



ABSTRACT

Intrapreneurial Capabilities: A catalyst for Innovation and Entrepreneurship in a University setting

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In the 1980s, an awareness developed that universities could commercially transfer knowledge, causing significant benefits for both universities and society. In literature, such commercialization activities have been called **academic entrepreneurship**. Entrepreneurship in academics has some distinctive features, making it a complicated context for commercial activities. Academics usually continue to work for the university, ownership of IP is shared between an academic and the university, and academics have traditional scientific norms, standards, and values that differ from conventional entrepreneurs. These dynamics caused academic and societal hesitation surrounding whether universities should engage in knowledge commercialization activities (Siegel & Wright, 2015).

At the base of these critical views, there seems to be an **incomplete understanding** of the process leading up to commercial activities. Firstly, many existing studies adopt a static point of view, only considering the last phase of knowledge commercialization. This means that not the whole process is taken into account. Secondly, the effectiveness and outcomes of knowledge commercialization activities remain unclear, leaving uncertainty about the broad applicability of academic entrepreneurship across a diverse range of universities. Lastly, when a successful or failed project of academic entrepreneurship is identified, it remains difficult to pinpoint what caused the success or failure of that specific project (De Keyser & Vandenbempt, 2023).

A potential solution for these issues lies in adopting a processual theory of science commercialization, connecting the various phases from idea generation to the last phase of knowledge commercialization. This allows the identification of support mechanisms, such as university programs or initiatives, that contribute to the success of academic entrepreneurship. Building on existing literature on intrapreneurship, a recent framework suggests that universities may possess **intrapreneurial capabilities**. These capabilities consist of mechanisms that enable and support intrapreneurial behavior among academics. These behaviors can then become embedded in the academic organization by anchoring them into their processes, procedures, and strategies (Flores et al., 2024).

Despite these theoretical advancements, **empirical validation** and refinement of a model of intrapreneurial capabilities is lacking. This paper aims to fill this gap by empirically investigating the impact of university-enabling and support mechanisms for the intrapreneurial process within the university. A mixed-method comparative case study approach will be used, combining qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews with key university stakeholders and quantitative insights from surveys.

In essence, this paper endeavors to discover the missing piece of the puzzle needed to make academic entrepreneurship effective. It shifts the focus inward, examining intrapreneurial dynamics within universities rather than outward-facing knowledge transfer activities. It strives to empirically validate and refine an existing model that defines the intrapreneurial capabilities of universities consisting of enabling and support mechanisms. This will lead to the research question, "How does the development of university intrapreneurial capabilities influence the intrapreneurial process within universities?". A comparative case study approach will be used to answer this question. The insights gathered in this paper may then be applied by university leadership to foster intrapreneurial behavior in their organization.

References

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