THE VALUE-ADDED CONTRIBUTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP COGNITION RESEARCH: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THREE DECADES OF RESEARCH (SUMMARY)

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Recommended Citation
Grégoire, Denis A.; Corbett, Andrew C.; and McMullen, Jeffery S. (2009) "THE VALUE-ADDED CONTRIBUTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP COGNITION RESEARCH: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THREE DECADES OF RESEARCH (SUMMARY)," Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research: Vol. 29: Iss. 6, Article 10.
Available at: http://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol29/iss6/10

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SUMMARY

THE VALUE-ADDED CONTRIBUTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP COGNITION RESEARCH: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THREE DECADES OF RESEARCH

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Principal Topic

What has been the contribution of entrepreneurship research that adopted a cognitive perspective? To explore this question, we content-analyze a corpus of 156 entrepreneurship cognition articles published in peer-reviewed journals between 1976 and 2008.

Methodology

To generate a comprehensive sample of relevant articles, we conducted a series of searches in three reference databases: ABI Inform, Business Source Complete, and PsychInfo. For all three databases, we searched for articles that met the following criteria: (1) publication between 1976 and 2008; (2) publication in a peer-reviewed journal; (3) publication in a journal that is indexed in the Social-Science Citation Index; and (4) use of keywords relevant for “cognition” and “entrepreneurship”.

We analyze the corpus of articles along three axes. First, we investigate whether the publication of entrepreneurship cognition research is increasing, stabilizing, or decreasing, and whether it is limited to entrepreneurship-specific journals. Second, we inventory the independent and dependent variables of cognitive interest that entrepreneurship cognition articles have investigated, and assess the area’s degree of theoretical convergence upon specific (and potentially unique) variables. Third, we build on these observations to identify the areas where entrepreneurship cognition has made important value-added contributions, and analyze the form that such contributions have made from a cognitive standpoint.

Results and Implications

In terms of growth trajectory, our results show that dramatic increases in the number of entrepreneurship cognition articles per year have led to the appearance of more entrepreneurship cognition in journals of higher impact. At the level of the entire corpus, we find that entrepreneurship cognition research exhibits low levels of theoretical convergence on any particular variables. However, we observe that some groups of papers that share particular disciplinary anchors gravitate towards narrower sets of variables, while other groups of papers do not. These observations suggest that, even though the cognitive perspective has made important contributions to entrepreneurship research over the last three decades, there remains a number of theoretically relevant axes that have been poorly explored – and especially in empirical terms. We conclude by providing guidelines and recommendations for future research.

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