

Entrepreneurship among BSU Graduate Business Students: Self-Perception of Skills and Impact of the Graduate Business Program

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the perception of BSU business graduate students regarding entrepreneurship: what entrepreneurial characteristic they possess, how this correlates with their demographic profile; and how the graduate program contributes to its development. A modified questionnaire of Bajaro (2009) was administered to 55 graduate students in the first semester of the school year 2010-2011. Results show the BSU graduate students do not possess characteristics typical of entrepreneurs and are thus, not entrepreneurially inclined. Their entrepreneurial characteristics do not correlate with their demographic profile, except for one characteristic, "Risk-taking" that shows significant correlation with "community-business related training/exposure". The BSU business graduate program was perceived to have limited contribution towards the development of their entrepreneurial characteristics. These findings indicate a very narrow playfield for improvements to be worked on that would have impact on entrepreneurship development. The graduate program may have to capitalize on the significant finding on the impact of "community-business related training/ exposure" to "risk-taking" and formulate more activities towards this end as it is these activities that could reach out to the needs of these business graduate students.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, BSU MBA students, graduate business program

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of entrepreneurship over the past 40 years made very strong impact on the cultural and economic areas influencing the business people, the educators and the policymakers around the world. People in every country have shown diverse entrepreneurial qualities and aspirations; some found their way into nearly all world markets including India, China, Singapore, the Philippines and other developing countries. The challenge of globalization creates a need for entrepreneurship to uplift people's standard of living. Entrepreneurs are considered energizers, risk takers, job providers, innovators and instruments for economic growth (Drucker, 1995). Thus, entrepreneurship drives the creation of new wealth or value out of innovation (Mondejar, 2005) and basically aims to gear someone towards self-employment.

Entrepreneurship is deeply rooted in the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere in the world. One of the local success stories on entrepreneurship is that of Mr. Henry Sy, who founded Shoe Mart (SM) and built hundreds of SM branches all over the Philippines and around Asia-Pacific region (<http://www.sm-shoemart.com/history.htm>). His example served as a strong motivation for Filipino entrepreneurs to venture into business while facing worldwide challenges and uncertainties. With the advances in technology and global communication, more and more young men and women are geared towards active pursuit for economic and business related activities, them as new breed of entrepreneurs in a different business and social playfield.

The Philippines is in dire need of entrepreneurship especially with poverty line reaching 50% to 70% of the population (Mondejar, 2005). Filipinos need to get out of their economic situation in self-reliance; thus, entrepreneurship affords a way for new business to be started in response to an identified opportunity. The importance of entrepreneurship has been well-recognized (Hisrich, 1995) among the Philippine business schools with some incorporating it into their curricula. Entrepreneurship courses have been offered as a way for students to experience the spirit of adventure, risk-taking and aspiring new dreams. A positive environment encourages entrepreneurial thinking, promotes innovation and leads to a higher degree of social and economic stability. Thus, programs that help develop entrepreneurial skills instill an attitude and drive to succeed in business; taking example from the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs, i.e. risk-takers, decisive, action takers, and innovative (Knight, 1994; Kao, 1991; Glancy and McQuaid, 2000)

Batangas State University (BSU) is one academic institution mandated to implement quality and excellence in instruction, research and extension, responding to the growing needs of the country and the world for globally competitive and morally upright professionals, scientists, technologists, technicians, skilled workers and entrepreneurs. The BSU Graduate School, in particular aims to provide students with learning opportunities in diverse areas including education, management, public service, business and economics among others. Thus, students in the Graduate Business Program are provided with theoretical knowledge in business as well as technical skills that would jumpstart them as entrepreneurs. In the course of realizing these goals, there comes a need to assess the existing Graduate Business Program as to how students perceive themselves and the program in the overall context of ushering them in as competent entrepreneurs.

METHODS

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive-normative survey approach in its attempt to achieve its objective following the design of Good and Scates (1992). It is considered descriptive as it tries to analyze the entrepreneurial characteristics of the Graduate Business students and normative since it aims to establish the relationship between the respondents' entrepreneurial characteristics and the profile variables.

Subjects of the Study

The subjects of this study were the Doctor in Business Administration (DBA) and Master in Business Administration (MBA) students of the BSU Graduate School for the first semester of the school year 2010-2011 consisting of 55 students.

Data Gathering Instrument

The questionnaire was based on Angelita Bajaro's (2009) twelve characteristics of entrepreneurs validated through preliminary interviews of DBA and MBA students followed by secondary validation by a group of professors in the field of entrepreneurship. Final copy was made after the internal and external validation of the instrument. The instrument consists of three parts: the first part of the survey questionnaire explores the demographic profile of the respondents; the second part assesses the extent of the respondents' entrepreneurial characteristics in terms of personal, managerial and human relation characteristics; and the third part determines the extent of the programs and activities of the Graduate Business program (See Appendix 1).

Statistical Treatment of Data

Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of data. The statistical tools consisted of percentage, weighted mean, Likert scale, Pearson r and chi-square and F-test. Percentage was used to summarize the respondents demographic variables; weighted mean was used to determine the extent of the respondents' perception on the entrepreneurial characteristics of the respondents based on a Likert scale; and Pearson r and Chi-Square were utilized to test the significant relationship between the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of the respondents and the profile variables.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Of the 55 questionnaires distributed, only 37 (67%) were retrieved. The 37 respondents were all MBA students of BSU, 68% (25/37) are female, and 95% (35/37) already have taken MBA subjects. They are mostly employed in non-managerial profession (92%, 34/37) with only one respondent who is engaged into business, the nature of which is general services. Seminars are important continuing education and skills improvement activities; and 89% (33/37) of the respondents have attended business-related seminars, of which 19% (7/37) are locally conducted and 11% (4/37) are of national scale. The respondents have had community-business related trainings, 87% (32/37) of which are privately sponsored and 13% (5/37) are publicly sponsored.

Respondents' Perception of Their Entrepreneurial Characteristics

Twelve entrepreneurial characteristics were assessed from the 37 respondents: (1) Risk-taking, (2) Hope of success and fear of failure, (3) Persistence and Hard work, (4) Energy and mobility, (5) Use of feedback, (6) Personal responsibility, (7) Self-confidence and self-reliance, (8) Knowledge ability, (9) Managerial ability, (10) Innovativeness, (11) Achievement orientation, and (12) Persuasive ability. The description of these traits has been outlined previously (Bajaro, 2009). For each trait, at least five questions were asked and the respondents indicated their responses in a Likert scale where: 1- means Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 mean Disagree (D), 3 means Agree (A) and 4 means Strongly Agree (SA) (See Appendix 1). The summary of the mean responses to the assessment of the 12 entrepreneurial traits is shown in Table 1.

Notable are the composite weighted mean scores of the responses that ranged from 1.59 to 2.04 with a verbal interpretation of "Disagree". This means that in all the entrepreneurial traits presented to the respondents, none of these they possess. The results indicate that the respondents think and act in exactly the opposite way an entrepreneurial person thinks and acts. Looking at the rank of the scores, the top 3 highest ranking traits are: Risk-taking (1), Personal responsibility (2) and Self-confidence and self-reliance (3). This indicates that despite the generally weak entrepreneurial trait among the respondents, these three traits stand out as the respondents' stronger traits. While the three lowest ranking traits: Innovativeness (10), Persistence and Hard work (11) and Managerial ability (12) are the weakest traits of the respondents. It is surprising to note that these three traits that are more foundational in nature are the ones the respondents found of least importance.

Table 1. Summary of mean responses to the twelve entrepreneurial characteristics

Trait No.	Entrepreneurial Characteristic	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Meaning	Rank
1	Risk-taking	2.04	Disagree	The respondents are not risk takers, doesn't want to personally manage theirs' and other peoples' resources.	1
2	Hope of success and fear of failure	1.74	Disagree	They are pessimists, with little hope for success; afraid to fail.	8
3	Persistence and Hard work	1.63	Disagree	Sloppy poor worker without dedication.	11
4	Energy and Mobility	1.78	Disagree	Low energy and inflexible	7
5	Use of feedback	1.82	Disagree	Not eager to use feedback to improve self	5
6	Personal Responsibility	2.01	Disagree	Does not want to be responsible for one's actions	2
7	Self-confidence and self-reliance	2	Disagree	Lack self confidence and self reliance; dependent on others	3
8	Knowledge Ability	1.78	Disagree	Lacks desire to be knowledgeable	6
9	Managerial Ability	1.59	Disagree	Lacks managerial ability	12
10	Innovativeness	1.66	Disagree	Lacks innovativeness, unable to bring out new ideas	10
11	Achievement Orientation	1.72	Disagree	Not keen to be an achiever, satisfied with current status	9
12	Persuasive ability	1.9	Disagree	Poor persuasive ability, unable to influence others	4

Relationship of Entrepreneurial Characteristics to Demographic Profile

Using Pearson correlation to analyze for the relationship of entrepreneurial characters to demographic variables show no significant correlation with the respondents' demographic profiles except for "community- business related training/exposure" where a significant correlation was observed with the entrepreneurial character "Risk-taking" (Table 2).

Table 2. Relationship between the entrepreneurial skills of the respondents to their community-business related training/exposure

Entrepreneurial Skills	P-Values	Computed Values	Decision	Verbal Interpretation
Risk-Taking	.02	.37	Reject Ho	Significant
Hope of Success & Fear of Failure	.12	.26	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Persistence & Hard Work	.11	.27	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Energy & Mobility	.71	.06	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Use of Feedback	.599	.09	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Personal Responsibility	.77	-.05	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Self-Confidence & Self-Reliance	.60	.09	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Knowledge Ability	.62	.08	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Managerial Ability	.21	.21	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Innovativeness	.26	.19	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Achievement Orientation	.18	.23	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Persuasive Ability	.24	.20	Accept Ho	Not Significant

This indicates that among the different entrepreneurial characters, it is only “Risk-taking” that can be influenced by variables like “community-business related training/exposure”. The rest of the traits appear to be immutable and unaffected by the demographic variables.

Influence of the Graduate School Programs to the Entrepreneurial Characteristics

The summary of the perception assessment of the respondents on the influence of graduate school programs to the entrepreneurial spirit is shown in Table 3. It can be noted that the weighted mean response from the different programs and activities ranged from 1.57-1.81 with an equivalent verbal interpretation of “Some Extent”. This means that all the graduate school programs have little impact on improving the entrepreneurial characters of the respondents.

Table 3. Perceived influence of BSU grad school business related programs and activities to the entrepreneurial spirit of the respondents

<i>Programs and Activities</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>	<i>Rank</i>
1. Inclusion in the curriculum of the subject Entrepreneurship and Organizational Development and other related business subjects.	1.62	Some Extent	5
2. Attendance to seminars/trainings on entrepreneurship and related business ventures as partial requirements in some courses.	1.57	Some Extent	7
3. Participation in actual entrepreneurship activities.	1.60	Some Extent	6
4. Holding of forums, conventions and conferences with successful entrepreneurs as resources persons.	1.57	Some Extent	7
5. Utilization of case analysis in business subjects.	1.68	Some Extent	3
6. Conducting research on entrepreneur related topics	1.65	Some Extent	4
7. Joining plant tours, field trips and trade fairs.	1.81	Some Extent	1
8. Conducting interviews with successful entrepreneurs	1.68	Some Extent	3
9. Attendance to round table discussions related to entrepreneurship.	1.70	Some Extent	2
10. Membership with professional organizations related to business and entrepreneurship	1.60	Some Extent	6

Ranking-wise, we see activities: (7) Joining plant tours, field trips and trade fairs; (9) Attendance to round table discussions related to entrepreneurship; and (8) Conducting interviews with successful entrepreneurs to top the list. This indicates that these activities have the most impact to the respondents among others.

DISCUSSION

The perception of BSU business graduate students regarding entrepreneurship has been analyzed. While the perception of 67% of the initial target respondents was gathered, representing 2/3 of the business graduate school population, it is of interest to note that even with the small population; the whole cooperation of the respondents was not solicited. While there could be a number of reasons, why the DBA students were uncooperative, the scope of which is not included here, the phenomenon represents an apparent lack of appreciation by the more senior business graduate students on surveys that would serve as basis for possible curricular improvement. The demographic profiles obtained from the survey show the

respondents to be mostly non entrepreneurs in their current state and are 68% females. While they seem to have exposures in business concepts both through seminars and community activities, they do not seem to have internalized the twelve entrepreneurial characters listed. Furthermore, only in one item was a link found (i.e., between the trait “Risk-taking” and “community-business related training/ exposure”) indicating a very minimal area or field by which to work on for trait improvement. Similarly, the graduate school programs appear to be poorly appreciated by the respondents in improving their entrepreneurial spirit as manifested by the low ratings (i.e. 1.81 and below, Table 3). The survey lends support to what seems to be a disjunction in the graduate program in business, where the clientele are not really keen in business or are not engaged in business, and are not in the program to improve their business skills but purely use the program as a credential for promotion. This observation although sad to note but should serve as a wakeup call to the program implementers, that is, whether they really are hitting their target group or they really meant the program for developing Business School faculty. But still the same, if it is the latter, then a clear appreciation of the business, embodying the entrepreneurial characteristics must be present or a likely possibility of malaise in business perspective and sense will be perpetuated by the graduates of the program.

The findings of this study run contrast to the findings of Puckett in her master’s thesis “Personality Characteristics of Woman Entrepreneurs” (Puckett, 1993). In her work, she observed a significant difference in the skills, forecasting/ planning, personal experience and the talents, entrepreneurial initiative and public relation of her respondents. The results of her research recommend that women having the desire to become an entrepreneur participate in seminars that build leadership skills, and attend classes on market research/ forecasting. These observations were not apparent in this study, although the top three activities namely: (7) Joining plant tours, field trips and trade fairs; (9) Attendance to round table discussions related to entrepreneurship; and (8) Conducting interviews with successful entrepreneurs were the high scoring activities and may seem to show some parallelism with Puckett’s findings.

The study done by Polias (2004) on “Entrepreneurial Competencies” assumes that there are common characteristics shared by entrepreneurs whether in business environment or when studying a business- related course. It was believed that there are possible relationships between the entrepreneur’s and students’ socio-demographic variables and their entrepreneurial competencies or characteristics. This study has shown these relationships to be weak. Whether this observation is unique to this group or not, needs further investigation.

In the study of Koh (1996) among Hong Kong MBA students where entrepreneurial inclination was evaluated for association with psychological characteristics, he noted that those who are entrepreneurially inclined have greater innovativeness, more tolerance of ambiguity and higher propensity to take risk as compared with those who are not entrepreneurially inclined. The latter observation appears to be true, as the respondents in these study reflects characteristics that are not entrepreneurially inclined. While both populations of MBA graduate students were noted in Hong Kong, the graduate students in BSU are skewed more towards the “not entrepreneurially inclined”.

A survey on 361 students of the University Tun Abduk Razak (UNITAR) Malaysia in both graduate and undergraduate levels to examine their entrepreneurial inclination revealed that the students had a very high need for achievement, had a high propensity to take risk, was willing to innovate and had a high locus of control (Yusof et al, 2007). These psychological characteristics including their moderate tolerance for ambiguity reflects on their high inclination towards entrepreneurship. While this pattern depicts ideal scenario among

business students, some considerations that may have to be discounted are cultural, societal pressure and economic opportunities. These considerations may not be critical to the respondents of this study, hence, their low entrepreneurial appetite.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study has analyzed the perception of BSU business graduate students regarding entrepreneurship: what entrepreneurial characteristic they possess, how this correlates with their demographic profile and how the graduate program contributes to its development. Findings show the BSU graduate students do not possess characteristics typical of entrepreneurs and are thus not entrepreneurially inclined. Their entrepreneurial characteristics (primordial though it maybe) do not correlate with their demographic profile, except for one characteristic, “Risk-taking” that shows significant correlation with “community-business related training/ exposure”). The BSU graduate programs contribute only to “some extent” towards the development of these entrepreneurial characteristics, thus indicating a very narrow playfield for improvements to be worked on that would have impact on entrepreneurship development. Further study needs to be done utilizing an inductive survey questionnaire to explore what the student thinks would best help them improve their entrepreneurial skills. Another is to include entrepreneurship topics in the different courses to promote awareness and emphasis as it is likely that the poor responses elicited were due to lack of knowledge. Finally, the graduate program may have to capitalize on the significant finding on the impact of “community-business related training/ exposure” to “risk-taking” and formulate more activities towards this end as it is these activities that tend to reach out to the needs of the graduate students.

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