OPPORTUNITY RECOGNITION WITH A MENTOR: THE ROLE OF THE ENTREPRENEUR'S LEARNING GOAL ORIENTATION (SUMMARY)

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OPPORTUNITY RECOGNITION WITH A MENTOR: THE ROLE OF THE ENTREPRENEUR’S LEARNING GOAL ORIENTATION

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Principal Topic
Research has demonstrated that mentors can help novice entrepreneurs in the identification of business opportunities (Ozgen & Baron, 2007). However, the process by which mentoring enables a mentee to identify new opportunities is not well understood. This is the purpose of this research. One of the major benefits of a mentoring relationship is the learning that ensues from discussions with the mentor (Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Therefore, the knowledge that is acquired through a mentoring relationship could stimulate the novice entrepreneur’s ability to recognize new opportunities. At the same time, learning goal orientation (LGO) is a fairly stable psychological disposition that individuals bring to their relationship with others. LGO stimulates behavior and influences the interpretation of, and reaction to, certain outcomes (Dweck, 1986).

Method
We collected data through the business mentoring program of Fondation de l’entrepreneuriat in the province of Quebec. Mentees were contacted by email to participate in the study and 362 participants agreed to cooperate (response rate of 36.9%). We have measured the entrepreneur’s ability to recognize new opportunities with the measurement developed by Anna et al. (2000) and it was used as the dependent variable. LGO was measured with the scale developed by Button et al. (1996) and learning with a mentor was measured with the instrument developed by Allen and Eby (2003).

Results and Implications
We found that age had a negative influence on dependent variable, whereas management experience had a positive effect, while others control were non-significant. LGO had a positive influence on the dependent variable, just as learning with a mentor. We added the interaction term of LGO X Learning with mentor, which was significant, but had a negative effect. This mean that the greater the LGO, the lesser the effect between learning with a mentor and the ability to recognize opportunities. We confirmed that learning with a mentor is an important way of developing self-efficacy in recognizing opportunities for novice entrepreneur. However, this effect is more important for entrepreneurs with a low LGO because mentoring may be one of the few activities that they make use of to develop this specific self-efficacy.

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