

ENTERING THE EDU-TECH MARKET IN GHANA

Case: SkillSafari Oy

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Abstract

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Title of publication Entering the Edu-Tech Market in Ghana Case: SkillSafari Oy		
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The African continent is a developing continent due to several reasons, paramount among these reasons are the access to basic education and the quality of this education. The objective of this research work was to determine how a small Finnish company SkillSafari and the concept of digital badges should penetrate the Ghanaian educational market and how it should utilize its experiences from other African markets into the Ghanaian market.</p> <p>The research used the qualitative approach, primary data for the research was gotten from a series of interviews with relevant and knowledgeable focus groups who will be the primary market target for SkillSafari in Ghana. This study also focused on the various market entry strategies by analyzing the Hollensen International marketing strategies. The study included an analysis of the company, an analysis of the target market and also utilized analysis tools such as the SWOT Analysis and PESTEL Analysis. The various relevant players in the education industry and the types of partnerships SkillSafari should be forming.</p> <p>The research work concluded that SkillSafari should expand to the Ghanaian market and this expansion should be through a joint venture approach, a joint venture will give the company the advantages of having a local partner with years of knowledge and experience in the market, knowing the players in the market and most importantly understanding how the marketing aspect of the business should be, the selection of this local partner will be important and a lot of attention should be placed on selecting the right partner with both parties clearly understanding the MOU.</p>		
<p>Keywords</p> <p>Digital badges, micro credentials, gamification, continuous learning, market entry strategy.</p>		

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ABBREVIATIONS

SSA	Sub Saharan Africa
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
UN	United Nations
EU	European Union
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AU	African Union
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UIS	Institute of Statistics
LLC	Limited Liability Company
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPI	Gender Parity Index
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
UEW	University of Education, Winneba
UCC	University of Cape Coast
TTCs	Teacher Training Colleges
GES	Ghana Education Service
TED	Teacher Education Division
DE	Distance Education
IN-IN-OUT	Two years living on campus and 1 year living off campus
IN-IN-IN-IN	Four years living on campus
PGDE	Post-Graduate Diploma in Education
SME	Small and Medium enterprises
IP	Intellectual Property
R&D	Research and development
NAGRAT	National Association of Graduate Teachers
GNAT	Ghana National Association of Teachers
CTAG	Concerned Teachers Association of Ghana
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background and purpose

Education is the cornerstone of any country; especially in the sub-Saharan Africa region, it has been the linchpin on which all development occurs (Badu, Kissi & Antwi-Afari 2018). In most sub-Saharan countries the level of education development is directly proportional to the general level of development of the country, be it economic development through the highly educated human resources, socio-cultural development through the openness to foreign cultures, ideologies and way of life to political development through the organization of free, fair and transparent electioneering process.

To ensure sub-Saharan African countries can meet the set national and international goals for formal education, there are set standard and criteria's that have to be achieved. Paramount among these standards is the Infrastructure for education and the quality of education. Government across the African continents have been battling the inadequate infrastructural developments in their perspective countries using different strategies. infrastructure has now become a yardstick in comparing the level of growth of educational systems in developed economies and that of developing economies (Badu et al. 2018).

Quality education would refer to the enhancement of an individual's skills including the soft skills and capabilities to meet the modern-day needs of the society and industry. It is that form of education that focuses not only on the grades and the results of classroom examinations but focuses on the emotional, psychological, socio-cultural and the cognitive development of the individual and all the above should not be dependent on the race, gender, economic status of the geographical location of the individual. Thus, quality education would be that ultimate form of education that prepares the person for life outside the classroom.

According to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), several factors enhance quality education, paramount among these factors would be the quality of the teaching staff and educators, education administrators and quality control supervisors (Sean Slade 2017).

This thesis seeks to explore the work a small Espoo based Edu-Tech firm SkillSafari Oy is doing to enhance the learning and teaching experiences in educational institutions across the African continent. This research would primarily focus on recommendations of expanding operations to the Sub-Saharan African region.

1.2 Thesis objectives, questions and limitations

Stating clearly what the objectives of a thesis are is very important. Doing this leads to properly understanding the limitations that may arise from the research work and also would lead to having better questions. (Saunders et al. 2016, 44–46.)

The main objective of this research would be to discuss the various ways SkillSafari can expand into the Ghanaian Educational Market with its main product the digital badges. The research will conclude with the recommendation of two potential strategies. Segmenting research questions in a thesis is important because it helps the author to know which questions are valid and which are invalid. (Collins & Hussey 2014, 105.)

The research will also discuss potential socio-cultural challenges the case company will face doing business in Ghana. The main research question of this thesis would be:

- What should be the entry strategy for SkillSafari in Ghana?

To answer this research question, the sub questions below should be solved;

- What will be the main competitive advantage of SkillSafari in Ghana?
- How will SkillSafari survive in the Ghanaian market for the long term?

The provided answers to the questions would assist the case company to know the appropriate strategy to implement, the right private sector and public sector partnerships to strike, the right educational materials to produce and would further assist the case company to have a deeper understanding of the educational landscape across the West African region.

Research works of this nature tend to have some considerable amount of limitations, paramount among them is the issue of geolocation of the author. The author is not based in Ghana currently and thus most of the questionnaires are done via interviews and online interactions. The scope of the thesis is also a limitation due to the number of educators, lecturers and private sector partners interviewed. The author, however, worked at the case company and understands the topic and its complexities very well.

1.3 Research methodology

Research is a term synonymous to the seeking of knowledge. It can be defined as any scientific and pragmatic search for crucial data points on a topic of interest. The ultimate purpose of research should be to make the larger society a better place (Kothari 2004). In

this section, the author is focusing on the types of research methodology going to be used based on the research target and the ways of data collection. Generally, there are two main ways of conducting research, we have quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The Qualitative approach

This is the research approach where the data obtained during the data collection stage cannot be analyzed in the quantifiable method (Bykov 2015, 14). The qualitative type of research is used mostly to analyze researches that have data in situations such as events. Qualitative researches can be simply described as the type of research that does not entirely involve the use of figures, statistical and empirical facts.

The Quantitative approach

This approach on the other hand, is grounded in the use of quantity and amount (Kothari, C.R 2004). When the occurrences of the phenomenon on which research is to be done involves the use of quantity, figures and statistics the best probable method of research would be the quantitative research method. Some other instances where this type of research is applied are when the research involves the use of surveys, test results from laboratories.

Table 1. Differences between qualitative and quantitative research (Saunders et al. 2012)

Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Descriptions and Observations	Driven by Statistics and figures
Events, Occurrences are analyzed	Precise measurement of collected data
Sample size relatively small and information cannot be used to represent the larger the population	Sample size relatively large and information can be generalized to represent the larger population
Output is usually describing a phenomenon	Output is mostly in precise figures

The goal of the research is to find out the best way for SkillSafari to enter the Ghanaian market. The author will interview and serve questionnaires to graduate teachers in Ghana, teacher trainees and administrators of the Colleges of Education (CoEs) in Ghana, this is because graduate teachers, teacher trainees and CoE administrators will be the focus

group for the research and the author will aim to understand what they think the current teacher education system lacks, how the private sector can come into their field and industry, what ideas and businesses will these teachers go out of their way to spend money on in order to develop their professional skills.

Data Collection

Similar to the types of research methods, there are also two main types of data collection methods, these are the

- Primary Data collection method and
- Secondary Data collection method.

The author of this thesis is going to apply both types of data collection methods, the primary sources are those that are obtained from direct eye witness reporting, legal evidence, statistical evidence of an occurrence among others. The secondary data, however, has to do with a third-party description or the analysis of the primary resource. Figure 2.0 gives further explanation of the differences between the primary and the secondary data collection methods (Saunders et al. 2009, 288-320).

Table 2. Differences between Primary and Secondary data collection methods

Primary Data	Secondary Data
Data received at real time, first-hand information	Data received at past time, this type of data is mostly second hand information
Usually includes historical, legal documents or documents of facts	May include articles from newspapers
Primary data collection is an expensive method and very time consuming also	This method is relatively less expensive and requires less time also

Questionnaires and Interviews

During the research, questionnaires and Interviews will be used for focus groups. These questionnaires will be issued to a few graduate teachers who are currenting in the teaching profession, trainee teachers from the two main Colleges of Education (CoEs).

Questionnaires would be more appropriate in this case due to the geographical location of the author. These questionnaires and interviews will guide the author to better understand how professional teachers across the various educational levels view the training they receive in the colleges of Education, they will also guide the authors to understand the degree to which these teachers will be open to receiving additional private training where they bear the cost of the training themselves. The author will also seek to understand how the second focus group of teacher trainees view the concept of digital badges and how they view the combination of digital badges and their teacher bachelor's degrees.

1.4 Thesis structure

The thesis structure is a breakdown of the entire thesis flow, explaining and describing chapter by chapter. The essence of the thesis structure is to give any reader an easier and more comfortable method of understanding the thesis as presented in the report.

The thesis has four (4) chapters as seen in the table of content, chapter one (1) brings out the basics of the introduction, this chapter comprises of the thesis background and the purpose of the research, the thesis objectives, questions and the limitations. The research methodology, the data collection methods and last but not least the thesis structure.



Figure 1. Thesis Structure

Chapter two (2) is the literature review, this chapter focuses specifically on providing the answers to the thesis questions and the results of these answers would then be used in chapter three (3). Chapter three (3) then focuses on the interviews, the questionnaires, collection of data from this is forwarded into chapter 4 where the discussion is held. Chapter four (4) also referred to as the conclusion, this is where the answers to the thesis question are provided and a conclusion is drawn.

2. MARKET ENTRY STRATEGY

2.1 The Decision to Internationalize

The decision on whether to Internationalize company operations or not, which market to expand into and how are we going to enter the market are among the most important questions for SMEs (Ali et al. 2017). The main responsibility of management is decision making and it is decisions like how to internationalize, the markets to get into and how this is going to be carried out are going to be the differences between succeeding and failing (Katsikeas et al. 2006; Nemkova et al. 2015).

In this chapter the research would take a look at the process of going foreign and expanding operations overseas. The author will consider the various theories and strategies aimed at making this process a success.

We live in a very globalized world which is characterized by the interdependence on different economies, raw materials, supplies and customers, we are at a stage where marketing in itself is already on a global scale. (Hollensen 2014.) With an ever-expanding global economy and an expanding global population, smaller sized companies have traditionally lacked the capital needed to internationalize as compared to their multi-national competitors, however SMEs have the advantage of speed and effectiveness from the planning stage to the implementation stage.

At the initial stages of globalization, it was assumed that multi-national conglomerates would use their competitive advantage to introduce standardized produce, However John Naisbitt in his 1991 classic the Global Paradox stated what later became the obvious:

The mindset that in a huge global economy the multinationals dominate world business could not have been more wrong. The bigger and more open the world economy becomes; the more small and middle size companies will dominate. In one of the major turnarounds in my lifetime, we have moved from 'economies of scale' to 'diseconomies of scale' from bigger is better to bigger is inefficient', costly and wastefully bureaucratic inflexible and, now, disastrous. And the paradox that has occurred is, as we move to the global context: The smaller and speedier players will prevail on a much-expanded field.

Small sized companies like SkillSafari in the case of this research work have an advantage of moving faster and being agile in operations.

2.2 The Five Stage Decision Making Framework

The five steps decision making model as explained by Hollensen would enable a company to know where it is currently positioned in terms of whether to Internationalize, the type of market to go into and how to penetrate into such a market. This framework for both small- and large-scale companies that are exploring the possibility of going International. SkillSafari already has taken the decision to focus on the African education market which is its core business market and this research offers a reason to consider Ghana as a new market to penetrate. The Hollensen decision making framework would be very useful to critically analyze the Ghanaian market and the possible strategies of entering thus market.

Should the company go International

The step looks at the capacity of the company, its current position in its local market and the desire to go International. (Hollensen 2014,18-19). With an ever-expanding global economy, the desire to internationalize may be tempting, however Solberg (1997) argues that the main factors that make a firm go global are saturation of home market and the local factors of production, potential of emerging markets and partnerships, co-operations with larger business partners.

Solberg (1997) proposed the nine strategic windows to give management of firms a generalized guideline on whether the company has reached a stage to go international or not.

Table 3. The Solberg nine strategic window.

		Industry Globalism		
		Local	Potentially global	Global
Preparedness for internationalization	Mature	3. Enter new business	6. Prepare for globalisation	9. Strengthen your global position
	Adolescent	2. Consolidate your export	5. International markets expansion consideration	8. Seek global alliance
	Immature	1. Stay at home	4. Seek niches in international markets	7. Prepare for your buyout

In the nine strategic windows theory, Solberg argues that firms that do not have a dominate position and market size at home should not go global, they end up being overly stretched thin, the “stay at home” window represent companies with no international experience and which do not have a dominate position at home, such companies are advised to remain local companies and focus on building a strong dominate position at home.

Solberg (1997) also argues that if the firm is in a dominate position and has competitive advantage over it's over a section of its global competition, such a firm should consider expanding abroad. The prepare for buyout stage refers to firms that have a specific technological knowledge, Intellectual property and offers specific services to larger companies but find itself in a rather volatile market, such a company would be advised to prepare for a buyout and seek one if necessary. (Hollensen 2014, 20-21.)

Which Market should the company enter?

This step helps companies to now put all possible countries together and compare them based on certain criteria such as local competition they would be facing, their specific strategies and advantages, the regulatory regimes in these countries, the tax systems, laws on foreign companies such as government influences. The macro and micro economics situation of such countries and the cultural acceptance of these countries to the company's business model also should be considered. Companies need to critically analyze the legal, economic, political and the sociocultural situations in these countries. These factors are uncontrollable, and they give the strongest signals as to the potential the country has or not and whether the risk-returns ratio would make sense. (Hollensen 2014, 174-179.)

Market Entry Strategy

Once the process of internal reflection has ended and the company has taken the decision to move forward with its expansion policy into a particular market, the next step is determining which strategy to use which entering the market. Hollensen (2014) argues that there are varying factors that may influence the type of entry method adopted by companies. These factors may range from external Influences which would not be in the control of the company, these factors may include market size and growth, trade barriers, general market competition, geo-political situations and the distance between the home country and the host country, other factors may include risk averseness of the company, the size of the company and the international market entry experience of the company. (Hollensen 2014, 321-333.)

The three main market entry modes are the export, intermediate and the hierarchical modes. (Hollensen 2014)

Export Mode

This is the most traditionally known and established method of marketing entry. It is also the most common method used by majority of companies that have little to no international experience. Most companies start by exporting and then move their business operations abroad. An advantage of this mode is that there is no cost and worry in manufacturing goods in the host country. This method assists companies to study and understand the host country well and also the performance of the product, a huge amount of capital is however spent on marketing, some merits of the export mode are it minimizes the risk to the company, the company has a good amount of time to study the market and product data and these signals would assist the company to consider making further considerable R&D, there is low amount of cost to the company, the biggest budget to the company in this case would be that of marketing, the company has the ability to enter the market and withdraw much faster. (Hollensen 2014, 347-349.)

The disadvantage of the export mode will be that there is low control in the market, little to no local knowledge and experience in the host market. Exports can be classified into 3 main types Indirect export, direct export and co-operative export.

Indirect export

This method is recommended for firms that either have little or no experience with international and expansion and company that do not focus primarily on expansion. In this this method, the duties of exporting the product is contracted to an independent company that is in the country of the manufacturing company. The downsides of this method would be, the producing company would have little or no control on how the products are exported, which distribution channels are deployed, how the products are marketed and priced in its new country. In effect the manufacturing company risk having the reputation of the product or itself as the manufacturing company damaged by leaving its products in the third party's hands. The upsides of this method will be the less risks and less financial commitments. (Hollensen 2014 349-351.)

Direct export

This method of export is recommended for more confident and dominant companies. Companies that have gained knowledge and experience on going international and know their host countries well. With direct export, the company exports products directly to its

partners in the host country, these partners maybe distributors whom would usually incur more risk. An exporting company may partner with both distributors and agents or the distributors may have also then get agents who would serve in the supply chain system for the distributors and these agents are usually paid on commission bases. (Hollensen 2014, 353.)

Cooperative Group Mode

SMEs usually in similar markets but not competing among each other are recommended to form alliances to enter into foreign markets, forming such alliances may provide each SME with capital, technology, reduced risk and security needed to have the confidence to enter new markets. (Hollensen 2014, 360.)

Intermediate Mode

This is the mode of entry where the manufacturing company comes into some form of partnership with another company in order to enter a new market. This may be due to the difficulty or lack of desire to taken on full risk and capital in expanding. A few ways of arranging such a partnership would be through licensing, joint ventures and franchising, multinational firms come out through these types of arrangement. SMEs going into any of such partnerships however have to make sure such contractual agreements adhere to the trade laws, foreign direct Investment (FDI) laws in both their home and host markets. (Hollensen 2014, 369.)

Licensing

This is the type of intermediate arrangement where the parent firm gives a partner firm partial or full rights which may include, trademark, processing and manufactures. The advantages of licensing agreements would be entry into the new market is fast, the cost of entry is low and although there is considerable amount of risk, the risk with this strategy is relatively low the disadvantages are that this method requires a great deal of research, and investigation into the potential partner before any final agreement can be inked. (Hollensen 2014, 371.)

Joint Venture

A joint venture is more of a strategic form of partnership. Joint venture refers to two independent entities that come together to either create a whole new independent entity by itself or a non-equity venture which is based on contractual agreements. Over the recent decades the formation of joint ventures has become more frequent mostly due to developing

economies attempting to protect their local players. Most regulations require foreign companies entering into these markets to have either a local partner, have local citizens on their boards or have a certain percentage of local employees on the team. These mostly large-scale companies either have to partner with a local company to meet these regulations or create joint ventures with local players, the creating of joint ventures in most cases is more favorable due to the following;

- Risk is shared between all partners and this makes individual firms more confident, companies in a joint venture share in-depth knowledge from both the parent market host markets and this exchange of knowledge and technical know-how reduces the risk factor associated with entering a new market alone.
- When two or more separate companies come together there is more financial, human resources and marketing strength.

The major downsides of a joint venture would be the clash of different work and company cultures, now managed efficiently this could lead to grave repercussions for the new entity formed. (Hollensen 2014, 379-385.)

Franchising

According to Hollensen (2014, 374-378), franchising refers to the type of market entry where the parent company that owns the trademark and intellectual property of a product or service allocates some rights or in most cases the full rights to a separate independent entity which would be referred to as the franchisee the right to a particular geolocation and market. This method has a low cost of entry and the risk associated with this entry mode is relatively low, this would be so because the franchisee is already in the local market and in most cases the franchisee is already a dominate player in the market, the human resources, the market position, supply chain network and marketing would already be in place hence making the franchising method very low on risk to the parent company. The responsibility attached to this method would be that the franchiser will have to continue providing technical support to the franchisee. The risk associated with this method is that the franchisee may become a competitor if the laws and the transfer of rights is not well worked out.

Acquisition

This is also a method of entering a new market. In this method a company buys another company which is already in the market the parents company plans to enter. Usually the company has a dominate position in the market and would probably be a formidable competitor should the acquisition not be done.

Such acquisitions are usually done in the purchase of entire stock positions if both companies are public listed companies and are listed on the stock exchange. In the acquisition of a rather small and private company, the purchase is done on a cash basis and the founders and CEOs are absorbed into the larger company. The acquisitions of publicly listed firms have to be approved by several government, consumer protection and anti-trust agencies, this is to ensure that monopolies are prevented, and the general public good is protected. The acquisition of private firms on the other hand have to be approved by the founders and board members.

Hierarchical Mode

When a company owns and completely controls its own entry into a new market, this is referred to as a hierarchical mode of market entry. There are several ways this can be done, a few of these ways would be through. (Hollensen 2014.)

- Locally based representatives
- Regional Centers
- Resident Sales agents.

Locally based sales representatives

This is the type where a representative, usually a high-ranking member of the marketing and sales team travels to the new market and engages with potential clients in the new market with the target of signing on these clients and partners. These sales reps are often referred to as travelling salesmen. The hierarchical method is used mostly by companies that are focused on B2B sales and partners, in this case a few prominent clients and business partners in the new market will usually lead to great business rewards. (Hollensen 2014, 400.)

Regional Centers

The concept of regional coordinating centers or regional headquarters come into the options when a company is looking at entering multiple markets within the same time line and these markets are in the same geographical location and have similar market dynamics. The company selects one country as the regional center whose main responsibility is to coordinate and streamline the market entry. This method of entry though rarely used is used by large scale firms due to how capital intensive this requires and the large human resources it requires. (Hollensen 2014.)

Designing the Global Marketing Program

To develop a fitting marketing program, the company has to utilize certain analytic tools, this research will utilize the 4P marketing mix which are the Product, the Price, Place and Promotion.

Product

This could either be a tangible good or intangible service in the market. It is important for companies and their sales executives to know exactly what they are selling, companies and sales executives that have lost direction on what on good they are selling and services they are offering would not know how to sell them. (Hollensen 2014.)

Price

After the product and services offered are well understood, the company should now focus on the pricing models and in doing so factors such as profit margin, prices been charged by competitors and cost of factors of production have to be taken into consideration before a decision on price is made .(Hollensen 2014.)

Promotion

This is arguably the most intensive process in the mix, once the product is known and the price is set. It's now time to promote the product with activities such as social media campaigns, SEOs, video and email marketing and public relations campaigns. The general idea is to get the product in the open and give it that exposure it needs to sell. (Hollensen 2014.)

Place

Hollensen (2014) also refers to the place as the distribution. The entire marketing mix would ultimately depend on the distribution and it will become a failure when all the above parts are in place and the distribution is not right. The various distributing channels and supply chain agreements need to be ready to ensure a constant supply of the products into the market.

Implementation and Controlling the Marketing program

This is the last stage which is centered on co-ordination and management of the previous 4 steps, this also involves the co-ordination of different cultural styles, company

partnerships and different regulatory systems, a great deal of negotiation would be needed in this stage to ensure that the entire process of going international and staying international remain a success. (Hollensen 2014, 657.)

2.3 Internal Analysis

An internal analysis can also be described as a deep introspection of the company from within, this is carried out by employees and management of the company where the competencies, efficiencies and the general health pf the company is evaluated and measures are initiated to ensure that the company self creates its spark to become more productive and competitive in the market. (William 2019.)

In order for SkillSafari to properly evaluate the various strategies of entering the Ghanaian market, the company will have to do undergo an internal analysis. This analysis will primarily look at its international experience, the size of the firm and the SWOT analysis.

International Experience;

This a measure of the amount of foreign professional experience the firm already has or the amount of experience the administrators of the firm have under their professional careers be it with other firms and this knowledge can be leveraged on (Hollensen 2014).

The volatile and unpredictable nature of doing business in the international market will be reduced if the company has had prior experience. Every country is vastly different in terms of social culture and work culture however having that limited amount of internationalization and international work experience will be immensely valuable when entering into a new market. At SkillSafari, the team has enough experience working not only in Finland but across the African continent, the experience of working with various government officials, lecturers and partners in the private sector is valuable and these experiences are transferable to other parts of the continents due to the similar socio-cultural norms, government structures and professional work culture.

Firm Size

Hollensen (2014), argues that ‘the size of a company indicates the resources available’. Most large firms prefer to have as much control as possible on the market entry method, unlike these firms Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) do not have that ability due to the

limited number of staff and the financial capital available. These companies would have to make the maximum opportunity out of their limited financial resources.

Similar to the case of SkillSafari, the company is a SME and thus will have limited number of resources and the financial strength. Due to this the company will have to focus fully on building long lasting partnerships and mostly partnerships with local partners, these partners in most cases are also private Education oriented firms and non-profit agencies.

Such mutual relationships are beneficial to both partners, SkillSafari has the technical know-how on the badges, European partnerships and the technical know-how and a proven track record whiles the local partners based in the local market understand their market far better than SkillSafari, know how business is done and the structures of the various agencies we seek to work with, these local firms also understand the socio-cultural dynamics and they also want to working with foreign firms to boost their credibility and track record. These partnerships benefits both parties and they have been successful so far in the parts of Southern Africa SkillSafari has been operational.

2.4 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis is a method used to determine where the strengths, weaknesses which are in this case organizational, opportunities and threats are. Questions are usually posed in the form of a questionnaire and staff of the company fills these forms; the author will discuss a sample of the questions that can be asked in this questionnaire.

Strength:

- What is our competitive advantage?
- What unique resources and skills do we have?
- What do we as a company do best?
- What do our customers and the general public say about us.

Weaknesses:

- Which areas do we need to improve?
- What kind of resources and skills are we lacking?

Opportunities:

- Do our customers have a need that is not being met today?
- How is our business model changing and how do we utilize this change to our advantage?
- What is our biggest weakness and how do we turn this weakness into an opportunity?

Threats:

- What challenges do we face?
- Which regulations are a threat to us?

The SWOT analysis is a structure that would enable a realistic and evidence-oriented approach to analyzing the company, some advantages of using the SWOT analysis will be that this strategy can be used on a specific department within the company, this analysis method can also be used to guide strategic meetings where management can directly focus on the weaknesses and threats of the company while double downing on the strength and opportunities to take maximum advantage. (William 20019.)

3. SKILLSAFARI – THE STORY

3.1 The Background

This chapter would start with a look into SkillSafari, the case company for this research, the company is a Finnish Edu-tech startup located in Espoo. The sole purpose of the company is the promotion of quality education and the continuous learning of both students their educators by combining in-depth knowledge of the Finnish education approach in the teaching and the learning process.

The company seeks to export the Finish education system around the world and tailoring this system with the open badge system also known as the digital badges. An open badge is a term used to describe the digital badging solution for the validation and the accreditation of skills. Unlike the developed societies where methods of validating skills have been developed and perfected in some instances over the years. Developing countries such as countries across the African continent are yet to develop a standard method let alone perfect such methods.

What SkillSafari does is to share the best practices from the Finnish system abroad, with these practices in mind we work to create new innovative systems and practices to suit the different socio-economic and cultural situations of our partner countries. SkillSafari ensures that we are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). Goal 4 of the UNSDGs focuses on the provision of quality education.

SkillSafari develops innovative education solutions for our partners across the African continent, we use two main approaches and have two main focus groups. We have the student and graduate focus groups and the educators and administrators focus groups. At SkillSafari, there is a strong belief that technology provides the perfect platform and the advantage of learning and cultivating critical skills.

The Startup has worked in countries such as Pakistan, India, Turkey, Bahrain, Qatar, Tunisia, Tanzania, Zambia, UAE, Morocco, Kenya among others. This thesis would seek to export the SkillSafari methodology into Ghana and how any future advancement into the country might play out considering the challenges and the opportunities.

At SkillSafari we aim to have a big and positive impact on education quality across the Africa continent, this can be divided into two subsections. The company seeks to have an immediate impact on the level of quality education. Discussions with our partners over the years reveal that several foreign Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs) think tanks, Start-

ups and well-established firms have over the years attempted to solving the quality education challenges, however, due to the bureaucracies of government agencies and duplicity of functions by different regulatory agencies, attaining results takes a very long time. Most of these well-intended foreign bodies then leave moving onto other projects, bearing in mind these start-ups and companies either have investors or need to show quarterly and annual statements. However, at SkillSafari we have a different approach, upon careful study, upon careful analysis we realized that the very popular strategy was for foreign firms to expand into the new country, set up offices, undertake recruitment, start going through the regulatory hurdle, gain accreditation from the various accreditations bodies and then start to do the actual work. On average, unlike Finland, this entire process would take the best part of a year. The is a popular perception that doing business in Africa is difficult, unfortunately, this is true from our experience.

What SkillSafari does however is different from the popular trend, we have our entire core team in Finland, through the use of local partners we have been able to establish a local presence in several countries. The CEO Satu is very well known across the African quality education bandwagon and as such is regularly across the continent for conferences where she mostly is a speaker or Chairperson of such conferences, Satu uses such opportunities to network and interact directly with African policy wonks, regulators, government appointees who are most probably the real decision-makers. Through the use of local partners, we maximize our outreach work very efficiently and can achieve results in a much faster way, this strategy also has challenges that when not worked out quickly may hinder progress, challenges in communication and professionalism due to socio-cultural differences are the most common.

SkillSafari also serves an additional role in our pursuit to enhance quality education. The company partners with and has working relationships with educational organizations and continental education bodies such as the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). We believe that solutions to African challenges need to be brought up by Africans, developed with Africans and as such we want to be as present as much as we can and interact with policymakers as much as possible, the company also presents policy papers, proposals and quality control strategies to these organizations.

3.2 The African Challenge

The education landscape across the continent is one of many different shades of progress and stagnation. There is one fact we have to acknowledge and that is no matter the part of the world we may find ourselves in what is happening in the African education landscape would either directly or indirectly affect us.

A recent report by the Caerus Capital LLC would put the landscape as 'Progress has been made but not much'. The challenges faced by the continents education system can be generally categorized into three main categories:

- Access to Education
- Quality of Education
- Relevance of education

Access to Education

Access to education is by far the most paramount challenge faced by all regions on the continent, especially the SSA region, statistics from the UIS are as staggering as they go, comparing all regions of the continent, the SSA region is the region with the highest rate of exclusion from school. More than one-fifth of school-going age between 6 to 11 years are not in school and have very limited access to educational facilities.

This is closely followed by children between the ages of 12 and 14. Over 60% of children between 15-17 years are not in school. These data at best are an indictment on all the efforts government, International organizations like the UN and UNESCO and start-ups like SkillSafari are doing at worst these data are a global education crisis.

With no urgent solution to turn the tide around the current trend is expected to only get worse as the population keep increasing leading to more pressure on educational infrastructure and thus further reducing the already low access to education.

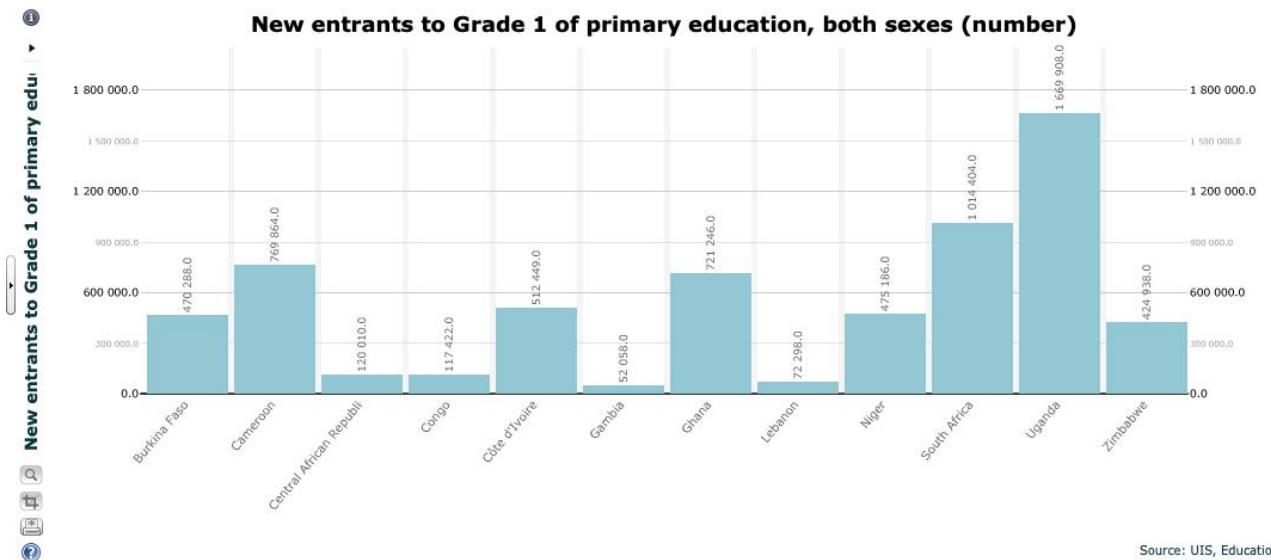


Fig 4. Comparative data showing both sexes new entrants to grade 1 (UIS, Education 2019)

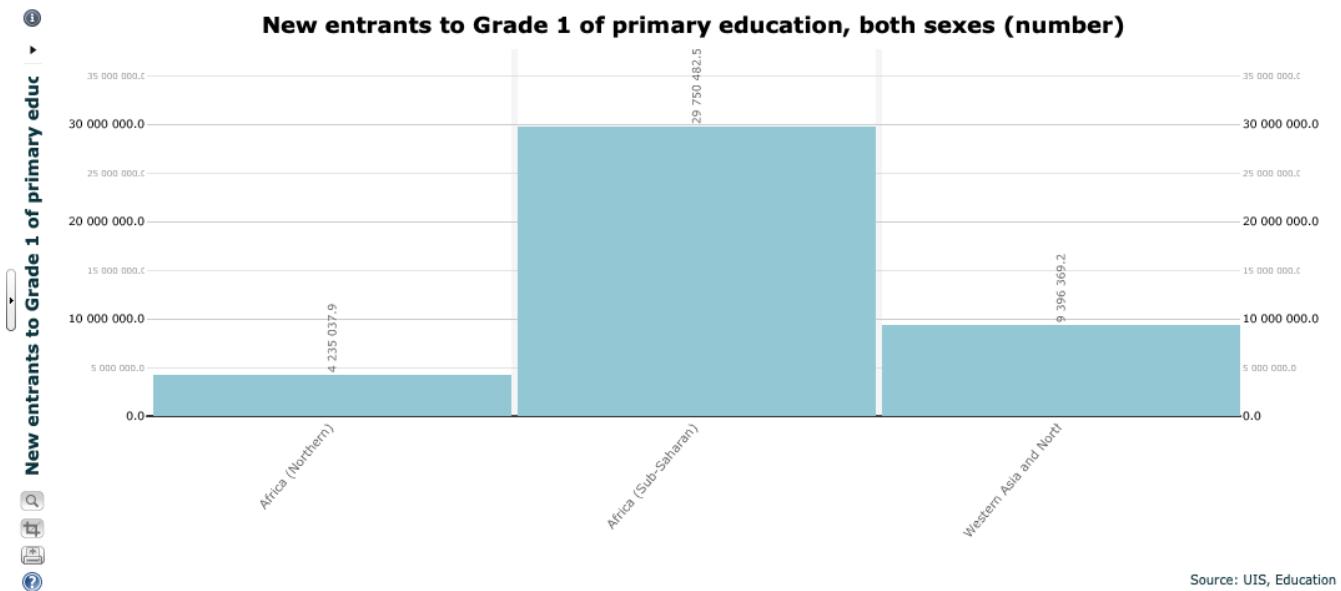


Figure 5. Data comparing three African regions on new entrants to Grade 1 (UIS, Education 2019)

R.S Peters defined education as the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who are committed to it (Slade 2017, February 22). Quality education should not be considered in terms of numeracy and literacy, this way of considering education is outdated and certainly cannot be described as quality. Over a long period, education generally has been viewed as a content delivery mechanism, the difference between educational end products in

western developed economies and that of the developing economies is seen in the end products of their respective educational systems.

Western developed economies focus on the quality developed end products while developing economies focus on the quantity end products. The aim of a good quality educational system should be to explore and bring out the full potential of the individual for the benefit of the society, however, what is seen in most parts of the world is a type of education that is based on tests, the passing or failure of such test, the forced memory of figures and facts which would in no way be needed and just for the sole purpose of passing test.

There are certain fundamental structures such as the quality of learners and the quality of the learning environment that lead to the achievement of good quality education (S.G.N Eze, 2019). These structures do not make up for the effort individuals have to put in nor do they make up for the effort teachers and educators have to put, however, these structures would be very important accessories in the goal of achieving quality education.

Quality learners would eventually lead to quality education (S.G.N Eze, 2019). When focusing on achieving quality education, a good amount of attention must be placed on the quality of students in the classrooms, the standard of living of the students ultimately affects their abilities to assimilate and learn properly. Factors such as good health condition, a good early childhood experience, and support from the parents and guidance at home. Healthy growth development within the first 3 years of life goes a very long way to benefit the child (McCain & Mustard 1999).

The environment where education is set to occur has to be of a good standard, there has to be well-equipped infrastructure to enable the teaching and learning process. The aspect of the environment of study varies a lot across the African continent, there are several other parameters that are used to measure the level of quality of the educational process, these may include the percentage of GDP the government spends on primary and tertiary education per student, percentage of school enrollment in primary school and comparing this to the gender parity index (GPI), the percentage of trained and untrained teachers.

The primary school completion age for both male and female and the percentage of females. The chart below is a chart showing the average number of pupils per reading textbooks in primary schools across sub-Saharan Africa.

Quality Education

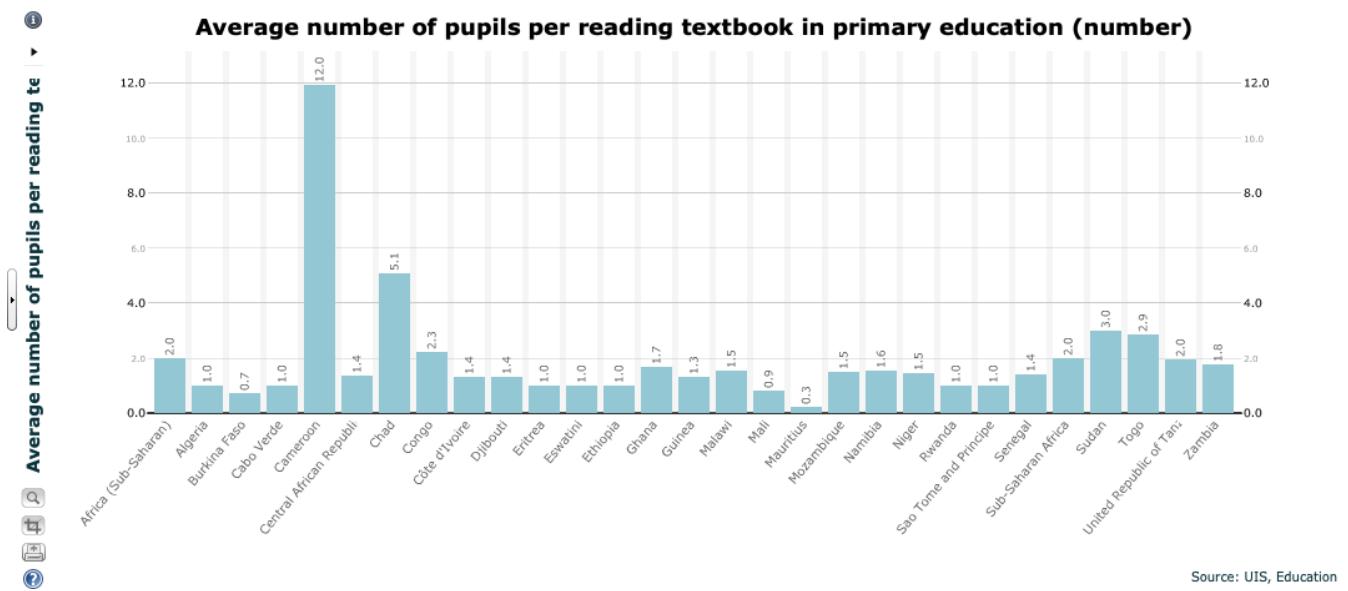


Fig 6 Source: (UIS, Education)

3.3 What is the Digital Badge?

The Mozilla foundation defines a badge as “Digital credentials that represent skills, interest and achievement earned by an individual through specific projects, programs, courses or other activities” (Mozilla Foundation 2013).

Muijenburg et al. (2016) Open badges are digital images that contain metadata and their origins are inseparable from the ethos of open-source code. A digital badge is a visual representation of a skill or achievement on the internet. Such badges contain data and these metadata are sharable across the web. In our interactions with partners across the African continent, the locals simply refer to a digital badge as an Internet badge.

Due to the open nature of such badges, no one has a universal control of badges, they can be created and issued by anyone, however, Start-ups like SkillSafari can issue such badges due to our access to the open-sourced issuing platforms and the relevant technical skills. The concept of digital badges was brought to life by the new electronic culture of continuous learning made possible by the wide-reaching effect of the world wide web, this had led to curious minds being able to reach out and connect to study programs of interest from educators in different countries in some cases at no cost and also with the use of digital badges have the ability to receive certification for the new knowledge gained.

The 21st century has made it possible for new technological advancement in the use of mobile technology, video streaming and the use of social media, this has thus enhanced concepts such as web-based human resource recruitment, online reputation, and social media. These three are brought together by the idea of digital badges. The average job seeker in 2019 has built a professional profile on social media platforms and has completed a short web-based educational course. The ability to publicize such credentials and improve the online reputation is possible by the use of digital badges.

Multinational organizations such as Mozilla, Adobe, IBM and Oracle have open-sourced their badge technologies where any other organization such as schools, Non-Government Agencies and startups like SkillSafari can use to issue badges. Globally there are over 2000 organizations that are issuing badges

3.4 Badge Specifications

Badges are made for individuals based on certain criteria and specifications. The recipient of the badge can be just about anybody and everybody, In the case of SkillSafari, our main target group of the badges are teaching professionals across the various educational levels, educational administrators and the supervisors.

We do this knowing that the challenge of the industry our partner countries have, there is currently an inadequate number of teaching professionals in both the formal and the informal sectors across our partner countries and this explains why we focus more on freshly graduated teachers, and some university students in their third or final years who would want to start a teaching career in basic schools and high schools. The current generation of teachers have very limited opportunities to undergo retraining and SkillSafari also comes in to organize training sessions for them with the aim of awarding badges to such professionals.

Each badge contains a metadata, and this is that information or data that is behind what it took to earn that particular badge. Metadata simply means “the data about an already existing data”. Digital badges contain data on three key stakeholders, these are the issuing authority which may be any non-profit group, educational association, company etc. the recipient of the badge who is identified by a name or in most cases an email address and the badge awarding criteria fulfilled to achieve the badge.

In addition to the above, the average badge would contain the badge name, an image of the badge, the date the badge was issued, tags, the standards of the badge which are the

skills or achievement of the person that made the individual qualify for the badge and the evidence of the badge.

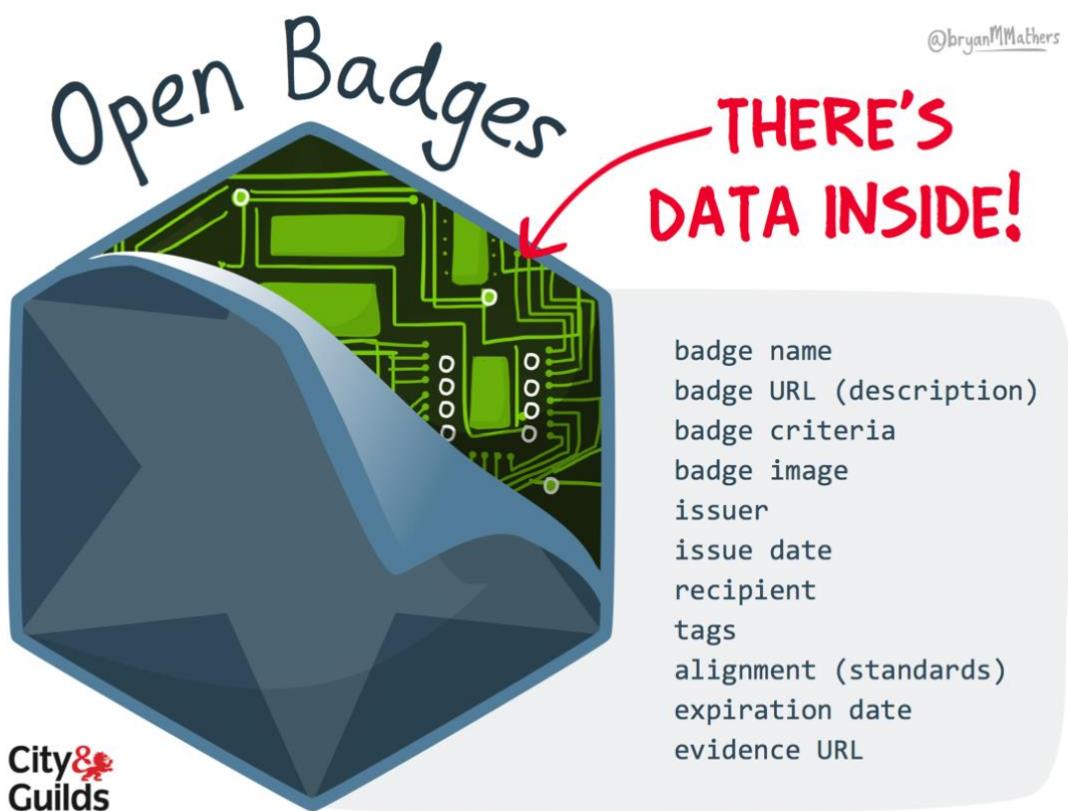


Fig. 7 Open Badges peeled by Bryan Mathers (used under CC-BY-ND License)

The concept of digital badges thrives on motivation (Muilenburg & Zane 2016). The adoption of badges is built on the strength of motivation. Researchers have found that when badges are introduced into a learning environment, there is an increase in the desire of learners to complete all tasks to attain the badges (Gibson et al. 2013). Psychologists have long found that motivation and learning desires have a directly proportional link, where an increase in a person's motivation leads to an increase in the desire to learn. (Elliott & Dweck, 2005.)

Furthermore, it can also be said that the level of quality of an educational result can be determined beforehand by the level of motivation (Brouss & Garrison 2004; Dörnyei & Ushioda 2013). There is a very close relationship between the desire to learn, improve one's abilities and the motivation needed to be able to achieve that. Persons with a high level of motivation usually achieve a high level of mastery in a particular field.

Research has proven that low interest and motivation to study is a source of low self-confidence and low tenacity to learn, this may lead to an increase in the school drop out rate. The relationship between motivation and learning outcomes can be observed across all age groups thus from basic schools to high schools to the tertiary level.

Learning with Badges

Airline mile programs are used as an incentive mechanism to encourage more travelling from loyal air travelers, similarly, hotels have special packages as Platinum, Gold and Silver memberships to encourage frequent tourist and travelers to use specific hotels, these two programs are ways such industries encourage patrons to keep patronizing. These are purposely meant to motivate individuals to be committed patrons.

This analogy can be stretched to the use of digital badges both in the formal and informal learning environment. By providing learners with badges to represent each completed program. Learners are motivated to learn faster to earn badges and some learners aim to achieve more badges than their peers, in this case, the badges become the magnetic pull to motivate learning. Once learners complete a program and are issued badges, the chances that they would be motivated to earn more badges is high. One feature of digital badges is that they are sharable, this enables badges to be shared and displayed on professional social media platforms so current employees and potential recruiters can view them.

Across the African continent, SkillSafari similarly undertakes its badging process, from Kenya to Rwanda the company works alongside accredited local partners. In the formal education sector, the company and its local partners work with teacher training institutions called Colleges of Education (CoE) and teacher unions. We work with teacher training institutions because:

- Graduates would be entering the job market and research shows graduates or final year trainees have a high probability of signing up for the badges than their colleagues who already have stable jobs.
- Although there is an inadequate number of teachers, there is huge competition in the job market and trainees would like to have a competitive advantage in the market hence the need for badges.

- With the aim of gradual adoption of badges, it is more logical to focus on teacher trainee colleges where the next generation of basic and high school teachers are being educated.

SkillSafari first runs pilot projects in these colleges. To attain badges trainees should have passed some courses set by the lecturers. The more of such selected courses and tasks trainees pass, the more badges they attain. Badges in management and administration are available for the management of such Colleges of Educations also. This process has been successful, we observe entire classes attaining badges.

After the pilot projects, SkillSafari then signs MOUs with the college. We believe the concept of digital badges would be adopted on a national level as more Colleges of Education are signed up to the scheme.

On the teacher Union front, such unions usually have regional and national conferences, our partnership with these unions allow us to be present during such conferences. A presentation on the badges is made and interested teachers sign up for tests to attain the badges.

We observe that when we focus on teachers already in the profession, the younger teachers who are more technologically inclined tend to easily understand the concept of digital badges and tend to have more interest than the much older generation of teachers.

4. GHANA AS A MARKET

4.1 Understanding the market

Ghana is arguably one of the most stable and peaceful democracies across the African continents. Currently, a middle-income country where education is a major national priority.

This chapter is going to focus on the education of teachers for high schools and basic schools. The Ministry of Education in Ghana has a long-term action plan to harness the power of technology to support the training of new teachers. The structure of the current education system is such that students are taught to focus on memorizing facts and figures to pass examinations rather than learning to become critical thinkers and solution-oriented.

The system, therefore, produces students who graduate with the best grades and are not able to get into the corporate working class. The country, therefore, has a high unemployment rate and most of these unemployed individuals are highly educated. Several government agencies, startups and international agencies have joined forces to reduce this by enhancing the kind of education students receive. A lot of emphasis is placed on the pre-service and in-service training of teacher trainee students and professional teachers. This is the market for SkillSafari.

4.2 Teacher Trainee Institutions in Ghana

The Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) which is the initial teacher trainee education process if offered in 38 Colleges of Education (Asare & Nti, 2014).

Grade K-9 and 10-12 are taught by teachers with a bachelors' diploma certificate issued by the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) and the University of Cape Coast (UCC). The two universities are crucial to the supply of well-trained basic and high school teachers in Ghana. It's also to be noted that University graduates from other public universities such as the University of Ghana and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) also enter the teaching profession (Asare & Nti 2014).

The Colleges of Education train kindergarten, primary and high school teachers using the Diploma in Basic Education, this is a 3 year program for teachers, for teachers who have already been through this program and passed, they undergo a two year program and are trained either by the University of Cape Coast or the University of Education. There is a separate pathway also for bachelor's degree holders who want to enter the teaching profession. These bachelor's holders after completion of their first-degree programs can

enter the teaching service either through the private route or the public route. There is also a four-year distance learning program for Untrained Teachers Diploma in Education. (UTDBE.) This is for Untrained serving teachers; this program is a partnership between the Teacher Education Division under the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the various Colleges of Education (CoE). (Anamuah-Mensah & Benneh 2010.)

Table 3 gives a detailed overview of the current pathways to Pre-service and In-service teacher training and development in Ghana.

Table 3 Pathways to Teacher Training in Ghana Source (Anamuah-Mensah & Benneh 2010)

Pathways	Location/institution	Implementing agency(ies)	Duration	Structure	Mode	Qualification earned/certificate awarded
Pre-service or initial teacher education	41 CoE (38 public and 3 private) JEC UCC/UEW CUCG VVU	NCTE/GES/TED JEC management University authorities	3 years 4 years 1 year 3 years 2 years 4 years 2 years	IN-IN-OUT DE IN-IN-IN-OUT Sandwich Sandwich Regular 4-year Post-diploma	Traditional/ DE/school attachment DE Traditional Traditional Face-to-face Traditional Sandwich	DBE BEd PGDE/certificate in education Diploma in education PGDE BEd BEd
Induction?	Schools? DEOs UEW	GES?	NA*	NA	NA	Teaching license?
In-service upgrading	UCC	University authorities	4 years	IN-IN-IN-OUT	Traditional/DE	DBE/BEd
In-service upgrading	UCC	University authorities	4 years 2 years 3 years 2 years 4 years	IN-IN-IN-IN (one semester practicum) IN-IN (Post-Diploma) OUT-OUT-OUT Sandwich for DBE holders Sandwich for non-professional serving teachers	Traditional Traditional DE/sandwich Sandwich (centers at selected CoE across Ghana) Sandwich (selected CoE as learning centers)	BEd BEd DBE BEd UTDBE
In-service cluster	School or cluster-based	GES	Variable	Variable	Traditional	No certificate or certificate of attendance
In-service: Lifelong learning, thinking, and rethinking practice	Individual	Individual	Lifelong	Variable	Variable	NA

4.3 External Factors of Ghana

In analyzing the external factors that are usually associated with the establishing a business in Ghana, there are several methods used to evaluate these factors, this author would however use the PESTEL analysis method. The PESTEL analysis tool is used to evaluate the macro facts about a company, these are the factors that outside the purview of the company, unlike the SWOT analysis method which focuses on the happenings within the company and factors that directly under the control of the company, PESTEL is the opposite of that. (Kottler & Armstrong 2014.)

The PESTEL analysis represents:

- Political Factors
- Economic Factors
- Social Factors
- Technological Factors
- Environmental Factors
- Legal Factors.

For the purpose of this research work, the author will focus on the Political, Economic, Social, Technological and the Legal factors. The image below shows what the PESTEL Analysis is comprised of.

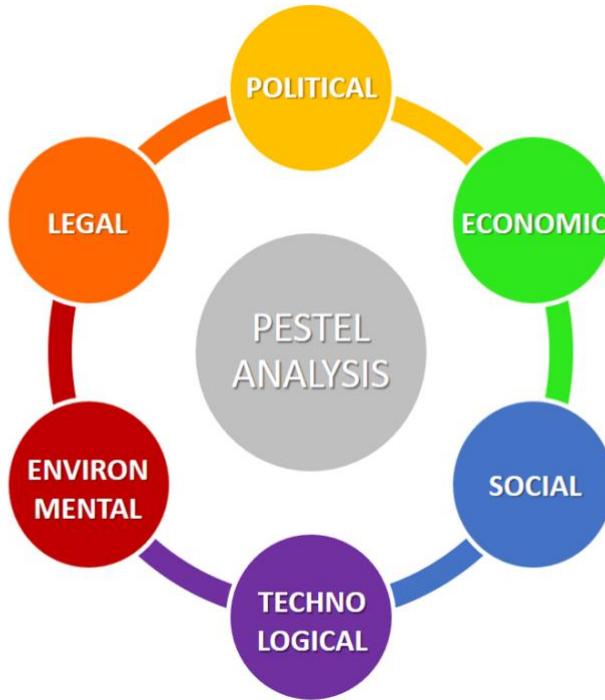


Fig 8. The PESTEL Analysis

Political Factors:

The political factors usually comprise of the stability of the government, and how that affects the business community in the country, the level of corruption ,the degree of the freedom of press and the freedom of speech of the individuals, the tax regime in the country, the amount of government regulations and deregulations, the degree of bilateral relationships with other nations and membership status of international organizations such as the World Trade Center (WTO), the amount of government influence and interference in private companies and how much the government allows competition within different industries.

Ghana is a very peculiar case in all the above considerations across the continent, Ghana is a functioning democratic country with a population of 29million (World Bank Group 2018). Ghana is located close to the Atlantic Ocean and surrounded by Burkina Faso to the north, Togo to the east and Ivory Coast to the west, politically the country practices a multi-party democracy with over 7 political parties and two major parties.

According to the World Bank Group Ghana ranks very high in the basic freedoms of the citizen such as the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. There is a free market space for entrepreneurs, and they are encouraged to actively take risk and participate in the economy, here are also tax incentives for young business, SMEs and Start-ups. SkillSafari will have no challenge doing business in Ghana. Foreign firms like SkillSafari are

actually encouraged to come, open offices, set up partnerships and help develop the economy.

Economic Factors:

In analyzing the economic considerations, factors such as economic growth rate, Interest rate, exchange rates, the GDP of the country, the availability of credit for private companies, the rate of employment and unemployment. For SkillSafari, the exchange rates, availability of credit, Interest rates, unemployment rates, government interference in foreign companies and tax regimes for foreign companies will be very important for consideration.

Social Factors:

Social Factors that should be evaluated are the population size and growth rate, the per capita income, average disposal income, the attitude towards foreigners, level of customer service, the education level in the country among others. Ghana is ranked relatively high in all the above criteria, the attitude of Ghanaians towards foreigners is very cosmopolitan in nature.

Technological Factors:

The level of innovation, internet infrastructure, means of communication and the level of technology is advancing at a rapid rate, the country has 3 telecom firms with a connectivity of 4G network, there is also a vibrant tech-oriented start up community, coding schools and academies.

Legal Factors:

The world bank described the Ghanaian judiciary as “an independent judiciary that has won the trust of the public”. Ghana has strong laws that protect employees and employers against all forms of discrimination, contract disputes and consumer protection laws. Foreign companies operating in Ghana have the same and equal opportunity to seek legal redress when the need arises.

5. EMPERICAL RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Structure and Data collection

Due to the non-numerical nature of the data and the results of the interviews this research was conducted in the qualitative approach. The purpose of the research was to state the why SkillSafari should enter the Ghanaian market and by so doing why other Finnish Edu-Tech companies should seriously consider Ghanaian market.

The questions were in an informal structure this was done to ensure that interviewees did not give one-word answers or short answers. The writing of the research was based on three factors;

- Personal experience from the author working at SkillSafari and having lived in Ghana for over 25years.
- Interviews from teacher trainees currently in CoEs in Ghana
- Interviews from active professional teachers in Ghana
- Questionnaires from education-based non-profits and private agencies across Ghana

A total number of 14 interviews were conducted, 8 interviews with active teaching professionals and 6 teacher trainee students in their final year were interviewed, all interviews were conducted online using various social media platforms such as skype calls, WhatsApp and Viber video calls. Such social media platforms are dominant in Ghana. Most working professionals like teachers and trainee students will prefer communication via these platforms than the use of email.

All interviews were conducted in English. As said earlier, the author of this research is a Ghanaian by birth and after having lived there for several years, it was much easier to understand the interviewees, understand the cultural perspective and the reasons for certain answers.

The next pages will discuss the interview questions and the comments from interviewees

1. How will you grade the teacher training program in the College of Education?

Most of our Participants gave the training in the CoEs 6-9 marks, they spoke very well of their CoE tutors, 2 participants however graded their training much lower and bemoaned the quality and standard of the training was falling as the years went by. Participants made remarks such as;

The quality of teachers released each year into the profession seems to be going down, I do not think it is the fault of the students themselves, I do however think it is the curriculum that is used.

Due to the influx of private basic and high schools, most trainees rush their education to enter the profession.

Compared to other SSA countries, the quality here is very high, however having gone through the system, most of us tend to criticize our own CoEs.

I would rate the standard high but looking into the future, I think the standard will drop because our CoE syllabus does not change fast enough to cover the fast pace of development.

Working with new graduate teachers, I will say the quality is much lower than it was when I attended, however I will put the blame at the increase in students, there are too many trainee students now for the much smaller number of tutors, decades ago the focus was quality, I think the focus now is more on quantity than quality.

Analyzing the comments on this question, a trend is observed, teachers who graduated recently and most final year trainees gave much higher scores and spoke highly of the quality, however, teachers who graduated decades ago confessed the quality has dropped and keeps dropping.

2. How long do you plan to stay in the teaching profession?

10 of the 14 participants said they had no imminent plans of changing professions. Two participants however said they were open to new ideas and opportunities but are not actively in search of these opportunities.

A few comments from participants are below:

I have plans to save enough funds to start my own kindergarten, will be running it whiles I teach.

The profession is regaining the respect it deserves from the government, there are more people who want to become teachers now, that may be due to the growing unemployment rate, I really like the profession as it is now.

I look to teaching in the private sector sometime to come, it is very challenging in the public schools, most teachers would prefer private schools until they become like the public schools.

The observation from this question was that all participants had plans to remain in the education industry, however as expected long term plans were different, most teacher trainees even before graduating were looking at starting an education oriented business, some mentioned starting education non-profits, educational travel agencies, two participants mentioned using new technologies and platforms like Khan Academy to create their own courses and offer to teach them online.

3. Opinion on seeking additional education and training?

All participants spoke very positively about getting new training and new types of education, most of the participants were open to the use of the internet in this training, although a few had reservations due to the internet connectivity challenges in rural areas, below shows some of the comments from participants:

Yes, I will like to keep myself updated on current trends in my profession, this is the only way I will be able to teach this current generation of students.

I will definitely do that and will prefer to be train by private agency or NGO, the current government way of lifelong learning is not effective.

The take away from this question was the divide in the age groups, much older teachers who had years of teaching experiences were reluctant in this, most gave very open remarks, comments from most of these teachers seem to come from the belief that the government was responsible for their training and re-training.

This question had a different reaction from the newer and younger teachers, they believe they were fully responsible for their actions and trainings which would make them more competitive. A few brought up the idea of seeking further degrees in the education field abroad all by themselves.

4. Knowledge of digital badges?

Participants described digital badges in the most basic way possible, although the deep level of understanding was missing, the author could infer that with just a little explanation 5 out of the 14 interview participants easily understood what digital badges were. Participants initially described digital badges in the following:

A badge showing your identity, address and maybe your profession and criminal record.

It is a platform where you can show your professional skills and careers.

Similar to the use of social media where you can showcase yourself to the outside world.

It sounds like a platform that displays the accomplishments of people like Facebook.

After this first set of comments and answers, the author went on to explain the concept of digital badges and most participants then could relate to it, there was a spike in interest on the concept after the explanation. The concept of gaining badges and using them as a symbol of credentials showcasing the skills, academic progress and the possibility of using these badges to attain higher career heights got participants very interested and this interest continued for the remaining half of the questions.

5. Importance of Teacher Unions?

All the active teachers spoke very well of the teacher unions, they are all members of various unions and some are members of multiple teacher unions. There are three main unions in Ghana for teachers and educational professionals, these are NAGRAT, GNAT and CTAG. A few of the comments collated are:

The best thing any new teacher can do for themselves is to join any of the unions, they fight for us.

I will recommend you take this concept of badges to the unions; they are the surest ways to reach as many teachers as possible.

Our unions are very important when it comes to training and re-training programs, other foreign agencies like yours send marketing materials through the unions.

GNAT is the biggest union by members and the oldest, they have more proper structures to support your vision, CTAG is more focused on fighting government for teacher welfare and benefits.

Our unions have several partnerships with other foreign teacher unions, foreign companies and international groups, once or twice a year we attend conferences and training seminars.

It will be much easier to work with any of the unions than dealing with the ministry.

Our unions are there for us, anything that will benefit teachers in Ghana, our unions will support such ideas.

These comments confirmed the ideas and initial thoughts SkillSafari had about the importance of unions, similar to other African countries, teacher unions and leaders of these unions have an enormous amount of control, power and respect over their members. There may be differences in relation to dealing with government due to political considerations, however when it comes to any other teacher welfare such as the idea of training their membership, there is a good amount of harmony. This harmony is very positive for foreign companies such as SkillSafari. It is only natural that a company will prefer leadership stability in its partner agency.

6. Financial Commitment to Additional Skills?

The feedback for question 6 was met with mixed reactions, participants generally accepted that in order to have additional skills and training, they had to take the commitment initiative and the financial initiative, all participants accepted and liked the idea or making payment for additional training leading to attaining of the digital badges. 10 participants suggested prices within the range of 5-10 euros which will be between GH30.00- GH50.00, the remaining participants had suggestions much lower.

It should be noted that these are price suggestions for one badge thus SkillSafari makes its profits along the increase in volume, half of the participants were willing to get more than 5 badges for different skills and the other half suggested they will be interested in more than 5 badges, when teachers gain badges in classroom management, starter level to expert level badges in problem-based learning and challenge- based learning badges, there is a higher probability that these teachers will go for multiple badges.

7. Thoughts on SkillSafari & Recommendation?

Participants spoke well and positively about the concept of badges and the ability to have an additional way of recognizing their skills. Participants gave comments as below:

Once your team gets the rights partnerships and agreements, I believe your service will catch on fast.

Make sure the company gets the teacher unions and attending our next seminars will boost your visibility and sales.

This is a new concept and am sure like myself, a lot of my colleague do not know such a company and such a service exist.

To make business sense, you should focus in the southern part of the country, bigger cities such as Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi and Cape Coast.

A consistent feedback was the mindset that foreign companies, in this case European firms like SkillSafari were trustworthy, the author learnt that European non-profits and education advocacy groups were trusted more. This is an opinion which is similar and shared in the countries where SkillSafari is currently operational. The author also learnt that partnering with EU organizations such as the various embassies of EU states in Ghana and educational programs funded by the EU will bring great results, 4 participants mentioned they had attended programs funded by the EU for teacher training and development. A few participants gave recommendations on how the SkillSafari should market itself, below are comments on this:

Most of us in the boarding schools spend a lot of time on campus, doing campus visit to speak at staff meetings would have direct results.

Work on the trainings schools (CoEs), award the tutors and the heads of these school's badges, help them to understand what the badges are, when they fully understand the technology, they will influence their students to get them also.

Once you get our unions on your side and they agree to help you, they will get you more results with the marketing they do than with what you can do.

Teachers are very intelligent people and know the difference between a good company and a bad one and a good idea and bad one, market yourself as an education company nothing extraordinary.

Strike agreements with the CoEs and you will catch final years and recent graduates, the best way to reach the most teachers within a short time is through the unions and the training schools.

The various interviews led the author to develop two main recommendations which should be considered priorities:

- Registration: The registration and certification of the company should be the first step, the necessary authorizations will have to be sort after at the Registrar Generals Office, Ghana however has a local content bill which requires all foreign companies in Ghana to have local partners.
- SkillSafari however due to the business model and the nature of operations across the continent works with local partners and this requirement will not be a challenge. The company will also have to complete registration processes with various agencies under the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service.
- Partnerships: The formation of partnerships is very important and this is already known to the management, the business model across the continent has been built on strong partnerships with local partners and Ghana will be no different, partnership with workers unions, government organizations such as the Ministry, educational organizations such as the various CoEs and International organizations active in the Educational sector in Ghana.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Answers to the Research Questions

The research work was focused on the market entry strategy for SkillSafari, a finnish edutech start-up to enter the Ghanaian education market, the company seeks to expand from its current operational zone in South African and enter into the SSA region, especially West Africa. The company seeks to set a strong foundation in Ghana.

The main research was;

- What should be the entry strategy for SkillSafari in Ghana?

In order to find answers to the main question above a set of supporting questions will have to be asked, these supporting questions are;

- What will be the main competitive advantage of SkillSafari in Ghana?
- How will SkillSafari survive in the Ghanaian market for the long term?

Below, the author provides the answers to these questions:

What will be the main competitive Advantage of SkillSafari in Ghana?

In the Ghanaian Edu-Tech market, SkillSafari will enter a specific niche market where the company will become the very first company to enter the commercial digital badges market hence having the first mover advantage. SkillSafari will have a competitive based on its origins, the company is a Finnish company and from research there is a strong level of trustworthiness, general likeness and preferability to European based companies and businesses. The company is also already established in some Eastern and Southern African countries and has successfully completed projects thus giving it the experience already dealing with local partners.

How will SkillSafari survive in the Ghanaian market for the long term?

The Ghana market has an enormous potential and for SkillSafari to be able to stay in it for years to come, the company has to ensure that it develops the best partnerships, as discussed in the research and from the information gathered, focusing on getting partnerships from the onset will go a long way to assist the company have a firm rooting in the education space, Educational institutions and education focused private and International organizations will be the best target for these partnerships. Another equally important aspect will be finding local partners, on the ground who will do most of the heavy

lifting in terms of local operations, management, recruitment, marketing and sales and marketing engagements. SkillSafari already employs this same strategy in its countries of operations and this has proven to be successful. Another way of maintaining that SkillSafari survives in the Ghanaian market will be to constantly be innovative, this research recommends that once the teacher level digital badge project is fully in operations, the company should initiate research work on expanding the product to a different target group such as recent University graduates or final year students in the various tertiary institutions.

The main research question:

What should be the entry strategy for SkillSafari in Ghana?

The research looked at the theory of new market entry, it also analyzed the current operations across the African continent and also evaluated the country specific factors, after the looking at all the information available, this research will conclude that SkillSafari should employ a joint venture model of operation in Ghana and placing a high value on the selection of the right local partner.

In selecting a local partner, the suitable partner will be one that has a good and reputable track record in the educational sector. The partnership agreement has to be a well-defined MOU where both parties will be able to build mutual respect and trust.

6.2 Research Validity and Reliability

The accuracy of a research is a very key aspect of any research, the reliability of a research makes the research piece trustworthy. The key factor of this thesis was to present the feedback and answers received from the CEO, interviewees, in addition to the personal work experience of the author in the company for the duration of work there, the author is also a Ghanaian national who has lived in the country for 25 years.

Secondary data for this research work was gathered from a wide range of sources ranging from subject specific online sources and materials and the continental specific data was gathered from International organizations such as the World Bank using their web-based data gathering platforms. Considering the all the above, the author can thus deem the thesis reliable and valid.

7 SUMMARY

The purpose of the thesis was to understand how the case company SkillSafari should enter the Ghanaian market. This report sort to explain the Ghanaian Educational landscape, the various sector-based players, the impact of the government, teacher unions and private sector.

The research starts with the basic business principles of market entry, here a lot of emphasis was placed on the Hollensen theory, the research looked at the various modes, their merits and de-merits, the research also utilized the various marketing tools such as the PESTEL analysis and SWOT analytical tool, all these made up the theoretical section of the thesis.

The report then led to look at the case company itself, the introduction of the company, the mission and areas of operation of the company, the team and business model of the company. The next chapter focused on the target country Ghana, data from the World Bank was looked at, this data focused on the continent as a whole to analyze the challenges and where the continent was heading. Here focus was placed on quality education and how the African continent and Ghana was faring in term of quality education.

The report then leads to focus on the concept digital badges, how they work, their characteristics and usage. The thesis would not have been complete without the participation of educational participants in Ghana, interviews were done on two sets of groups, the first group consisted of active teachers who are practicing the profession and the second group made up of final year students in Colleges of Education (CoE), these are the students who will be entering the teaching profession right after completion and will make up a large proportion of the target market for SkillSafari.

The final part included recommendations for the company, a market entry plan for the company, analysis of the interviews and the thesis questions which were stated in the first chapter.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions

1. On the scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 the lowest and 10 the highest) how will you grade your training program in the College of Education? And why this grade?
2. How long do you plan to stay in the teaching professional, why and what plans do you have after that?
3. What is your opinion on seeking additional education/training after your school?
4. What do you know about digital badges?
5. How important are the various teacher unions, GNAT, NAGRAT etc.?
6. How much are you willing to pay for additional skills and training that would end with you receiving the digital badge?
7. What is your take on the idea of SkillSafari (This will be asked after I have described what SkillSafari is about)?
8. What will be your recommendation?