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WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURS? (SUMMARY)

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 SUMMARY **WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURS?**

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Principal Topic

Interest in entrepreneurship has grown exponentially in the recent decades. While governments have designed a set of enabling policies that are beneficial to startups and firm growth (Gilbert, Audretsch & McDougall, 2004), and universities established mechanisms to spinoff companies (Shane, 2004), dedicated forms of support such as business have emerged (Hackett & Dilts, 2004). Despite today's ubiquity of entrepreneurship support initiatives, researchers have found little evidence of its benefits. For instance, the impact of business incubators in firm survival is mixed (Amezcua, Grimes, Bradley, & Wiklund, 2013; Schwartz, 2008) which be explained by a multitude of support strategies (Clarysse et al, 2005) not necessarily sharing the same outcome (Bergek & Norrman, 2008).

Against this backdrop, it is legitimate to ask: what do we know about supporting entrepreneurs? After decades of public and private investment poured into entrepreneurship support initiatives, what is the rationale of the many sources and types of support? More importantly, what do we know about the efficacy of each of these initiatives? And how do different sources and types of support fare when compared to one another?

Methods

Entrepreneurship support is the provision of valuable resources to entrepreneurs by individuals or organizations, which carry structured activities to facilitate the imminent establishment of a new independent firm, increase survival chances, or promote long-term growth (based on Hanlon & Saunders, 2007). We analyzed the content of articles 124 published in leading peer-reviewed journals selected using best practices of prior systematic literature reviews (Klotz, Hmieleski, Bradley, & Busenitz, 2014; Shepherd, Williams, & Patzelt, 2015; Short, 2009; Ucbasaran, Shepherd, Lockett, & Lyon, 2013).

Results and Implications

Taken together, our results suggest that we do not know much about entrepreneurship support. Most research focuses on internal mechanisms rather than seeking to understand whether a particular initiative designed to support entrepreneurship actually impacts the firm. Most studies reviewed describe how each form of support work internally, its best practices, or how firms need support. We end the paper suggesting research propositions based on existing prevalent theories in management and entrepreneurship.

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