

6-11-2016

LEARNING TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR: NOVICE ENTREPRENEURS' DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTUAL AND CAUSAL BEHAVIOR (SUMMARY)

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Recommended Citation

Solvoll, Sølvi (2016) "LEARNING TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR: NOVICE ENTREPRENEURS' DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTUAL AND CAUSAL BEHAVIOR (SUMMARY)," *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*: Vol. 36 : Iss. 3 , Article 14. Available at: <https://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol36/iss3/14>

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 SUMMARY **LEARNING TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR: NOVICE ENTREPRENEURS' DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTUAL AND CAUSAL BEHAVIOR**

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Principal Topic

The theory of effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001) was developed based on the study of expert entrepreneurs, where expert entrepreneurs are described as drawing upon their learned experience to effectively use effectuation. However, scholars have limited understanding of *how* effectual logic is actually developed through experience and learning. Consequently, there have been numerous and repeated calls for more in-depth examination of these antecedents to effectual behavior (e.g. Arend, Sarooghi & Burkemper, 2015; Perry, Chandler, & Markova, 2012).

In this study, we seek to understand how certain critical experiences faced by entrepreneurs during the startup process lead to learning, and subsequently how that changes entrepreneurial behavior. The main purpose of the study is to gain better understanding of how experiences and entrepreneurial learning contribute to the development of effectual and causal logics.

Method

We conducted in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs from 5 start-ups in experience-based tourism. The interviewees were followed during their three first years of running their business. The longitudinal component is vital, as we are interested in the learning taking place during the initial phases of new venture development and over time. This allows us to avoid common methodological biases, such as hindsight and recall bias. We complemented the interviews with secondary data from newspapers and social media.

Results and Implications

The study makes three key contributions to the literature. First, we contribute to novel understanding of the relationship between experience and the development of effectual and causal behavior, thereby providing insight to the proposition that effectuation is primarily a logic of expert entrepreneurs. Second, we examine the process through which (different types of) entrepreneurial behavior is shaped and reshaped, contributing to the understanding of how entrepreneurs learn from experience and transfer this learning into action. Third, we differentiate between learning stemming from experiences through meetings with institutions and learning from the entrepreneur's own experimentation with activities and behaviors. This provides a more in-depth view of experiential learning, but also on how institutions entrepreneurs face influence their experiences, learning and ultimately their behavior.

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