ENTREPRENEURS FROM A CHINESE TECHNOLOGY-BASED UNIVERSITY: JOB ROLES AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

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Principal Topic

This paper proposes to build on the stream of literature examining career history and entrepreneurship by examining the impact of human capital generated through education and work history, and specifically how policy changes influence the work history of those choosing to become entrepreneurs. I present a unique dataset of entrepreneurs from a prestigious technology-based university in China. This paper examines trends in entrepreneurship among alumni graduating from a technical university from the 1950s up to 2007. This timeframe permits us to analyze patterns in the human capital and work history characteristics of those becoming entrepreneurs in response to important policy changes during market reform.

Method

The paper builds on a growing tradition of university alumni surveys, however, to our knowledge, none have been done in China. Utilizing survey responses from almost 2,966 alumni I attempt to disentangle cohort and period effects to analyze how policy changes may have been associated with differing work histories for the individuals engaging in entrepreneurial behavior over time.

Results and Implications

New company formation rates by Chinese university alumni have grown dramatically over the past several years and with policy changes, the backgrounds of those entrepreneurs have changed to include more academics and those with technical work experience. The results suggest that after the 1999 policy changes, there was more entrepreneurship among those who have held academic jobs and technical roles in the past. In addition, the more recent founders were individuals who have achieved higher salary levels, and more of them grew up in lower economic status families. The results imply that a much broader segment of the Chinese population is now engaging in entrepreneurial behavior and that new companies in China are increasingly being started by those with more technical backgrounds, which may lead to more R&D and technology oriented start-ups.

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