Corporate Entrepreneurship: where are we? Where can we go from here?

Shaker A. Zahra, Kathleen Randerson, Alain Fayolle

Dans M@n@gement 2013/4 (Vol. 16), pages 357 à 361
Éditions AIMS

DOI 10.3917/mana.164.0357

Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse
https://www.cairn.info/revue-management-2013-4-page-357.htm

Distribution électronique Cairn.info pour AIMS.
La reproduction ou représentation de cet article, notamment par photocopie, n'est autorisée que dans les limites des conditions générales d'utilisation du site ou, le cas échéant, des conditions générales de la licence souscrite par votre établissement. Toute autre reproduction ou représentation, en tout ou partie, sous quelque forme et de quelque manière que ce soit, est interdite sauf accord préalable et écrit de l'éditeur, en dehors des cas prévus par la législation en vigueur en France. Il est précisé que son stockage dans une base de données est également interdit.
Corporate Entrepreneurship: where are we? Where can we go from here?

Shaker A. ZAHRA
Kathleen RANDERSON
Alain FAYOLLE
INTRODUCTION

This Unplugged issue of M@n@gement is dedicated to the topic of Corporate Entrepreneurship and is titled: Corporate Entrepreneurship: where are we? Where can we go from here? An international workshop was organized in Lyon on June 20-21st, 2011 and brought together about fifty researchers. The aim of this workshop was to discuss the results of recent works in Corporate Entrepreneurship research. To this end, we asked four researchers to do a state of the field and to share their vision of the rising promising research questions. The philosophy of this workshop was very much in line with that of the Unplugged series. We wanted it to be, to quote Josserand (Clegg & Starbuck, 2009), “a wild card to share their own perspective on novel ways in which to conceive of management today”. In the field of corporate entrepreneurship research, we are currently witnessing lively scientific debate around the Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) construct and the interactions between strategy and entrepreneurship. During the workshop, we embraced the distinction between advances in science (that we make by asking good questions) and scientific discovery (that we make by questioning what we think we know). This Unplugged includes three parts:

In part one, we present “The Evolution and Contributions of Corporate Entrepreneurship Research”, a state of the field of knowledge in the field. We retrace the field’s first steps and offer an agenda for research. At the intersection of strategic management and entrepreneurship lies the study of corporate entrepreneurship (CE), a phrase coined by Peterson and Burger (Peterson & Berger, 1971). CE is important for the field of general management (and thus the readers of M@n@gement) because it addresses entrepreneurship at the level of the firm (Miller, 1983), depending upon, yet going beyond, the entrepreneurial behaviors of the individuals that compose it. CE has been studied through its consequences (Guth & Ginsberg, 1990), through the prism of individual behaviors (Burgelman, 1983) and by investigating how companies organize for these activities (Kanter, 1985). The impact of national culture, meanwhile, has been studied relatively little (Hayton, George, & Zahra, 2002). Instead, the field has convened around other concepts applied to a corporate, organizational setting, such as opportunity recognition (O’Connor & Rice, 2001). Zahra et al note that the field is taking distance from the strategy literature, where CE has become overshadowed by the concept of entrepreneurial orientation, a strategic orientation akin to Market Orientation (Gotteland, Haon, & Jolibert, 2009), to embrace other questions. Our suggested research agenda first identifies the many classifications of CE that have been proposed. We note that the factors that lead to this variety have yet to be identified. Further research can fruitfully examine, amongst other topics: knowledge creation and integration, contextual factors such as national culture, markets (emerging or mature) and social entrepreneurship as well as inter-organizational manifestations of CE. The micro-foundations of these phenomena bring with them rather interesting questions: which individual behaviors lead to these organizational behaviors? How are they intertwined? How can HRM practices induce such behaviors? The keys to answering these issues, which can hopefully be offered by context, have yet to be discovered.
In part two of this Unplugged, we present an essay by Hayton, Hornsby and Goodblood entitled “The Contribution of HRM to Corporate Entrepreneurship: a review and agenda for future research”. This piece examines the micro-foundations of CE. The authors begin with the idea that from the perspective of HRM, there are two facets to the entrepreneurial process: the first is geared towards knowledge identification, acquisition and generation; the second aims at knowledge assimilation, evaluation and integration. They identify the first with Burgelman’s (1983) “autonomous strategic behaviors” and the latter with “induced strategic behaviors”, a concept analogous to that of “ambidexterity” (Schmitt, Probst, & Tushman, 2010). Hayton et al draw upon “the behavioral view”, resource and capabilities based perspectives and social exchange theory to piece together the relationship of CE to HRM. Borrowing from these theoretical lenses, they develop a process-model where environmental antecedents (leadership support, culture and structure) lead to and are supported by HR systems (knowledge management, compensation and incentives, policies and design) to favor the creation of human and social capital, which in turn can induce entrepreneurial behavior at the firm level (innovation, proactiveness and risk-taking). This in turn can produce CE outcomes (innovation, venturing or renewal) through the mediating effects of absorptive capacity and ambidexterity.

Finally, the third part of this Unplugged has two points of focus: the first is the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance; the second is the role of corporate entrepreneurship in family businesses.

For nearly two decades, entrepreneurial orientation has held the center of the stage in CE research, in particular the stream of research that focuses on the relationship between EO and performance. In this issue, Rainer Harms presents his research note, “From Entrepreneurial Orientation to Performance: inside the black box of corporate entrepreneurship”. In Lumpkin and Dess’s 1996 conceptualization (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996), the integration of activities (for example by using structural integration devices, rules, planning and budgeting, or integrating roles for project activity) was identified as a potential mediator in the relationship between EO and the performance of a firm. The unique contribution of Harm’s piece is, first, to identify the methodological barriers to this type of research. Second, he suggests more complex mediators. He shifts the focus from individual factors (for example, firm structure, commitment and organizational learning) to more complex ones: the entrepreneurial process (a chain of mediators) and “configurational embeddedness” (which brings us back to the initial intention of Miller’s 1983 work).

Out of the numerous different possible contexts, we chose to focus on family businesses. In their piece, “Corporate Entrepreneurship in Family Businesses: past, present, and future research”, Salvatore Sciascia and Cristina Bettinelli note that the dichotomy of early CE research (CE being favored in family firms against CE being impeded in family firms) has been overcome. Indeed, recent research includes more complex models, where positive and negative effects are studied simultaneously. In their suggested research agenda, the authors include questions that cover outcomes of CE (for example, strategic renewal, internationalization and strategic entrepreneurship) which have not been investigated in family business literature, as well as non-linear relationships and configurational approaches. Sciascia and Bettinelli go on to ask more provocative questions: how can entrepreneurial behaviors be transmitted from...
one generation to the next? Could succession be a tool to develop CE in family firms? If we have at heart to study how the family affects CE, we could equally question how CE affects the family. This research note delivers a much needed study of the literature and the topic as a whole, because CE is one of the keys to firm survival and success, and family businesses are both a major form of business worldwide and are characterized by unique features. With these two essays and two research notes, we tackle important research issues in the field of CE and set agendas for future research.
REFERENCES


- Clegg, S. R., & Starbuck, W. H. (2009). Can we still fix M@n@gement? The narrow path towards a brighter future in organizing practices. M@n@gement, 12(5), 677-702.


- Schmitt, A., Probst, G., & Tushman, M. L. (2010). M@n@gement in Times of Economic Crisis: Insights Into Organizational Ambidexterity. M@n@gement, 13(3), 128-150.