



Entrepreneurial Competencies of Community Development Program Students: A Case Study on Suratthani Rajabhat University, Thailand

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Abstract:

The objective of this research was to study the entrepreneurial competencies of fourth-year students in the Community Development program at Suratthani Rajabhat University, Thailand. The sample group consisted of 61 fourth-year students with a student ID of 62 from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Suratthani Rajabhat University. The research tools used were a checklist and a rating scale questionnaire to assess the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The statistical analysis used in the data analysis included frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

The research findings revealed that the students had a high level of entrepreneurial competencies overall. When considering individual aspects, it was found that they scored the highest in terms of autonomy in managing tasks, followed by innovation, proactive work, competitiveness, and risk-taking, respectively.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial competencies, Community Development program, undergraduate students.

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I. Introduction

Education is a crucial mechanism for driving a country's progress in terms of the economy, society, and the environment. The education system plays a vital role in developing a high-quality workforce capable of adapting to the rapid changes occurring in the world. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Innovation (MESRI) recognizes the importance of enhancing the quality of educational management to promote excellence and build the country's competitiveness. It aims to develop a teaching and learning management system that leads to competency-based learning, preparing individuals to cope with the changes of the 21st century through practical training and integrated teaching management. This will ultimately lead to sustainable employment and the creation of income-generating opportunities for individuals in the middle-income bracket (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Innovation, 2022). Consequently, all sectors, from the national level to the local/community level, need to adapt and collaborate to elevate the quality of education in Thailand to achieve the desired goals, particularly at the community level, which serves as the fundamental unit for societal development.

Rajabhat universities are among the higher education institutions dedicated to regional development according to the principles stated in the Rajabhat University Act of 2004. Rajabhat University of Surat Thani is one of the Rajabhat universities in the southern region that offers undergraduate programs directly related to community development, specifically in the field of Community Development Studies. This program focuses on integrated teaching and learning, combining knowledge and theories from various disciplines to create innovative approaches for community development. The aim is to develop students with the competencies necessary to contribute to the country's development, allowing them to apply the knowledge they have acquired to help develop their local communities. As professionals, graduates can work in various sectors, including government agencies, private organizations, community development practitioners, and community-based entrepreneurs.

In 2019 (2563 BE), there were a total of 3,148,897 registered micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Thailand. Among them, 2,673,922 were micro-enterprises, accounting for 85.31% of the total MSMEs. Although MSMEs make up a significant number, the majority of them fall under the category of micro-enterprises. In contrast, countries that have achieved higher levels of development typically have a higher

proportion of medium-sized enterprises, ranging from 5 % to 10 % . This highlights the limitations and importance of fostering entrepreneurs (Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion, 2022).

Promoting entrepreneurship among students, both within the community and society, is one of the strategies for developing Thai youth in line with the goal of improving the quality of Thailand's education system. Entrepreneurs play a crucial role in economic development, stimulating the country's economy, creating income distribution, and fostering the growth of new businesses or the expansion of existing ones to compete both domestically and internationally. Therefore, developing students' entrepreneurial competencies and preparing them for future careers is essential.

However, the field of Community Development may not directly educate graduates to become entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, the teaching and learning processes, as well as activities that promote learning both inside and outside the classroom, can contribute to the development of students' entrepreneurial competencies. Thus, studying the entrepreneurial competencies of students in the Community Development program at Rajabhat Suratthani University serves as a means to understand their competency levels and identify factors that can enhance their entrepreneurial abilities. Furthermore, this research can be beneficial for curriculum planning to meet the needs of future entrepreneurs and enable them to apply their knowledge and skills in their own community businesses, as well as to further develop their knowledge and create business value at the national and international levels in the future.

The objective of this research is to study the entrepreneurial competencies of fourth-year students in the Community Development program at Rajabhat Suratthani University. The findings will provide insights into enhancing students' entrepreneurial competencies and contribute to effective curriculum management. Ultimately, it aims to support students in becoming successful entrepreneurs and utilizing their knowledge to create valuable businesses in their local communities, as well as to expand their business efficiently and effectively both nationally and internationally.

II. Research Methodology

Population and Sample

The population used in this study consists of 127 fourth-year students majoring in Community Development at Suratthani Rajabhat University. This data was obtained from the Office of Academic Promotion and Registration as of February 30, 2566. The sample size used in this research is 61 individuals. The sample was selected using the stratified random sampling method (Wanida Wadicharoen et al., 2560: 180), with the sample being drawn from fourth-year students majoring in Community Development, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suratthani Rajabhat University.

Research Tools

The research tools used in this study include questionnaires, which consist of important content components as follows:

Part 1: Questionnaire on personal information of the respondents.

Part 2: Questionnaire on data related to the respondents' involvement in learning activities. The researcher modified it based on academic literature and it comprises four aspects:

Involvement in decision-making.

Involvement in practical operations.

Involvement in receiving benefits.

Involvement in evaluation.

Part 3: Questionnaire on the entrepreneurial competencies of the students. The researcher modified it based on academic literature and it comprises five aspects:

Innovative capability.

Risk-taking ability.

Proactive work capability.

Competitive mindset.

Autonomy in management.

Data Analysis

The data in this research was analyzed using the following steps:

1. Analysis of personal information of the questionnaire respondents, including gender, age, average scores, average monthly family income, educational institution, occupation of the family/parents, ownership of family business, membership in clubs or participation in extracurricular activities of the program/university, and frequency of participation in program/university activities. The analysis was conducted using percentages.

2. Analysis of the level of involvement in learning activities of the students and the entrepreneurial competencies of the students majoring in Community Development at the regional state universities in the southern region. The analysis was conducted using the mean and standard deviation.

III. Research Results

The results of the data analysis can be summarized as follows:

1. Analysis of personal information of the questionnaire respondents revealed the following key points:

- 70.50% of the respondents were female.
- 65.60% of the respondents were over 22 years old.
- 37.70% of the respondents had an average score between 3.01 and 3.50.
- 36.10% of the respondents had a monthly family income less than 15,000 baht or between 15,001 and 20,000 baht.
- 72.10% of the respondents' families were involved in agricultural occupations.
- 73.80% of the respondents' families did not own their own business.
- 55.70% of the respondents were members of clubs or participated in extracurricular activities of the program/university.

• The frequency of participation in program/university activities was 55.70%.

2. Analysis of the level of involvement in learning activities of the students revealed the following key points:

- Overall, the students had a high level of involvement in learning activities.
- The dimension with the highest mean score was the evaluation dimension, followed by the decision-making and operational dimensions.
- The benefits dimension had a relatively lower mean score.

3. Analysis of the entrepreneurial competencies of the students revealed the following key points:

- Overall, the students demonstrated a high level of entrepreneurial competencies.
- The dimension with the highest mean score was independence in managing work, followed by innovation, proactive work, competitiveness, and risk-taking, in descending order.

IV. Discussion

Analysis results show that the overall entrepreneurial competency of the students majoring in Community Development in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 4th year, at Rajabhat Suratthani University is at a high level. When considering individual aspects, it was found that the highest average score was in the dimension of "freedom in managing work," followed by "innovation," "proactive work," "competitiveness," and "risk-taking," respectively. This indicates that the students have perspectives and competencies that are well-prepared for entrepreneurship, even though they are not directly studying a business administration program. The overall outcome suggests that this may be due to the learning activities that the curriculum and university have provided, which encourage practical application and the utilization of new knowledge in the digital world beyond textbooks and classrooms. Students are able to benefit from and develop their entrepreneurial skills independently. These findings align with the research by Ebru Olcay Karabulut and Pinar Karacan Doğan (2018) on the trends and general entrepreneurial competencies of students in the Faculty of Sports Science. Their study revealed that students have a high level of abilities and entrepreneurial qualities. Similarly, Pannida Watcharangsee (2017) conducted a study on the competencies and characteristics of entrepreneurship in business administration graduate students within the Banjo Community Network, and found a positive and high correlation between overall and specific dimensions. These findings are consistent with the concept presented by Dess, Lumpkin, and Taylor (2005) regarding the five dimensions of entrepreneurialism: autonomy, innovativeness, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, and risk-taking. These five dimensions can be used collaboratively to enhance the operational capabilities of entrepreneurial businesses. Additionally, Lim's study (2009) on SME entrepreneurs in Seoul, South Korea, specifically in Japanese restaurants, found that dimensions such as innovation, risk-taking, freedom in managing work, and competitiveness have a positive impact on business performance.

V. Recommendations

The program administrators and faculty members should support and promote the development of entrepreneurial competencies among students to enhance their readiness for future entrepreneurial ventures. Some suggested measures include:

1. Incorporating entrepreneurship courses as elective subjects in the curriculum: Increasing the inclusion of entrepreneurship courses as electives in the curriculum would provide students with the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills necessary for being an entrepreneur.

2. Organizing additional training programs: Conducting extra training programs specifically focused on enhancing entrepreneurial competencies would be beneficial. These programs could provide essential knowledge and skills needed before students engage in community-based projects or internships to enhance their effectiveness and prepare them to become future entrepreneurs.

3. Facilitating practical work experience: Creating opportunities for students to engage in practical work experiences during their final semester would help them develop their entrepreneurial skills. Encouraging internships or placements in community settings or business organizations would enable students to gain valuable experience and strengthen their entrepreneurial competencies.

4. Fostering a culture of entrepreneurship: Promoting a culture of entrepreneurship within the university environment can significantly contribute to developing students' entrepreneurial mindset. This can be achieved through organizing entrepreneurship-related events, inviting successful entrepreneurs as guest speakers, and facilitating networking opportunities with local business communities.

VI. Suggestions for Future Research

1. It is recommended to study the entrepreneurial competencies of students in each program within the faculty to benefit the development of entrepreneurial competencies specific to each field of study within the faculty.

2. It is important to study a diverse range of information providers, including administrators, faculty members, and relevant staff, to ensure that researchers have a better understanding of the students and have comprehensive data for analyzing research results accurately and effectively.

3. Further research should explore additional factors that contribute to the future success of entrepreneurship, such as the intention to become an entrepreneur or attitudes towards entrepreneurship combined with the study of entrepreneurial competencies. This will result in more diverse research outcomes and provide insights for curriculum development and educational management, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for entrepreneurial endeavors in the future.

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