PROBLEM-SOLVING IN ENTREPRENEURAL TEAMS: PATHS OF FRAMING AND REFRAMING (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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INTERACTIVE PAPER

PROBLEM-SOLVING IN ENTREPRENEURIAL TEAMS: PATHS OF FRAMING AND REFRAMING

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Principle Topic

Overcoming problems, referring to complex situations that stand as barriers to an intended goal state (Hsieh et al. 2007, Simon 1991, Dörner 1976), is essential to entrepreneurial success and growth. Problems are present throughout the entire entrepreneurial process, and can for example involve the experience of critical events, environmental changes, failures and errors, or appear in the general process of opportunity exploration and exploitation. Entrepreneurs’ mental models influence how they understand the problem and the efforts taken to solve them, but also the type of learning it may lead to (Wang & Chugh, 2014) to be used and applied in future endeavors (Byrne & Shepherd 2015). Whereas some entrepreneurs engage in problem-solving as a forward-looking search process, others focus on problem-solving as a trial and error activity to overcome errors and failures (Yacob, 2015, Hsieh et al, 2007; Guo and Zhaou, 2010). There is, however, scarce understanding about mechanisms that influence the perceptions of problems in the entrepreneurial process, and the potential differences and similarities regarding problem identification and problem-solving approaches between entrepreneurs in the start-up and growth phases. This is a shortcoming since the framing of problem and efforts to solve them in the start-up phase may influence problem-solving approaches used in later phases. This study investigates how the framing of problems occurs in entrepreneurial teams and how this framing and re-framing of problems influence subsequent problemsolving efforts.

Method

Inductive methods are used to collect and analyze a mix of data. The sampling covered 6 new venture teams and 6 mature teams that volunteered for a business development program. The 12 teams were followed for a period of one year.

Results and Implications

As of this writing, the data analysis is still in progress. Preliminary findings indicate that problem-solving processes influence learning and new venture progress. Specifically it shows that heterogeneity of temporal focus may lead to fragmentation and conflicts in new venture teams, but may be rather positive in mature teams. One reason for this can be the clarity of roles and responsibilities in mature teams. The findings also indicate that reframing of problem may be the result of learning, but that such learning and reframing tend to take place within the same temporal focus as previously. Temporal focus seems to be difficult to change – no matter whether the team is new or mature.

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