

Needs Assessment for the Development of Entrepreneurship Curriculum for a Master's Degree Program

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Received: April 28, 2014 Accepted: May 15, 2014 Online Published: June 24, 2014

doi:10.5539/ass.v10n14p179

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n14p179>

Abstract

The objective of this study is to study the opinion of entrepreneurs toward an entrepreneurship degree, to study the opinion of bachelor's degree students toward a master's degree in entrepreneurship, and to study the guideline for a master's degree in an entrepreneurship program. In this study, we used the quantitative method within the questionnaire provided to entrepreneurs and bachelor's degree students, and we analyzed the results using mean and standard deviation. We also utilized a qualitative method using small group discussion by inviting five academics to discuss the guidelines for a master's degree in an entrepreneurship program. The results of this study show that the entrepreneurial skills most required are communication and collaboration, the skill of teamwork is higher amongst graduates from master degree programs, and that most bachelor degree students who wish to study in the graduate program think about job opportunities first (in both the public and private sector) and hope that graduate study will increase their knowledge, skills, experience from knowledge and knowledge-sharing in class, and will result in a new way of thinking. In addition, problem-based learning and active learning are very important for a master's degree program.

Keywords: needs assessment, entrepreneurship curriculum, master's degree program

1. Introduction

Education leads to opportunity. Therefore, business school offers opportunities, particularly through its Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree, including the enhancement of the careers, measured mostly in terms of the salary of graduates (Pfeffer & Fong, 2004). Business school develops critical thinking (Martin, 2002) and leads to a profession of management (Trank & Rynes, 2003). In addition, graduates can be eligible for a managerial position with the skills required to run a business. An MBA degree will benefit graduates in terms of career and personal growth. There are career benefits, including career advancement, career change, and gaining more confidence to start a business (Australian Institute of Business, 2012).

With the growing importance of entrepreneurship, a master's degree program in entrepreneurship is very important. A master's degree program in entrepreneurship prepares students to become business professionals who are proficient in finance, management, marketing and promotion, business law, global business trends, and other areas of operation. Many entrepreneurship programs stress the importance of leadership and management through business communication and relations. With a master's degree in entrepreneurship, business professionals can establish their own business, provide operational advice or manage existing businesses. Both Master of Science and Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs in entrepreneurship are offered (Mertl, 2014).

However, business schools face several problems, including growing competition, lack of research education and teaching, and executive education offered by an expanding set of providers (Pfeffer & Fong, 2004). Today, the power of the MBA is not so certain. Many in corporate America and academia say that the degree that once defined bright, snappy leadership now symbolizes a discipline that has lost touch with the business world. They argue that MBA programs have become too focused on research and those in-house training at large firms has more practical applications. They claim the programs have failed to create the types of leaders who can deal with

globalization, and some say they don't develop leaders at all but simply create functionaries. Other critics think that a focus on profit and share value, rather than on ethics and sustainability, fostered the type of narrow-minded thinking that led to the fall of Enron and the last recession (Entrepreneur, 2012). In addition, Kirby (2004) stated that educational institutions need to change the process of learning to enable their students to develop their right-brain entrepreneurial capabilities as well as their left-brain analytical skills and that business schools need to weaken the thought processes of learning so as to encourage and stimulate the entrepreneurial imagination.

Khon Kaen University, Thailand's public research university was the first university established in the northeast region of Thailand and remains the oldest and largest university within the region. The university is a central hub of education in northeast Thailand and is an internationally recognized university in Asia. Khon Kaen University offers a wide range of programs: its comprehensive academic program offers 105 undergraduate majors, along with 129 master's degree programs and 59 doctoral programs. Khon Kaen University was ranked 21st in South East Asia by Time Higher Education in 2009 and 4th in Thailand by The Office of Higher Education Commission, Thailand. Khon Kaen University has two business schools, the Faculty of Management Science and the College of Graduate Study in Management. Both fall within the master of business administration program; however, both business schools do not yet have a master's degree program in entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education have been discussed frequently in the past few years and promoted in all the national and European educational and political reform strategies. Teaching entrepreneurship is a challenge for most of the professors from non-business faculties, where the development of soft skills should be combined with a proactive approach of changing mindsets and attitudes (Martin & Iucu, 2014). Entrepreneurship as a skill and process is increasingly being taught as a part of various university educational programs (Al-Atabi & DeBoer, 2014). Curriculum development for a master's degree in entrepreneurship is very important for a university to extend knowledge to people and community, and then the new knowledge can give more ideas to students who can finish a master's degree to bring their knowledge to the development of their organization. So, within this paper, we will present the study of needs assessment for the development of entrepreneurship curriculum for a master's degree program, and this study will lead to the development of the curriculum of the master's degree in entrepreneurship for the Faculty of Management Science, Khon Kaen University, Thailand.

2. Objectives

To study the opinion of entrepreneurs toward an entrepreneurship degree

To study the opinion of bachelor's degree students toward a master's degree in entrepreneurship

To study the guidelines for a master's degree in an entrepreneurship program

3. Methodology

The location of this study is within the northeast region of Thailand. In this study, researchers utilized both a quantitative and qualitative method. Using the quantitative method, researchers provided 60 questionnaires to entrepreneurs by mail, and 45 questionnaires were returned. Researchers also provided 400 questionnaires to bachelor's degree students, by mail but only 220 were returned. The questionnaire used the Linkert scale and offered five answers: strongly agree, agree, moderately agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The closed questionnaire was interpreted by dividing the question scales into a 5-point scale as higher, high, moderate, low, and lowest (5.00-4.5, 4.49-3.50, 3.49-2.50, 2.49-1.50, and 1.49-1.00), and researchers analyzed this data using mean and standard deviation.

In addition, researchers used the qualitative method using a small group discussion by inviting five academics to discuss the guidelines of a master's degree in entrepreneurship, and researchers used content analysis and descriptive analysis to analyze the data.

4. Literature Reviews

The most fundamental reason for thinking about entrepreneurship at the grass roots is to find sustainable solutions to overcoming the injustices of poverty, which is evidenced by malnutrition, low life expectancy, indifferent educational attainment, poor access to water, inadequate health care, and exclusion from the benefits of economic and technological progress (The Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning, University of Cambridge, 2009). The National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education (2004) stated that entrepreneurship education can positively impact a learner at all levels in a wide number of contexts. Entrepreneurship is a key driver of our economy. Wealth and a high majority of jobs are created by small businesses started by entrepreneurially minded individuals, many of whom go on to create big businesses. People exposed to entrepreneurship frequently express that they have more opportunity to exercise creative freedoms, higher

self-esteem, and an overall greater sense of control over their own lives. As a result, many experienced business people, political leaders, economists, and educators believe that fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture will maximize individual and collective economic and social success on a local, national, and global scale.

Entrepreneurship education benefits individuals not just by helping them launching a business, but by instilling the entrepreneurial mindset that allows individuals to excel in whatever avenue they choose to pursue. Entrepreneurial education improves academic performance and increases problem-solving and decision-making skills. In addition, entrepreneurship education improves interpersonal relationships, teamwork skills, money management, and public speaking skills. It also increases job readiness and job preparedness (Busko, 2013). Entrepreneurial education is one of the best ways to support growth and generate jobs. Students who receive entrepreneurship education are not only more likely to be employed, but also more likely to start their own companies (Enterprise & Industry Magazine, 2013). It is very important to teach entrepreneurship outside the schools, to bring students into the world where business happens (Washington Post, 2014).

Development of entrepreneurship education and curriculum is very important for a region, if that region does not yet have a university or school teaching both bachelor’s degree and master’s degree in entrepreneurship. Curriculum is the foundation of the teaching-learning process. The development of programs of study, learning and teaching resources, lesson plans and assessment of students, and even teacher education are all based on curriculum (Pree, 1987). The curriculum development process systematically organizes what will be taught, who will be taught, and how it will be taught. Each component affects and interacts with other components. For example, what will be taught is affected by who is being taught (e.g., their stage of development in age, maturity, and education). Methods of how content is taught are affected by who is being taught, their characteristics, and the setting (Natural Resources Management and Environment Department, United Nations, 1996). In addition, Cai and Cirillo (2014) stated that the findings from curriculum analyses can have broad implications for curriculum developers, textbook analysis provides reliable feedback for future revisions. In addition, for classroom teachers and district leaders, the findings from curriculum analysis may help them select which textbook series to adopt for their schools.

The curriculum development process includes the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of curricula. In this paper, the focus is on the design process by using research on needs assessment for the development of entrepreneurship curriculum for a master’s degree program. The conceptual framework of this study is shown in Figure 1.

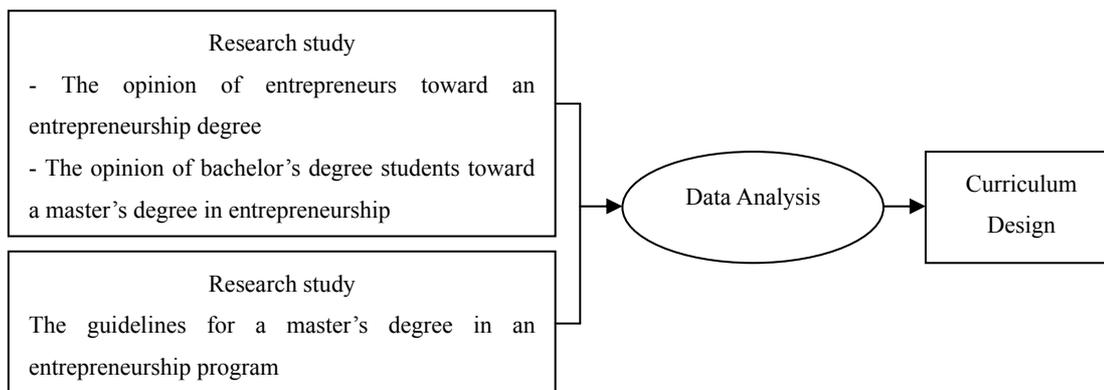


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

5. Results

5.1 The Opinion of Entrepreneurs

From the study, most entrepreneurs who answered the questionnaire have revenue between \$300-\$1,000 USD per month (40%), lower than \$300 USD per month (33%), between \$1,000-\$1,700 USD per month (20%), and more than \$1,700 USD per month (3%). The opinion of entrepreneurs toward students in the entrepreneurship degree is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The opinion of entrepreneurs

The opinion of entrepreneurs toward the students in an entrepreneurship degree	Opinion level		
	<i>x</i>	S.D.	Level
Skill in communication and collaboration	4.600	0.629	Higher
Skill of teamwork	4.756	0.620	Higher
Skill in creative thinking	3.911	0.769	High
Honest, working on time, and respecting other people	4.933	0.291	Higher
Have responsiveness in critical work	3.756	0.860	High
Skill in English for communication	4.267	0.786	High
Can communicate to foreign customers	3.533	0.897	High
Uses research to solve problems	4.089	0.950	High
Can analyze the internal and external marketing	3.889	1.110	High
The curriculum related to entrepreneurship	4.178	1.028	High
Students have the opportunity to conduct fieldwork and use case studies in the field of entrepreneurship	3.911	0.877	High
Lecturer and faculty staff have experience and knowledge in the entrepreneurial field	3.867	0.763	High
The master's degree program can offer particular knowledge to students, such as all management of SMEs, OTOP, large enterprises, and all aspects of a business organization	3.689	0.902	High
Have observed study, both locally and overseas; for example, visiting overseas entrepreneurs	3.733	0.768	High
Students can use system-thinking for management	4.067	0.892	High
Students can make a proposal for a business project	3.933	0.757	High
The curriculum of a master's degree should be an international program for supporting the ASEAN community in 2015	4.400	0.663	High
This master's degree program has teachers in both the thesis program and coursework program	3.578	0.699	High
A master's degree program in entrepreneurship should have to develop the curriculum for Khon Kaen University	4.378	0.625	High
Total	4.077	0.785	High

From Table 1, the most entrepreneurial skills required are communication and collaboration, and the skill of teamwork. In addition, teamwork and collaboration skills give organizations more efficiency as opposed to individual work because cooperative work reduces workloads for all employees and can result in the sharing of knowledge and ideas and increase the potential of business.

5.2 The Opinion of Bachelor's Degree Students Who Wish to Continue to the Graduate Program

From the data derived from people who wish to continue to the graduate program, we provided 400 questionnaires to the target population, but only 220 were returned. From the study, we found that 77% were students from a public university and 23% were students from a private university. Most students were between 15-25 years in age, and most of the students who answered the questionnaire were studying in their final year of their degree. The opinion of bachelor's degree students who wish to continue to the graduate program is show in Table 2.

Table 2. The opinion of bachelor's degree students who wish to continue to a graduate program in entrepreneurship

The opinion of bachelor's degree students who wish to continue to a graduate program in entrepreneurship	Opinion level		
	<i>x</i>	S.D.	Level
After finishing a master's degree, students can gain a job	4.659	0.566	Higher
This degree can work in both the public (government employee) and private sector	4.709	0.597	Higher
The entrepreneurship degree can offer more knowledge to students	3.786	0.894	High
You would like to continue studies in the entrepreneurship degree	3.659	0.938	High
The entrepreneurship degree is suitable and a requirement of the labour market	3.386	1.234	Moderate
Master of business administration in entrepreneurship is suitable and a requirement of the labour market	3.577	1.204	High
Graduates from the master of business administration in entrepreneurship have more	3.350	1.299	Moderate

The opinion of bachelor's degree students who wish to continue to a graduate program in entrepreneurship	Opinion level		
	x	S.D.	Level
employment opportunities and greater chances of receiving a higher salary			
Graduates from the master of business administration in entrepreneurship can be an owner of business	3.355	0.961	Moderate
Master of business administration in entrepreneurship should have to develop the curriculum for Khon Kaen University	3.432	1.340	Moderate
The program should place an emphasis on theory	3.059	1.051	Moderate
The program should place an emphasis on research study	2.823	1.142	Disagree
The curriculum of the master's degree should be an international program	3.164	1.400	Moderate
Students have an opportunity to conduct fieldwork and case studies in entrepreneurship through both local and international sightseeing	3.264	1.427	Moderate
The curriculum of the master's degree should be a bilingual education program	3.764	1.153	High
The program can lead to a student opening a business or working as an employee with a higher level of potential	4.282	1.094	High
Total	3.618	1.090	High

From Table 2, we found that most bachelor's degree students who wish to study in the graduate program think about job opportunities in the public and private sectors first, and they hope that a graduate study will increase their knowledge, skills, experience from knowledge, and knowledge sharing in class, and will result in a new system of thinking. In addition, most respondents would like to study for their master's degree on the weekend (Saturday and Sunday), regular program (Monday to Friday) between 8:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m. (33%), and Monday to Friday between 5:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m. (8%). Regarding the tuition fees, the respondents suggested \$650-\$850 USD per semester (89%), \$850-\$1,200 USD per semester (9%), and \$1,200-\$1,500 USD per semester (2%).

5.3 Guidelines for Master's Degree in the Entrepreneurship Program

The suggestions for the master's degree in entrepreneurship are as follows: first, offer problems-based learning, (i.e. case discussion) and allow students to focus on how and what they will learn. Hmelo-Silver (2004) stated that problem-based learning is an instructional method in which students learn through facilitated problem solving, which helps the students develop flexible knowledge, effective problem-solving skills, self-directed learning, effective collaboration skills, and intrinsic motivation. Second, offer active learning, i.e. class discussion, a think pair share, collaborative learning group, student debate, a case study, and so on. Bonwell and Eison (1991, p. 2) state that active learning is anything that involves students doing things and thinking about the things that they are doing. In addition, the study of Hoellwarth and Moelter (2011) showed that when instructors switched their classes from traditional instruction to active learning, student learning improved by 38 percentage points—from around 12% to over 50%.

In addition, the subject course for a master's degree in entrepreneurship is entrepreneurship management, entrepreneurial marketing, entrepreneurial operations, and legal aspects of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial finance, social business, green business, and business economics for the entrepreneur, entrepreneurial strategy, organization behavior, human resource management, and international business.

6. Conclusion

The study found that Khon Kaen University should launch a new master's degree program in entrepreneurship and set up the program as both a regular program (Monday-Friday) and a weekend program (Saturday-Sunday). The tuition fee is between \$650-\$850 USD per semester. In addition, problem-based learning and active learning should also be seriously developed because in the real phenomenon, every lecturer knows about this learning issue but still lacks the necessary operations and activities. Within problem-based learning, the role of the instructor is to guide and challenge the learning process rather than strictly providing knowledge (Dolmans, De Grave, Wolfhagen, & Van Der Vleuten, 2005), feedback, and reflection on the learning process, and group dynamics are essential components of problem-based learning. This assists in the process of creating meaning and building personal interpretations of the world based on experiences and interactions (Edens, 2000). In addition, several studies show that using active-learning activities before, rather than after, lectures or readings results in a deeper learning, understanding, and transfer of knowledge (Kapur 2010; Kapur & Bielaczyc, 2012).

Khon Kaen University is a research-based university that can bring research and case studies into the classroom, and the demand of the population and bachelor's degree students who wish to continue with a graduate education

is driving Khon Kaen University to develop many potential programs for supporting and developing human capital, which is a key step to improving upon the development of Thailand. However, it is not only knowledge of entrepreneurship management: the bilingual education program in both English and Thai is also very important. Many foreign businesses have come to the region, and many foreigners have also come to live in the northeast of Thailand. Thailand is going to be a member of the ASEAN community in 2015, which means that labour mobilization will occur, and many neighboring laborers' will travel to Thailand to work for a higher income, eventually presenting competition to Thai workers.

Acknowledgements

This study was financially supported by the Faculty of Management Science, Khon Kaen University, Thailand.

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