IMPROVING METHODOLOGIES OF HIGH POTENTIAL NASCENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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INTERACTIVE PAPER

IMPROVING METHODOLOGIES OF HIGH POTENTIAL NASCENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

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Principal Topic

A central development in entrepreneurship is the growth of nascent entrepreneur research through which statistically representative samples of venture start-up efforts and/or firms in gestation are evaluated over time (Davidsson 2006). While highly valuable, large research projects investigating entrepreneurship like the Panel Study of Entrepreneurial Dynamics (PSED) and its counterparts reveal random samples of start-ups being dominated by low potential, imitative ventures. This is in contrast with theoretical and policy interest which focus on high growth/innovative ventures.

Therefore, it is important to supplement PSED-type samples with theoretically representative samples of the ‘higher end’ emerging ventures. This is what we attempt in this research.

Our first contribution is to develop a way to capture a judgment sample of high potential startups based on novel, multiple screening criteria. Our second contribution is to compare process of development between high potential and ‘regular’ start-ups.

Methods

We sought to identify a diverse sample of high potential nascent firms varying in several dimensions identified as theoretically important in prior literature. While obtaining a random sample in this rare category is practically impossible we attempt to avoid biases by obtaining the sample from a large set of possible contact points (e.g., incubators; patents; awards etc.) To qualify firms as high potential, we used multiple, partly compensating screening criteria, related to human capital, aspirations of founders, and novelty of venture idea. Items were based on PSED to allow for comparison. We will investigate differences between high potential firms and our random sample in terms of sequence and ‘intensity’ of gestation activities.

Results

As of this writing the first wave data collection is about to be completed and a data set will be delivered within the next few weeks. This research makes two contributions to research on nascent entrepreneurship theory. It provides characteristics of the high potential judgement sample and evaluates what sampling strategies and sources were most successful. Second, it presents process differences and compares sequence and intensity of gestation activities between high potential and imitative firms. As such, this study provides a better match between theory and empirics, and a picture of differences in gestation activities.

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