THE CORNERSTONES OF SMES ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION: A NEW PERSPECTIVE (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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THE CORNERSTONES OF SMES ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION: A NEW PERSPECTIVE

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Principal Topic

This paper analyzes the factors that affect Entrepreneurial Orientation in Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Our aim is to contribute to the literature on SMEs entrepreneurship by extending our understanding of the effect of the top manager-entrepreneur’s personality and of the organizational structure features on EO. In doing so, we bring a few elements of response to Miller’s (2011:12) question: “When and how do structural routines and standard procedures actually foster EO?”. Our focus on the context of SMEs reflects the challenge offered by Carsrud & Brännback (2011:20) who note that little research has addressed the question of how factors such as self-efficacy and expected outcome interact with contextual factors to impact SMEs entrepreneurial behaviors.

Following in Miller’s footsteps, we set the entrepreneurship variable as dependent variable. We propose a model with the following independent variables: need for achievement (McClelland, 1961), entrepreneurial self – efficacy (Forbes, 2005), a variable that measures the extent to which a company has a mechanistic structure (Burns & Stalker, 1961), and company size and age (i.e. Stevenson & Jarrillo-Mossi, 1986).

Method

We chose a quantitative methodology and used established scales to insure commensurability with previous studies. Our questionnaire was sent to members of two French chambers of commerce from two regions that share the same contextual features. This may limit generality but may enhance application and generate more fine-grained and more empirically valid knowledge (Miller; 2011:881). The final sample is composed of 163 questionnaires for a response rate of 8,15%. T-tests indicate no significant differences between respondents and non-respondents in terms of age and size. We used the Harman one-factor test to successfully test for common method bias.

Results and Implications

Need for achievement and entrepreneurial self-efficacy are positively related to EO. The motivations and mastery of the top manager do indeed contribute to firm level entrepreneurial behavior. The mechanistic structure emerged to be negatively related to EO, which is also in line with previous findings.

Interestingly, size and age moderate the positive relationship between mechanistic structure and EO – meaning that the mechanistic structure can be beneficial and support EO as the firm grows older. Over the past, size and age have been seen as the enemies of entrepreneurship: as firms grow and age, entrepreneurship gets stifled by formalization. We find that, on the contrary, the formalism inherent to the mechanistic structure can furnish, under certain conditions, the frame for entrepreneurship.

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