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THE PERFORMANCE DETERMINANTS OF TECHNOLOGY BUSINESS INCUBATORS: A RESOURCE BASED VIEW

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Principal Topic
Technology business incubators have been around for about half a century. Despite their increasing popularity, one major question that is often raised is the return one gets on these investments. Although most efforts have brought an interesting array of often descriptive accounts in examining incubators’ performance, some do provide conceptual or integrative frameworks. However, there is a general believe that the jury is still out in terms of the overall effectiveness of these investments. This paper adopts a resource-based view of incubator performance in order to better understand why some incubator programs are more successful than others in supporting the development of new technology or science-based firms (NTSBF), in a unique and largely unexplored setting.

Methods
The paper provides evidence from France based on the original data collected from a recently implemented national program of technology incubators. From a population of 28 incubators with 1732 NTSBF projects operating under this program; we surveyed a representative sample of 1000 NTSBFs that are being nurtured in 15 different incubator facilities. Our research dataset originates from the program database covering the period of 2000-2008, which was supplemented using a questionnaire-based survey of key incubator/firm respondents.

Results and Implications
A central finding of our empirical research confirms the notion that each incubator has different resource stocks available and these resource combinations are shown to be a significant factor in explaining inter-incubator variation in their NTSBFs development performance. Especially, the presence of skilled and resourceful staff affects incubator activity and consequently the formation of NTSBFs. Furthermore, the size and nature of financial resources allocated to incubators influence the formation of NTSBFs. The study also provides convincing evidence that the presence of other supporting structure (such as universities) increases the likelihood of NTSBFs emergence. These findings provide new insights for policy makers involved in the incubation program design and enabling support systems that will aid in the formation and survival of NTSBFs by proper identification and allocation of necessary resources thus enhancing overall program sustainability and public acceptance.

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