

THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT SUPPORT IN PROMOTING CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITHIN SME'S IN THE SEAFREIGHT TRANSPORT INDUSTRY

C Schachtebeck and C Nieuwenhuizen

University of Johannesburg, PO Box 524, Auckland Park, Gauteng, South Africa,
2006, Tel: 011 559-3623; Email: cschachtebeck@uj.ac.za
Tel: 011 559-4369; Email: cecilen@uj.ac.za

ABSTRACT

Management support is widely reported to be a contributor to influencing corporate entrepreneurship within organisations. Managerial support and attitude are described as having a direct positive link on the levels of corporate entrepreneurial activity exhibited in organisations.

This paper provides an overview of the role of managerial support within Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the seafreight transport industry. A questionnaire, adapted from the Corporate Entrepreneurial Climate Instrument (CECI), developed by Morris, Kuratko & Covin (2008), was distributed to organisations of differing sizes in the seafreight transport sector. The questionnaire measured key antecedents of corporate entrepreneurship.

Data was analysed by means of a one-way between-groups ANOVA. Results indicate that managerial support for corporate entrepreneurship in the sampled SMEs is relatively low. Results further indicate that as an SME increases in size, its level of management support for corporate entrepreneurship improves. Respondents under the age of 30 perceived a higher level of support than their older counterparts.

This paper provides recommendations regarding initiatives SMEs can undertake to improve managerial support levels. The findings and recommendations of the paper are of particular interest to middle-level and senior managers within SME's in the seafreight industry who have a direct influence over managerial support levels in their respective organisations.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are seen as the backbone of modern economies and often drive GDP growth. SMEs are a product of entrepreneurial growth and contribute significantly towards the economies they operate in. However, as SMEs grow, they require both internal and external stimuli to remain entrepreneurial and innovative. This internal entrepreneurial phenomenon is commonly known as corporate entrepreneurship, or Intrapreneurship. Corporate

entrepreneurship (CE) can be defined as “entrepreneurial behaviour inside established midsized and large organisations” (Morris & Kuratko, 2002).

Salehi and Yousefi (2011:916) define an intrapreneur as “a person within a large corporation who takes direct responsibility for turning an idea into a profitable finished product through assertive risk-taking and innovation.” The National Small Business Amendment Act (2003) defines SMEs, excluding micro-enterprises, as organisations which have between 20 and 200 employees and generate a turnover of between R3 million and R26 million.

Ahmed and Nwankwo (2013:83) explain that the rapid economic growth in BRICS economies has occurred as a result of the rise in entrepreneurial activity amongst SMEs. It thus becomes evident that SMEs are of paramount importance in supporting South African economic growth. In the context of economic growth, Musandu-Nyamayaro (2007) explains that the transport sector is pivotal in economic development, of particular importance is the creation and support of SMEs in the freight sector.

While entrepreneurship and SMEs are important in addressing economic priorities, it is concerning to note that entrepreneurial activity in South Africa is low when compared to global peers. Preisendoerfer, Bitz & Bezuidenhout (2014:164) state that Total Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) is relatively low in South Africa at 5.3% when compared to other nations who exhibit much higher TEA rates. Education, training and enterprise development are controllable factors which are important drivers behind the development of entrepreneurs (Nafukho & Muyia, 2010).

In order to capitalise on the benefits that entrepreneurial development and SMEs can provide, the focus turns to the management of SMEs to increase TEA rates. This is due to the fact that SME management has control over internal factors. One such prominent factor is managerial support for CE. Filser and Eggers (2014) stress that firm internal support for innovativeness and risk-taking has a direct influence on firm performance. Doubell and Struwig (2013) describe internal firm support as organisational support to enhance the potential of success. This highlights the important role management plays in supporting CE and thereby improving organisational performance. For the purposes of this study, management support can be described as the “provision of an enabling work environment” in order for employees to function effectively and to innovate (Onuma, 2015). Innovation management can be described as a coordinated approach to managing internal creative outputs (Harrington & Voehl, 2013).

In the wake of increasing competition by large corporations, SMEs therefore need to remain agile and innovative in order to prosper in an increasingly competitive industry. The onus thus rests on SMEs to increase not only their internal levels of innovation and creativity, but more specifically their level of CE. Managers within an organisation must therefore make the creation of higher levels of innovation a strategic agenda item.

1.2 Problem Statement

Reduction in poverty and creation of wealth are the most important developmental goals Sub-Saharan Africa currently faces. The transport sector can contribute significantly towards these goals by improving efficiency of, and investment in the industry (Chakwizira & Mashiri, 2011). Efficiency improvements and more effective transport solutions can have a positive impact on economic growth rates and thus poverty alleviation. However, the South African seafreight transport industry currently faces a number of challenges such as port performance, slow adoption of technology, handling costs and management of container traffic. These challenges can be addressed and overcome by means of an enabling internal business environment (Adewuyi, 2013). The identified challenges can furthermore be addressed by means of innovative solutions. The importance of internal innovation, and the management of it, is highlighted by Farrington (2014:39) who indicates internal innovativeness as an important determining factor in business performance. As CE aims to produce innovation and strategic renewal, it is important for managers in SMEs to support CE in order to further innovation. As outlined earlier, SMEs play a fundamental role in the socio-economic system of a country. The importance of SMEs in the South African economy should thus not be underestimated. Yet very little attention has been given to corporate entrepreneurship within SMEs in the seafreight transport industry. In particular, there exists a lack of information on the role that management plays in supporting CE in these organisations.

1.3 Research Aims

This paper aims to provide an overview of the role of managerial support within SMEs in the seafreight transport industry by means of a comprehensive literature review and an empirical study. The study further aims to provide recommendations to managers of SMEs in the seafreight transport industry in order to increase their levels of corporate entrepreneurship, specifically by means of directed managerial support actions.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The below literature review aims to outline various managerial support factors influencing CE in both larger organisations as well as SMEs. The literature also provides an overview of the status quo of innovation management in the seafreight transport industry.

2.1 Management Support as an antecedent of CE

CE tends to be promoted in an environment where management support is active and consistent (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2004). In support of entrepreneurship in the workplace, De Villiers-Scheepers (2012:409) states that management support “plays a key role in encouraging employees to believe that innovation is expected of all organisation members.” In a study by Salehi and Yousefi (2011) of entrepreneurship in the banking sector, it was confirmed that managerial support can lead to higher levels of entrepreneurial activity.

De Villiers-Scheepers (2012:410) explains that management support for CE “can take many forms, the most prominent being items such as championing innovative ideas, recognition of people who articulate ideas, providing the necessary resources

or expertise or institutionalising entrepreneurial activity within the firm's system and processes." These initiatives thus indicate that management in any organisation plays a far-reaching and vital role in furthering corporate entrepreneurial actions.

2.1.1 Supportive human relations management

Batson and Yoder (2012:1659) explain that managerial support can take the form of coaching direct subordinates, the outcome of which is to promote a feeling of empowerment and thereby allowing employees to increase their intrinsic levels of motivation. Guo (2014:1802) further explains that good human relations and effective managerial Human Resource management can significantly improve CE and innovation. This implies that managers have a direct influence on promoting CE through effective Human Resource tactics and policies.

2.1.2 Financial incentives

In order to drive employees towards corporate entrepreneurial actions and initiatives, three main aspects need to be present, namely risk, effort and financial utility. The risks, such as pay-cuts and disciplinary action, encountered by the corporate entrepreneur should not exceed the chances of success. In terms of effort, the effort required to achieve success cannot be greater than what the corporate entrepreneur is able to provide. Lastly, in terms of financial utility, management has to provide a meaningful financial incentive, such as a role in the new venture or a profit-share agreement (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2004).

2.1.3 Managerial support for training & learning

Training is an important component of managerial support for CE as corporate entrepreneurs need to be equipped with the required skills in order to be able to innovate (Monsen, Patzelt & Saxton, 2010). Martin-Rojas, Garcia-Morales & Garcia-Sanchez (2011:985) further explain that top management support for technology is vital in employees obtaining competencies and facilitating the learning process of employees.

Wang (2005) describes the role of knowledge management as a vital component in promoting CE. Knowledge management allows the organisation and its employees to cluster knowledge, thereby easing access to information. Effective use of knowledge management technology further allows employees to communicate more effectively and therefore provide assistance in idea development and innovation (Wang, 2005). Managers thus need to ensure knowledge is managed and accessible.

2.1.4 Trust instilled by management

In addition to training and learning, trust is instrumental in fostering a culture of managerial support for CE. Management has to be able to give employees the freedom to experiment and innovate at the employee's own pace. A lack of trust will cause employees to be demotivated and not pursue risky innovations (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2004). Lakhapal (1994) explains that smaller SMEs tend to be dominated by the owner-entrepreneur in terms of decision-making power. This indicates that employees in smaller SMEs tend to have less discretionary decision-making power and limited levels of empowerment.

2.1.5 *Management style & actions*

Lee, di Domenico & Saunders (2014) stress that a relentless objective focus and tight control of employees can lead to resistance as organisations then tend to “value what is measurable, rather than measure what is valuable.” This implies that strict control of employee activities are counterproductive in the pursuit of CE as this forces employees to perform only those tasks that are being measured, rather than employees being innovative and experimental.

Batson and Yoder (2012:1661) go further to say that some of the attributes amplifying managerial support for CE include the provision of resources, developing interpersonal relationships with subordinates, setting clear goals & expectations and providing feedback to employees.

Duening, Shepherd & Czaplewski (2014) explain that entrepreneurs exhibit effectual thinking and logic, which differs fundamentally from managerial thinking in that the given means have to achieve an imagined end, whereas managerial thinking primarily aims to achieve a given goal through given means. Managers therefore need to be aware of this difference in thinking styles which have a fundamental impact on decision-making and implementation. Managers need to support this difference in thinking styles in order to promote Intrapreneurship within the organisation.

2.2 Status quo of the seafreight transport industry

Musandu-Nyamayaro (2007) explains that the transport sector is under sever scrutiny due to the direct link between an efficient transport sector and accelerated economic growth. Rennie (2002) goes further to say that the seafreight transport industry is undergoing significant change due to rapidly evolving competitive structures and increased customer demands. Therefore there exists a need to not only improve competitiveness of the industry, but also a need to change the modus operandi.

A number of studies were conducted to evaluate the status quo of innovation management in the international seafreight transport sector. The predominant finding is that, while a fairly high level of innovation is present, the management of activities supporting internal innovation is uncoordinated (Salarian, Heydarzadeh & Soltani, 2013; Gopal, Gopinathan & Varma, 2008). Further, a Norwegian study by Gunther (2014) revealed that joint innovation development & sharing in the industry is commonplace, to a much greater degree than innovation management internal to firms. There thus exists a strong need for better innovation creation and management. Ho and Chang (2015) go further to say that innovation capabilities of organisations in the seafreight industry are critical for survival, yet management seems unaware which specific strengths and weaknesses their organisations possess. Benito, Berger, de la Forest & Shum (2003) describe the maritime sector as exhibiting a lack of concern for the management of innovation, mainly driven by the demands of a small number of key customers.

Havenga (2013) states that the efficient transport of goods is pivotal in supporting economic growth and development. The transport sector thus plays a vital role in the South African economy. This therefore implies that SMEs need to find innovative and novel ways in which to reap the benefits of investment in the aforementioned sector.

Adewuyi (2013) stresses that businesses in the seafreight transport industry needs to develop skills locally and within companies in order to increase competitiveness. One such approach is to increase the level of CE, specifically by providing managerial support.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study was exploratory in nature as some research had been conducted previously into the topic of CE. However significant opportunity still exists in expanding knowledge of CE within the seafreight transport industry. The study utilised a quantitative research design as structured, self-administered questionnaires were used to collect empirical data.

3.2 Population & Sampling

The study made use of non-probability sampling by means of a convenience sampling approach. This approach was taken due to the researchers' established relationship with some organisations within the Seafreight Transport Industry. The population consisted of all SMEs who are currently operating within the Seafreight Transport Industry and are registered with the South African Association of Freight Forwarders (SAAFF). The sample size for this study consisted of three organisations of various sizes, according to size classifications of SMEs. The participants consisted of all core employees at various managerial levels. Non-core employees were excluded for the purpose of this study.

3.3 Data Collection Method

Primary data for the study was collected by means of structured, self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of two sections, the first section covering demographics. The second section measured key indicators of managerial support for entrepreneurial activity. The questionnaire was adapted from the Corporate Entrepreneurial Climate Instrument (CECI), developed by Morris, Kuratko & Covin (2008:331). Management support was measured according to 15 statements testing managerial support. The 15 statements can be observed in Table 1. The questionnaires consisted of a 5-point Likert scale, with response ranges from Strongly-Agree to Strongly-Disagree. The Likert scale allows the researchers to quantify the strength of responses. The instrument scored a Cronbach Alpha of 0.916. The instrument thus exhibits high internal consistency and can be used as a reliable measurement tool. Secondary data was collected by means of a literature review of current topics and debates around CE in SMEs and larger organisations.

Table 1: Survey Statements

Statements
(1) My business is quick to use improved work methods
(2) In my business, developing one's ideas is encouraged for the improvement of the business
(3) Upper management is aware and very receptive to my ideas and suggestions
(4) A promotion usually follows from the development of new and innovative ideas
(5) Those employees who come up with innovative ideas on their own often receive management encouragement for their activities
(6) The doers on projects are allowed to make decisions without going through elaborate justification and approval procedures
(7) Senior managers encourage innovators to bend rules and rigid procedures in order to keep promising ideas on track
(8) Money is often available to get new project ideas off the ground
(9) Individuals with successful innovative projects receive additional rewards and compensation beyond the standard reward system for their ideas and efforts
(10) People are often encouraged to take calculated risks with ideas around here
(11) Individual risk-takers are often recognized for their willingness to champion new projects, whether eventually successful or not
(12) In my workplace, the term "risk-taker" is considered a positive attribute
(13) The business supports many small and experimental projects, realizing that some will undoubtedly fail
(14) An employee with a good idea is often given free time to develop that idea
(15) People are encouraged to talk to employees in other departments in this business about ideas for new projects

3.4 Data Analysis

Data for this study was analysed by means of a frequency distribution which allows the researcher to discover trends. Furthermore, a multiple comparisons analysis table was used to display the collected data, showing elements such as frequency of responses, mean differences, significance levels and means. The study furthermore made use of the analysis of variance technique (ANOVA). This allowed the researchers to compare variances between the sampled organisations of differing sizes. Also, independent sample t-tests were conducted.

4 FINDINGS

An inverted Likert-scale was used for purposes of this study, thereby indicating that 1 indicates strong agreement, and 5 indicates strong disagreement. This therefore means that lower scores indicate higher levels of management support for CE.

The study found means of 3.62, 3.13 and 2.59 for Businesses A, B and C respectively. The high score for Business A indicates that in the sample, a small company does not perceive management support for CE to be overwhelmingly present. Conversely, the lower score for Business C shows that for the sampled organisations, a larger organisation seems to exhibit greater managerial support for corporate entrepreneurial behaviours. This also indicates that a larger organisation is

more likely to experience greater levels of internal innovation than a smaller organisation.

The 95% confidence interval also shows that the upper bound lies at 4.10, while the lower bound lies at 3.14. This indicates that the management in the small company is not perceived as supporting corporate entrepreneurship. The Post-hoc tests showed that Business A and Business C display significant differences in their scores, thereby indicating that the scores for Business A were significantly different from those of Business C. The scores for Business C fared significantly better than those of Business A, thereby indicating greater agreement and thus increased managerial support.

Figure 1 indicates the means of the three sampled organisations; A, B and C. The histogram indicates that as an organisation increases in size, its group means are lower, thereby indicating a higher level of management support for CE.

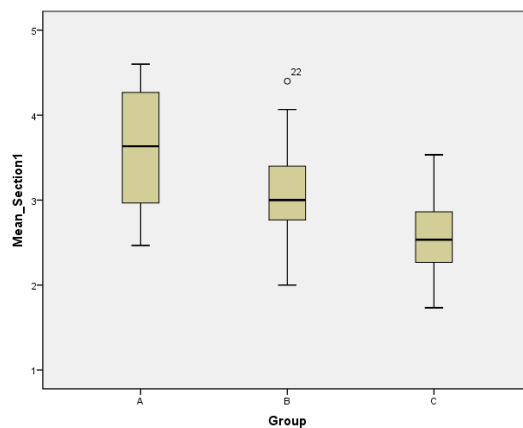


Figure 1: Histogram of group means

The score of 3.13 for Business B indicates that there is uncertainty or indifference with regards to managerial support for corporate entrepreneurship. The score could also indicate that management does not clearly voice its support for CE.

For the sampled population it can thus be deduced that the larger an organisation, the higher the exhibited level of management support for CE.

The overall mean for managerial support across the sample is 3.02. This score can be described as moderate to low, thereby indicating that sampled SMEs in the South African seafreight industry do not seem to actively support CE. The score could also indicate that management is not fully committed to furthering corporate entrepreneurial actions within their respective organisations. Also, management could be perceived, by its employees, as not fully committed towards corporate entrepreneurial activities.



Figure 2: Histogram of means according to age

No discernible difference was found between genders, i.e. male and females perceived management support for corporate entrepreneurship in equal manners. This finding can be interpreted to be positive as management does not seem to favour either gender when providing support for CE.

Table 2 shows the results of the one-way ANOVA which indicate differences in means between organisations of differing sizes, i.e. the mean for organisation A is 3.62, whereas the mean for organisation C is 2.59.

Table 2: One-way ANOVA

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Mean_Section1	A	12	3.62	.753	.217	3.14	4.10	2	5
	B	15	3.13	.659	.170	2.76	3.49	2	4
	C	20	2.59	.441	.099	2.38	2.80	2	4
	Total	47	3.02	.725	.106	2.81	3.24	2	5

A comparison between groups is indicated in Table 3. A value below 0.05 indicates significant differences between groups. Table 3 shows that significant differences exist between groups A and C. The value indicates that significant differences exist between the means of the smallest and largest organisations. The levels of management support thus differ significantly between small and large organisations. At the same time it can be said that limited differences exist between organisations A and B and organisations B and C. This further indicates that only significant differences in organisational size affect managerial support for CE. The larger organisation in the study exhibited higher levels of managerial support for CE than its smaller counterpart.

Table 3: Between-groups comparison

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable=Mean_Section1,Test=Scheffe						
(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
A	B	.488	.234	.125	-.10	1.08
	C	1.027*	.220	.000	.47	1.59
B	A	-.488	.234	.125	-1.08	.10
	C	.539*	.206	.041	.02	1.06
C	A	-1.027*	.220	.000	-1.59	-.47
	B	-.539*	.206	.041	-1.06	-.02

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It becomes evident that middle-level and senior managers harbour significant influence over the level of CE displayed by their organisations. This influence can be expressed by means of support for internal entrepreneurial initiatives.

The study aimed to investigate the role management support plays in supporting CE within SMEs in the seafreight transport industry. The literature on the status quo of innovation management in the seafreight transport industry showed an uncoordinated and internally deficient approach towards innovation management. It was however encouraging to note innovation being present in the seafreight sector. Furthermore, while the literature review highlighted the importance of management support in promoting CE, the empirical study revealed concerning findings.

The level of management support for CE in the sampled SMEs can be classified as medium to low. This means that the sampled organisations are not providing enough managerial support in order to foster higher levels of CE. The available literature reveals that managerial support for CE can take various forms. Management in the sampled organisation may be performing certain support initiatives more effectively, or visibly, than others. The low levels of managerial support perceived by respondents can also indicate a lack of awareness of support initiatives.

Significant differences could be observed between SMEs of differing sizes, with larger SMEs displaying higher managerial support levels for CE. This could indicate that as an SME grows in size and its policies tend to formalise, the managerial awareness and need for CE becomes more prevalent. The literature shows that smaller SMEs tend to be dominated by the entrepreneur-owner. This implies that the larger an organisation becomes, the smaller the influence of the entrepreneur-owner. This could further influence the extent to which employees are allowed, or not allowed, to exhibit entrepreneurial tendencies in smaller organisations.

It is also noteworthy that in the sample, respondents below the age of 30 tended to perceive higher managerial support levels, when compared to their older counterparts. For SME managers, this provides an opportunity to harness the perception of younger employees by providing additional support and incentives to act entrepreneurially. No discernible differences in perceiving managerial support could be found on the basis of gender.

With regards to managerial and industry implications, the impact for managers in the seafreight transport sector is significant. The literature revealed that managers, by means of their support levels, harbour a direct influence over the extent of corporate entrepreneurial behaviours exhibited. There are thus a number of actions managers in the industry can take to enhance their internal levels of CE.

Specific initiatives and actions managers should take include providing incentives, monetary or otherwise, for CE. This will ensure that employees are motivated to innovate and transform. Managers should also ensure better management of knowledge by means of documenting and disseminating knowledge internally. This will provide employees with the tools to innovate. Furthermore, employees should be assigned a greater degree of discretionary decision-making, thereby empowering employees. Empowerment of employees will further be enhanced by creating a culture of trust. Lastly, managers need to actively support the learning process of employees, for purposes of skills development.

Following these actions will ensure that SMEs in the seafreight transport industry can exhibit higher levels of corporate entrepreneurial behaviours and therefore innovate more readily.

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