ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP - AN EXPLORATION OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS, OUTCOMES AND LIFE CYCLE EFFECTS TO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH (SUMMARY)

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ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP - AN EXPLORATION OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS, OUTCOMES AND LIFE CYCLE EFFECTS TO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

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Principal Topic

Although entrepreneurial leadership has been associated with business development and growth, we still have limited understanding of the context, conditions and circumstances under which the leaders of SMEs view business growth as desirable and feasible and how a strategic approach to entrepreneurship helps them to realize their vision for growth. In order to address this gap an empirical investigation of six Scottish SMEs, account managed by a public enterprise development agency has been undertaken.

Method

The case companies were theoretically selected on the basis that they had invested directly or indirectly financial and/or time resources in leadership development within the organization, displayed a strategically entrepreneurial attitude, and had delineated particularly interesting courses in terms of organisational performance and growth during their lifecycle.

Semi-structured, longitudinal interviews were conducted with three informants for each case; the leader, an employee in an important management position and an external adviser. The critical incident technique was utilized as the principle method of data collection and content analysis. The thematic interview protocol was constructed in a way that enabled informants to create a narrative of their own experience by reflecting on incidents they considered to be critical in terms of visioning, strategic decision making for opportunity exploration/exploitation, and resource mobilization/management. This method helped respondents to build narratives of entrepreneurial events and leadership outcomes and link them to different trajectories of their business development. Finally, a chronological lens was used to allow identify patterns and investigate the effects of continuity and change.

Results and Implications

The study illustrates the interlinked relation between business growth strategies and vision; discusses strategic and circumstantial decision making on opportunity exploration/exploitation and explores the role of the entrepreneurial asset base, resource mobilization and management in the entrepreneurial leadership process. The chronological lens allowed seeing a temporal continuum of a series of events countered around decision making and its outcomes to realize a constantly revised vision for the future of the business. Finally, entrepreneurial leadership was identified as an act of the leader’s volition at the level of the individual firm with numerous antecedent variables and outcomes sensitive to initial conditions.

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