

Teamwork on Innovation in Young Enterprises: A Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract : The majority of young enterprises is founded and run by teams and develops new, innovative products or services. While problems within the team are considered to be an important reason for the failure of young enterprises, effective teamwork on innovation may be a key success factor. It may require special teamwork design or members' creativity not needed during work routine. However, little is known about how young enterprises develop innovative solutions in teams, what makes their teamwork special and what influences its effectivity. Extending this knowledge is essential for understanding the success and failure factors for young enterprises. Previous research focused on working on innovation or professional teams in general. Rare studies combining these issues usually concentrate on homogenous groups like IT expert teams in innovation projects of big, well-established firms. The transferability of those studies' findings to the entrepreneurial context is doubtful because of several reasons why teamwork should differ significantly between big, well-established firms and young enterprises. First, teamwork is conducted by team members, e.g., employees. The personality of employees in young enterprises, in contrast to that of employees in established firms, has been shown to be more similar to the personality of entrepreneurs. As entrepreneurs were found to be more open to experience and show less risk aversion, it may have a positive impact on their teamwork. Persons open to novelty are more likely to develop or accept a creative solution, which is especially important for teamwork on innovation. Secondly, young enterprises are often characterized by a flat hierarchy, so in general, teamwork should be more participative there. It encourages each member (and not only the founder) to produce and discuss innovative ideas, increasing their variety and enabling the team to select the best idea from the larger idea pool. Thirdly, teams in young enterprises are often multidisciplinary. It has some advantages but also increases the risk of internal conflicts making teamwork less effective. Despite the key role of teamwork on innovation and presented barriers for transferring existing evidence to the context of young enterprises, only a few researchers have addressed this issue. In order to close the existing research gap, to explore and understand how innovations are developed in teams of young enterprises and which factors influencing teamwork may be especially relevant for such teams, a qualitative study has been developed. The study consisting of 20 half-structured interviews with (co-)founders of young innovative enterprises in the UK and USA started in September 2017. The interview guide comprises but is not limited to teamwork dimensions discussed in literature like members' skill or authority differentiation. Data will be evaluated following the rules of qualitative content analysis. First results indicate some factors which may be relevant especially for teamwork in young innovative enterprises. They will enrich the scientific discussion and provide the evidence needed to test a possible causality between identified factors and teamwork effectivity in future research on young innovative enterprises. Results and their discussion can be presented at the conference.

Keywords : innovation, qualitative study, teamwork, young enterprises

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