



**Entrepreneurship education in Ghana – a study of students’ perspectives: Is lecturer capacity and methodology affecting impact?**

Essuman, Ato; Aning, Samuel; Baffuor Awuah, George

**Abstract**

Entrepreneurship Education has emerged over the last three decades as arguably the most potent economic force the world has ever experienced. It has become a critical tool for changing mindsets and giving business skills to students in business idea generation, opportunity examination and new venture creation. This paper analysed the perspectives of students on teaching methods, their experiences and lecturer perceptions on capacity so as to improve existing teaching methods in the classroom. Questionnaires were administered to day, evening, weekend and postgraduate students. The responses were analysed and used to determine student preferences relative to the teaching of entrepreneurship as well as lecturer capacities in the use of methodologies in the teaching of entrepreneurship. The authors argue that both students and faculty need the exposure to those entrepreneurs who have paid the price, faced the challenges and endured failures to make a difference. The authors conclude that for entrepreneurship education to embrace the 21<sup>st</sup> century, lecturers must become more competent in the use of academic technology and expand their pedagogies to include new and innovative approaches to the teaching of entrepreneurship as well as blend the teaching with industry collaboration to make the learning experience truly transformational.

Key Words: entrepreneurship education, graduate unemployment, university-industry collaboration, curriculum.

**INTRODUCTION**

The importance of entrepreneurship has attracted governments all over the world to establish policies and programmes to support it (Gangyi and Timan, 2013). This has led to considerable investments of resources and efforts to its development (Obaji and Olugu, 2014), since it is believed to have several multiplier effects on the economy, such as spurring innovation, creating jobs, driving economic growth, fostering competition, freeing up state resources, and providing tax revenue for the state (Galambos and Olugu, 2014; Arasti et al., 2012). Mayhew et al (2012) argue that nothing matters more for the economic welfare of any

nation than effective utilisation of innovations, since innovative entrepreneurs play a vital role in economic growth.

Though entrepreneurship has been defined variously, i.e., promoting innovation and implementing change in an economy by introducing new products or processes (Schumpeter, 1934), a process of discovery, the acting upon previously unnoticed profit opportunities Kirzner (1973), process of creating wealth (Klapper et al (2010).), points to the distinction between a business owner and an entrepreneur, although he admits one could be both. In his view, what distinguishes an entrepreneur and a business owner is a person's attitude, and that entrepreneurship is much broader than the creation of a new business venture. He argues that at its core entrepreneurship is a mindset – a way of thinking and acting and imagining new ways to solve problems and create value (ibid).

Kuratko and Hodgetts, (2007) suggest that entrepreneurship is more than a mere creation of business. It is a dynamic process of vision, change and creation that requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions (ibid). They stress further, that essential ingredients in any entrepreneurship venture should include the willingness to take calculated risks, in terms of time, equity and career, the ability to formulate an effective venture team, the creative skill to marshal needed resources, the fundamental skill of building a solid business plan, and the vision to recognise opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction and confusion (ibid). This viewpoint reinforces the thinking that entrepreneurship pedagogy should include skill-building courses in negotiation, leadership, new product development, creative thinking and exposure to technological innovation (Solomon et al., 2002; Kuratko, D. 2004).

Entrepreneurial endeavour is not a new phenomenon in Ghana. Indeed, within the Ghanaian society, there are strong examples of entrepreneurship at many levels. Examples abound of the market women selling and organising themselves into associations to source for products at farm gate prices, or financing the production of some kinds of produce to ensure guaranteed supply. However, the systematic academic efforts that are geared towards developing entrepreneurial skills in students at the tertiary level are a more recent phenomenon within the education sector.

As in other countries, the subject of entrepreneurship has become important due to the challenge of youth unemployment. In recognition of that challenge, the government of Ghana in 2006 established the *National Youth Employment Programme* (NYEP) to stimulate entrepreneurial endeavour among the youth. It was estimated that about 65% of Ghanaian youth were unemployed at the time (Gyampo, 2012). The rural urban drift of young people has tended to create more unemployment in the urban areas. This is understandable given that there are not many opportunities in the rural areas that would serve as an attractive pull factor to let young people remain there. Indeed, the issue of young female head porters (popularly called *kayayei*<sup>1</sup>) in the major cities of Ghana is a worrying trend. They go to the major cities in search of greener pastures and fall prey to many dangers and experience unmet expectations. Without access to resources and decent living, they become susceptible to many dangers within the inner city areas where they usually congregate (Abukari and Al-hassan, 2017; Wrigley-Asante, 2013). In the case of graduates without work, their situation tends to be even more desperate. A recent phenomenon of an association of unemployed graduates

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Kayayei” combines two words, “Kaya”, meaning load or goods in the Hausa language, and “Yei”, meaning women in the Ga language - See more at: <http://www.viasat1.com.gh/news/features/article.php?postId=196#sthash.UD7DGbWA.dpuf>

has exacerbated the challenge. It is estimated that there were about 24,647 members as at July 2015 (Ghanaweb, 2016). This group of unemployed youth clamour for jobs and put pressure on government to ensure that there are opportunities for all. A lot of the graduates seek white-collar jobs or employment within the public sector that has no new openings (Gyampo, 2012). As a result of these challenges, some, within the public sector especially, have tended to reduce their ages to get a longer working life.

At the public policy level, the Government of Ghana has made efforts to develop entrepreneurial endeavour. In addition to the National Youth Employment Programme, there have been a number of interventions aimed at stimulating entrepreneurial endeavour. These have included the Rural Enterprises Programme (REP), Skills Development Fund (SDF), Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA), Integrated Youth Community Centres (ICCES), Microfinance and Small Loans Centre (MASLOC), Local Enterprises and Skills Development Programme (LESDEP), Youth enterprise Support (YES) and Savannah Accelerated Development Programme (SADA).

While all these efforts are very laudable, they have achieved limited success because of the way they were implemented. A lack of partnership with key training institutions, political colourisation and improper implementation mechanisms undermined success (World Bank, 2016). In this regard, the case for developing entrepreneurs is not only compelling but has become very critical. It is a matter of prime importance therefore that universities teach their students to become employers rather than a part of the employed or unemployed association of graduates. It is however important that the delivery of such a course is done in a manner that allows students not only to assimilate theories, but also have sessions which teach practical ways of turning ideas into reality, and which gives students a strong base for critical

thinking, innovation and creativity within a learning environment for recognising opportunity. As a result of the above, entrepreneurship education has become not only necessary but critically important.

In the light of the above, there is enormous pressure on higher education institutions (HEI) and other stakeholders to be innovative and develop graduates with a capacity to solve economic and social problems. HEI's are now being judged by ways in which they respond to social and economic needs of society (British Council, 2016; World Bank, 2016; McIntosh, 2008). This includes, actions to enhance graduate employability, contributions to national economic growth and local development and approaches to stimulate the birth of new enterprises and innovation in existing firms. These underscore the emergence of entrepreneurship education in HEI.

In order to understand the critical elements in the teaching of entrepreneurship, the study sought to ascertain students' experiences and preferences for the various methods of teaching entrepreneurship, lecturer capacity and experiences in the teaching of the subject, and in particular, their comprehension of the current pedagogical approaches in entrepreneurship education. The following research questions facilitated the investigation:

1. Which methods of knowledge transfer provide the capacity to engage and actualise your dreams?
2. To what extent do the methods
  - a) Provide the basis for establishing a business enterprise?
  - b) Increase the ability and confidence to take initiatives and exploit opportunities?
3. What have been your experiences in the teaching of entrepreneurship?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Governments around the world have shown a growing interest in interventions that promote entrepreneurial success, making significant investments in entrepreneurial education and training (Lee and Venkataraman, 2006; Obaji and Olugu, 2014; Gangyi and Timan, 2013). This is happening not only in developed nations, but also across the developing world as well. Empirical research has found positive correlations not only between entrepreneurial activity and innovation, but also between entrepreneurship and job creation. Skilled entrepreneurship offers potential rewards for individuals across the socioeconomic spectrum, including vulnerable populations and workers in the informal sector for whom it signifies potentially more stable income flows, increased profits, and more secure employment (Arasti et al., 2012; Mayhew et al (2012).

The question remains, however, whether entrepreneurial success can be taught and, if so, what is the best way to teach it. Preliminary research has reached mixed conclusions across a range of outcomes associated with entrepreneurship education programmes. Furthermore, findings are mixed regarding the extent to which programmes are able to support various individuals, from poor and vulnerable groups to educated aspiring entrepreneurs with significant work experience. Findings are further complicated by the fact that training and education programmes are delivered in heterogeneous cultural and educational contexts. Yet, despite thin evidence, and in particular a lack of information on outcomes and costs, the global entrepreneurship education experiment continues.

Entrepreneurship education should therefore represent academic, formal and informal interventions that share the broad objective of providing individuals with the entrepreneurial mindset and skills to support participation and performance in a range of entrepreneurial activities (World Bank, 2014; Matley, 2006). Many countries have thus launched action plans

to promote entrepreneurship education to foster innovative and entrepreneurial skills and to encourage more young persons to establish their own enterprises.

As indicated above, the importance of entrepreneurship is now an acknowledged fact by both policy makers and academics. In Ghana, policy makers decided to stimulate entrepreneurship through the Youth employment programmes. Even though training of all kinds have been given by the informal sector, attention lately has focussed on the role universities and formal tertiary institutions could play. The critical issue however, is how the knowledge for engendering entrepreneurial endeavour is transmitted. Neck and Greene (2011), discuss this by outlining four methods of teaching entrepreneurship. These include 1) starting a business 2) serious games and simulations 3) design based learning, and 4) reflective practice. In their view such an approach allows students to gain practical experience by starting their own businesses and simulating expectations in order to give the real hands on experiences that are real to the business world. They contend further that because entrepreneurship is an applied discipline, it cannot be treated as a science course. A significant outcome of the entrepreneurial experience in the class therefore, is to assist students to recognise and examine opportunities.

This is significant when viewed against the statement of Peter Drucker (1985) that Entrepreneurship is neither magic nor genetic, but that it can be learned because it is a discipline. This assertion is supportive of the view that entrepreneurs are not born, but made. Given the right atmosphere, culture and relevant training, it is possible therefore to train students to become entrepreneurs. The dynamics and the journey will naturally be dictated by the context within which the entrepreneurial activity takes place.

The above notwithstanding, entrepreneurial knowledge transfer is expected to be experiential. There ought to be outcomes that are in consonance with the objectives for education. A study

by Graevenitz et al. (2010), indicated dissonance between entrepreneurship education, learning outcomes and business creation. This therefore makes the case for lecturer capacity and understanding critical. Additionally, it is important to understand the perspective from the student's purview, in order to ensure that entrepreneurship education achieves verifiable outcomes. The impact for communities and nations are monumental if well managed. Dagdilelis and Giossi (2015) support this view and indicate that, for impact to occur, there must be a combination of teaching innovation and creativity.

Howard Stevenson, a professor emeritus at Harvard University, intimated during an interview that teaching entrepreneurship should be practical in orientation by making the entrepreneurial firm the place of study<sup>2</sup>. In addition, Stevenson stated that entrepreneurship is impacted by the society in a number of ways - that is, entrepreneurs flourish in societies where they are celebrated, and entrepreneurs flourish in communities that see change as positive and where resources are mobile. Stevenson's assertion supports the issue of context discussed earlier. Societies that are supportive of entrepreneurial endeavour are likely to see more entrepreneurs than in those that see private endeavour as something to be frowned upon. Stevenson's position reinforces the view by Wong, (2014) on the concept of entrepreneurship culture and its impact on entrepreneurship. Though the concept of culture is defined in many ways, it is believed that the entrepreneurial culture affects individual attitude towards entrepreneurship as a career or plan to set up a business or new venture (OECD, 2012).

Entrepreneurship is therefore more than the initial quality of owners to start business venturing. More importantly, it is about the exceptional qualities required in the processes of both creating and sustaining particular business ventures, irrespective of whether these

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<sup>2</sup> see <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/entrepreneurships-wild-ride> accessed 19/05/16



ventures operate across national boundaries (Yeung, 2002). In general, the supportive environment refers to a combination of factors in the environment that play a role in the development or nurturing of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities. Consequently, when an individual creates a business in a specific cultural environment, this business reflects that cultural environment, for example, characteristics such as strategic orientation and growth expectations for the business (Thornton et al., 2011). As the infrastructure develops and as the entrepreneurial system grows, the system will thrive only if the environment is conducive for entrepreneurial activity and new venture creation (Pennings, 1980).

Albornoz et al (2014) in their work, *Understanding the Teaching Goals of Entrepreneurship Instructors: An Approach in Search of Effectiveness*, made reference to a conceptual framework for teaching. This framework in its application found that the disciplines in which an instructor is an expert tends to predominate leading to differences in teaching goals among teachers of entrepreneurship. A study in Brazil found that Brazilian students were more motivated to take studies in Entrepreneurship relative to comparable countries (Lima et al, 2012). This was attributed to student experiences that led to the awakening of their desire to create new businesses as a result of their training. Thus, training that meets student needs are more likely to have greater impact and reflect on the economy. In Australia, a similar study targeting students' perspectives used an instrument called the Australian Survey of Student Engagement to determine among others relevant teaching methods for entrepreneurship (Balan and Metcalfe, 2012). The findings were interesting as they outlined that poster reports, followed by team based learning were the most engaging means for teaching entrepreneurship to undergraduate students (ibid).

Clearly, the importance of entrepreneurship to education and the development of any country cannot be overlooked. More importantly, the methods of teaching and the best means of

reaching those being taught are fundamental in the building blocks for developing entrepreneurs. In relation to this, Arasti et al (2012) identified group project, individual projects, problem solving, and training in investment, group discussion, scientific visits and guiding young entrepreneurs by supporting them in their projects as some of the best ways to teach the subject.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Methodist University College Ghana was used as a case study. The university attracts different groups of people to its programmes with ages ranging from 19 to beyond 50. These are workers who are pursuing degree programmes for promotion at work or some other cause and young people directly out of school. Their class preferences fall into day (regular), evening and weekend according to their personal circumstances. The postgraduate students are all evening students. The day students were full time and were the youngest in terms of age. Their parents pay their tuition and they had the most time to study. Their ages were within the 19-26 age range. The evening and weekend students were mainly workers. Their lectures were very packed, with little time. It was necessary therefore to understand the needs of these various groups. The authors used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to assess student preferences to teaching methods and their underlying reasons and matched the responses to understand their significance relative to the numbers.

Questionnaires were administered to those who took entrepreneurship as a course in the various groups (regular day students, evening students and week-end students) through their class representatives to elicit responses from them. The use of class representatives as coordinators was to reduce possible power relationship that might ensue if they were directly administered by the authors, some of whom were their lecturers. To reduce bias and

collaboration and ensure independence, students were asked to respond right after the various entrepreneurship classes. This coincidentally happened to be the most convenient time to the respondents. This took about 25-30 minutes after which the questionnaires were collected by their class representatives. In all the population targeted was 71 of which 97% was returned.

Focus group method was used for each of the groups (day, evenings and week-end) to triangulate the results of the survey, but most importantly, to engage participants in an interactive setting and to discuss thoughts freely with other participants. Each group had 7 people who were chosen by the class representatives and were asked to ensure gender balance. Again, this was done to reduce possible bias of lecturers' choices for those who were familiar to them and were good participants in class. The open and free discussions among participants themselves were quiet revealing as they led to depth of deliberations, generated ideas and provided a wealth of information for the study.

The questionnaires and focused group discussions were analysed using a likert scale for the responses that allowed choices to be made. The questionnaire also allowed respondents to make recommendations on issues that they felt strongly about and these were analysed and collated into groups. Following the feedback from the students, lecturers of entrepreneurship were also interviewed. The discussions centred on their understanding of the subject, the effectiveness of the traditional approaches used in teaching, their knowledge of the new pedagogical approaches in entrepreneurship education, their capacity to deliver and the challenges in delivering entrepreneurship education.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

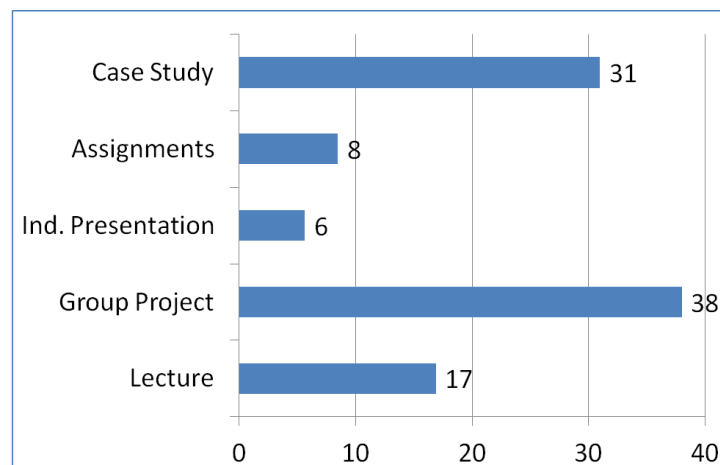
The analysis of the questionnaire presented interesting findings. There were a total of 71 respondents across all the various groups. The respondents were both local and foreign students who were pursuing courses of study at the Methodist University College Ghana (MUCG). The percentage of respondents who were international students was 26%.

In trying to understand their personal circumstances, the authors learnt from the analysis of the responses that 87% of them were single and the remaining 23% were married, widowed or divorced. The authors wanted to understand the learning environment that best suited the aspirations of these different categories. Additionally, there was interest in seeing which of these categories were more likely to be interested in taking entrepreneurship education to the next level by starting a business. While the greater majority of young people wanted experience in a firm before engaging in their own start-ups, those with experience and single were more willing to be daring.

Asked what types of methods were in use for teaching entrepreneurship at the MUCG, they identified lectures, group discussions and presentations, assignments, individual presentations and the use of case studies.

On the issue of their preferred teaching methods which best ensures their understanding and sustains their interest in the subject, the students' response is shown in the graph below.

### Preferred Teaching Methods of Students in Percentages



Overall, 38% of students preferred the use of group projects as a means to teaching entrepreneurship. This was closely followed by the use of case studies. Together, the use of case studies and group work represented 69% of the best methods for sustaining interest and gaining understanding by students of entrepreneurship.

While there were variations based on the age and working life of the student respondents, the incidence of working together was the most preferred method. The evening and weekend students added that role-plays should be included in group work presentations. The day or regular students also added that site visits should be included as part of the instruction to enhance understanding.

The findings on the preferences of students are interesting as they indicate a preference for certain types of teaching methods most likely to develop and grow entrepreneurs. Clearly,

the use of only lectures as a means of growing entrepreneurs requires rethinking. The analysis of the responses from the focus group also support the view that the mindset is one of the most important issues in changing perceptions and growing entrepreneurs. This finding supports that of Buckley (2013) that the pedagogical approach utilised supports certain learning outcomes. From the perspective of the students, teaching methods that support interaction, visits and role-plays are those that best engender their understanding as students of entrepreneurship. Again, there are certain methodologies that when used to teach entrepreneurship are preferable and enhance their understanding of the subject. This inference is also indicative that while there are people with natural skills for marketing and business start-ups, it is possible to transfer knowledge to anyone who wants to become an entrepreneur. Thus, entrepreneurs can be made. As Peter Drucker stated, entrepreneurship is a discipline, and like any discipline, it can be learned (Drucker, 1985).

Discussions with lecturers of entrepreneurship also indicate that lecturers must themselves be innovative in the way that knowledge is disseminated. To be able to do this, lecturers must be exposed and be able to effectively link the theoretical concepts to real life situations or case studies with which they are familiar and can effectively discuss. The best lecturers, the discussions discovered were those with the skills and experience to engage industry to identify challenges and produce research of relevance to the subject. Besides the ability to undertake regular high quality industry relevant research, is the capacity to contextualize issues. While the theories of entrepreneurship and the key elements of innovation remain the same, entrepreneurial activity takes place within different societies and the teaching and ensuing discussions needs to be cognizant of the local realities. This finding is supported by those who believe that dialogue with industry should impact the curricula for

entrepreneurship education (Kuratko, 2007) and that students need the exposure to those entrepreneurs who have paid the price, and endured failures.

Whereas the students in the study and the subsequent findings indicated a preference for group work and case studies based on their needs, Sexton and Bowman (1984) were of the view that programmes for entrepreneurship students should emphasise individual activities over group activities. It is important to note that teaching takes place within institutions and approaches and cultures differ as well as preferences. In hierarchical cultures, students are expected to behave in a particular way and asking questions may be seen as challenging a teacher. This could result in a tendency towards rote learning. At the MUCG, this is clearly seen in the behaviour of students from different countries and different parts of Ghana. The group work approach that has been used supports students to learn from other countries and cultures and lay the building blocks for working with and leading teams. The UN Conference on Trade and Development, in recognition of the important role of entrepreneurship education, discussed the issue as an agenda item in 2011. The note verbale by the UNCTAD secretariat stated that:

*One of the key success factors for entrepreneurship education is effective development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, in which multiple stakeholders play a role in facilitating entrepreneurship. It is a system of mutually beneficial and self-sustaining relationships involving institutions, people and processes that work together with the goal of creating entrepreneurial ventures. It includes business (large and small firms, as well as entrepreneurs), policymakers (at international, national, regional and local levels), and formal (primary, secondary and higher education) and informal educational institutions. The different stakeholders are involved in a series of symbiotic actions, which include awareness and outreach, the development of human capital and critical talent, public-private partnerships, multiple sources of innovation, intellectual property and funding (UNCTAD, 2011).*

The UNCTAD statement recognises the role of interconnectivity within the teaching environment for entrepreneurship education to be effective. Whereas entrepreneurship is

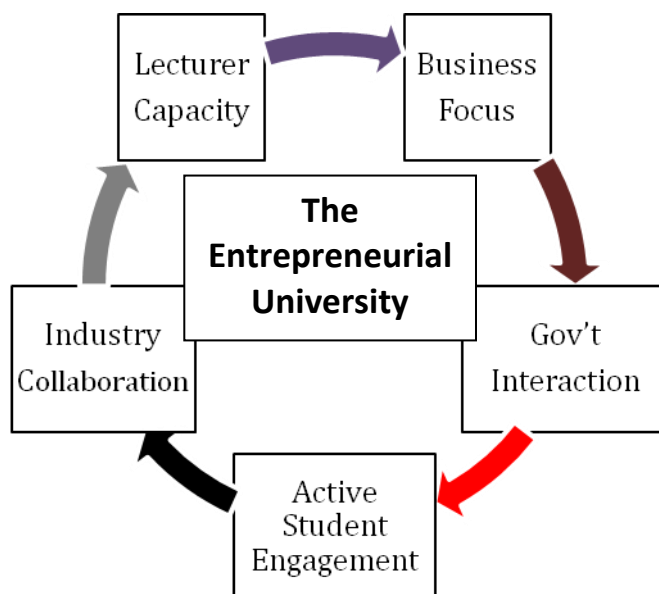
taught only at the University level in Ghana, the UNCTAD proposes in its article that this should not be the case. Instead, entrepreneurship should be taught at all levels of the educational chain. This is fundamental because the current jobs that are available are changing so quickly. The approaches and methods for doing things a couple of years ago are very different from those of today. Innovation has become the new order with young people developing businesses based on new and emerging technologies. For the teaching of entrepreneurial endeavor therefore to be beneficial, the process must be thought through, and young undergraduates given the opportunity to learn through interaction, study visits, team work and incubation. The element of engagement with the private sector or real life entrepreneurs is one critical aspect of teaching entrepreneurship which should engage the attention of lecturers.

Entrepreneurship education has become an imperative given its impact on national economies. However, it cannot be taught as any other course and would require a mix of different methods to achieve an outcome that creates business. A model for the effective teaching of entrepreneurship developed by the authors called the EABA Model<sup>3</sup> is presented below as a guide.

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<sup>3</sup> EABA Model developed in 2016 by Unonymous





The model sees lecturer capacity as a critical component in knowledge dissemination for knowledge to be effectively shared. The focus of the teaching should be business in orientation, pinned on effective interaction with Industry and Government and active student engagement through the use of business cases, group exercises.

In addition, it is important to reiterate that the theoretical concepts underpinning entrepreneurial endeavour should be discussed within contexts that would help students to understand, by making effort to use local examples. The use of real life entrepreneurs as speakers at occasional functions organised by departments teaching entrepreneurship will support effective engagements with students.

It must be noted that lecturer capacity is enhanced when the lecturers have industry experience and continue to interact with industry through research, attachments and board appointments.

## CONCLUSION

The entrepreneurship education programme at the higher educational institutions should be structured to give students the chance of becoming business owners even whilst at school. Entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions should aim at developing entrepreneurship mindsets in students, lay the foundation for self-employment and small-scale entrepreneurship and help create alternatives to wage employment. The pedagogy should therefore be done in a manner that allows students not only to assimilate theories but to have practical sessions that expose them to turning ideas to reality.

A dynamic economy that is innovative and able to create jobs that are needed will require a greater number of youths who are willing to become entrepreneurs. Because education is key to shaping young people's attitudes, skills and culture, it is vital that Entrepreneurship education is addressed not only at the university level but also from an early age.

There is no doubt that it takes special learning processes, a special culture, a special focus, together with the establishment of new kinds of associations and relations to a series of internal and external stakeholder-groups for universities to live up to the new role they have been designated by stakeholders. It is instructive to note, however, that this would require some reciprocity from government and other stakeholders in the area of funding, and an effective entrepreneurial ecosystem particularly, the collaboration between universities and industry to serve as a vehicle that would enhance innovation through knowledge exchange. The challenge in this context will, in many cases, necessitate the development of different and new didactic and pedagogical methods and teaching forms as compared with those traditionally applied in university communities.

Above all, achieving the broader aims of education and development and solving the problem of graduate employability will depend on a rich, relevant and invigorating learning environment for both students and lecturers.

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The interest of the authors has been on methods of teaching a course that best suits the needs of their students as well as capacity to deliver effectively, based on requirements for teaching entrepreneurship courses. While some very helpful findings have been made, it is instructive to note that the scope of the research was very limited on a number of levels. The research was limited to a private university and its students. Additionally, it sought to undertake the research and analysis from the perspective of the students mainly and the capacity of lecturers to effectively teach the course. While some interesting conclusions have been reached relative to teaching of undergraduate evening, weekend evening and postgraduate training, there is still room to explore options for knowledge dissemination among older students and their ability to put the knowledge to practical uses. There are however opportunities to expand on this research in a number of other areas by addressing challenges of entrepreneurship beyond the perspective of the students.

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