number of pertinent issues for the students to wrestle with. This presupposes that the lecturer has taken into consideration the fact that the students would be able to cope with the issues under discussion.

According to Tamakloe et al. (1996), for effective discussion to take place, the assumption is that students have assimilated data from experience gained from a field trip or a form of reading assignment. Since discussion demands a great deal of reflective thinking on the part of the students, the rate of transmission of information and achieving goals in a lesson can be very slow. The method, however, is a powerful means of developing critical thinking in students: Tamakloe et al. (1996) state that “whilst the merits of discussion as a method of teaching is obvious, most lecturers are happy with the use of the method as a potent tool for generating effective learning. Students who are used to lecture method find it difficult to participate in a (group discussion) class.

Concerning the use of project method by the EDC lecturers, Table 4 indicates that only 36 (22.2%) stated it

was often used, whilst as many as 80 (49.4%) of the respondents, said that it was rarely used. The overcrowdings of the time table in tertiary institutions has brought to fore the need to make an increasing use of the project method. An increase in the use of the project method, according to Tamakloe et al.(1996), can cut down teacher-student contact hours more, especially in higher institutions like the Polytechnic, and to lay a good foundation for independent study. However, despite the advantages of this method, a high number of the respondents (126 or 77.8%) stated that their lecturers rarely or never use the project method in teaching. It means that learners are not being made to benefit from the advantages of the project method of teaching which promote independent study and research. This would no doubt affect the quality of the HND graduate.

According to the data in Table 4,43 (26.5%) of the respondents indicated that the discovery – learning method was often used; 53 (32.7%) said it was rarely used, whilst the remaining 66 (40.7%) respondents indicated it was never used. The discovery –learning method, which is similar to the project method is rather characterised by the dominance of student activity. Jegede (2001) disclose that the discovery method is a necessary condition for learning the variety of techniques of problem solving, of transforming information for better use, indeed for learning how to go about the very task of learning. Unfortunately, over 50% of the respondents stated that they have not benefited from the discovery –learning method for learning in the EDC. This would, undoubtedly affect negatively the EDC’s delivery in Tamale Polytechnic.

On the use of field work method as an instructional strategy, the data in Table 4 shows that only 12 (7.4%) said that fieldwork method was often used, another 46 (28.4%) said it was rarely used and as many as 104 (64.2%) of the respondents indicated that field work and industrial visit were never used as an instructional strategy for the EDC. The results from the study, as indicated in Table 4 reveal that a good number of the respondents 104 (64.2%) stated that field work and industrial visits were never used as an instructional strategy for the EDC. This shows that, despite the numerous benefits it provides in enhancing teaching and learning, the EDC lecturers in Tamale Polytechnic were not exploiting it to the full probably due to its few demerits. This situation may no doubt have serious repercussions on the effectiveness of the EDC. On the issue of interaction with entrepreneurs to promote practical training only 17 (10.5%) of the respondents said that they often interacted with entrepreneurs, another 37 (22.8%) said they rarely interacted with entrepreneurs whilst the majority, 108 (66.7%) of the respondents said they never interacted with entrepreneurs. The idea of enabling EDC students to interact with entrepreneurs is to encourage them to see the entrepreneurs as their role models and have the

opportunity to learn at first hand from them what it takes to set up and run a successful enterprise. Unfortunately, out of the total number of 162 who reported on the item, as many as 108 (66.7%) said they had never interacted with entrepreneurs. This situation, no doubt, had serious consequences on the effective delivery of EDC in Tamale Polytechnic.

Assessment techniques

Table 5 presents respondents perception on assessment techniques. Out of the total number of 162 who responded to this item of the questionnaire, 85 (52.5%) agreed, whilst 65 (40.1%) disagreed that their EDC lecturers mark and return assignment and class test on time. The point that majority of the respondents were of the view that, EDC lecturers in Tamale Polytechnic marked and returned students work, as required by the course suggests an effort to promote effective learning on the part of the lecturers, since prompt feedback to students assignment has positive implication for effectiveness.

The data show that majority of the respondents, 84 (51.9%) out of the total number of 162 agreed, while 67 (41.4%) disagreed that the assessment techniques used by their lecturers was appropriate to the objectives of the course outline. Since the majority of the respondents agreed that the lecturers' assessment techniques were appropriate to the objectives of the course outline, their perception on the EDC was positive. On the issues of varying assessment 62 (38.3%) of the respondents agreed, while 82 (50.6%) disagreed that their lecturers used a variety of assessment techniques. Therefore, since a majority of the respondents disagreed that their lecturers used a variety of assessment techniques, it could mean that the perception of the respondents on EDC assessment technique was negative. Similarly, 77 (47.6%) of the respondents disagreed, while 70 (43.3%) agreed that their lecturers can identify areas of strengths and weaknesses of the students learning in the assessment. Lastly, 76 (47.0%) disagreed and 72 (44.4%) agreed that assessment techniques reflect their achievement.

Conclusion

The study revealed that, apart from lecture halls and furniture, the respondents mostly were of the view that all the other facilities were inadequate. The, data showed that over 50% of the respondents were of the view that the lecturers and the periods allocated on the time – table were inadequate for the EDC. Other major weaknesses identified in the EDC instructional strategies were that, students do not embark on fieldwork and industrial visit and they also do not interact with role model

entrepreneurs or agencies which deal with entrepreneurial development.

Ineffective instructional strategies hindered, to a great extent, the ability of the EDC lecturers to explain critical issues, and practices in the EDC to students. It, therefore, seems logical to anticipate that considerable improvement in the teaching and learning of EDC can be brought about with effective instructional strategies.

Regarding assessment techniques, an important finding from this study is that the skills of the EDC lecturers in assessment techniques in the Tamale Polytechnic were generally not adequate. The study was also able to reveal that the HND students considered the EDC to be beneficial.

Policy Implications

On the basis of the findings of the study some policy implications were drawn as follows. The Polytechnic management should again ensure that adequate quantities of study materials for effective teaching and learning of the EDC are supplied. In addition, mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that materials supplied are properly utilised to enhance effective teaching and learning.

Another area of importance to the effective teaching and learning of EDC was the limited use of fieldwork method and industrial visits approach to teaching. Since the teaching and learning of EDC is not restricted to the classroom, lecturers should make efforts to involve students in fieldwork and industrial visits as well as promote interaction with successful entrepreneurs and small scale industries. This would provide them with the opportunity to get information and also to interact with role models. Therefore, the Polytechnic authorities should endeavour to provide students with adequate means of transport for fieldwork and industrial visits.

The Polytechnic authorities should establish School -Based Enterprise (SBEs) to provide services to persons other than the students themselves which can be operated by EDC students in turns. This would bring realistic occupational preparation by involving students.

Finally, the Polytechnic authorities should ensure the use of more authentic assessment procedures, (by inviting competent resource persons from the universities to educate the staff through workshops and seminars) on effective assessment procedures.

Table 1: Facilities available for EDC

Resources	Available		Not Available	
	No.	%	No.	%
Lecture Halls	151	93.2	11	6.8
Furniture	147	90.7	15	9.3
Library Facility	139	85.8	23	14.2
Means of Transport	97	59.9	65	40.1

Source:survey data 2011

Table 2: Frequency of usage of curriculum materials

Resources	Often		Rarely		Never	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Course Outline	94	58.0	59	36.4	9	5.6
Academic Journal	85	52.5	60	37.0	17	10.5
Television	51	31.5	52	32.1	59	36.4
Computers	41	25.3	78	48.1	43	26.5
Videos	21	13.0	45	27.8	96	59.3
Textbooks	49	30.2	74	45.7	39	24.1

Source: survey data 2011

Table 3: Comparisons of availability of inputs for EDC by Schools

School	Adequacy of Resources		Not Adequate		Adequate	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
School of Business	Lecturers		102	87.9	14	12.1
	period on time-table		71	61.2	45	38.8
School of Engineering	Lecturers		28	87.5	4	12.5
	period on time-table		27	84.4	5	15.6
School of Applied Science	Lecturers		11	78.6	3	21.7
	period on time-table		12	85.8	2	14.3
Total Respondents	Lecturers		141	87.0	21	13.0
	period on time- table		110	67.9	52	32.1

Source: survey data 2011

Table 4: Frequency of usage of different instructional strategies

Instructional Strategy	Often		Rarely		Never		Total	
	No.	%	No	%	No	%	No.	%
Lecture method	108	66.7	47	29	7	4.3	162	100
Group discussion	53	32.7	70	43.2	39	24.1	162	100
Project method	36	22.2	80	49.4	46	28.4	162	100
Discovery - learning method	43	26.5	53	32.8	66	40.7	162	100
Field work (industrial visit)	12	7.4	46	28.4	104	64.2	162	100
Interaction with entrepreneurs	17	10.5	37	22.8	108	66.7	162	100
Interaction with agencies	17	10.5	37	22.8	108	66.7	162	100

Source: survey data 2011

Table 5: Respondents perception on assessment in EDC

Method of Assessment	Responses						Total
	Disagree		Agree		Not sure		
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	
Always mark/return students work	85	52.5	65	40.1	12	7.4	162
Lecturers' assessment are appropriate to EDC objectives	84	51.8	67	41.4	11	6.8	162
Lecturers vary assessment techniques	62	38.3	82	50.6	18	11.1	162
Lecturers identify areas of strengths and weaknesses	77	47.5	70	43.2	15	9.3	162
Assessment reflects students achievement	76	47	72	44.4	14	8.6	162

Source: survey data 2011

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