



Book review: State of Entrepreneurship Support through Incubators in India

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Abstract Entrepreneurial ecosystem is a very active area of research both conceptually and empirically, yet most literature that emerged over the last two decades predominantly pertain to developed economies. At the same time, transitioning and emerging economies have continued to grow rapidly, making a strong case to study entrepreneurial ecosystems in emerging economies (Bruton et al., 2018). Ecosystems are broad constructs and the constitutive elements of an ecosystem are themselves complex (Stam, 2015). Hence exploring key elements of the ecosystem in depth to understand the mechanisms of how entrepreneurship is supported through intermediary organizations like incubators is a fruitful exercise. In this context, we review the book “Technology Business Incubators in India Structure, Role and Performance” which is a timely synthesis for academic researchers and practitioners, looking to explore the topic as it pertains to emerging economies. The book is part of the De Gruyter Studies in Knowledge Management and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems series, that covers pertinent ecosystems issues around universities, and sustainability by leading authors.

Keywords Book review, Entrepreneurial ecosystem, Incubator, Technology startup, Emerging economy, India

I. Details of the book

Book title: Technology Business Incubators in India Structure, Role and Performance

Book authors: M H Bala Subrahmanya and H S Krishna

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II. Book Review

Entrepreneurial ecosystem is a very active area of research both conceptually and empirically, yet most literature that emerged over the last two decades predominantly pertain to developed economies. At the same time, transitioning and emerging economies have continued to grow rapidly, making a strong case to study entrepreneurial ecosystems in emerging economies (Bruton et al., 2018). Ecosystems are broad constructs and the constitutive elements of an ecosystem are themselves complex (Stam, 2015). Hence exploring key elements of the ecosystem in depth to understand the mechanisms of how entrepreneurship is supported through intermediary organizations like incubators is a fruitful exercise. In this context, this book “Technology Business Incubators in India Structure, Role and Performance” is a timely synthesis for academic researchers and practitioners, looking to explore the topic as it pertains to emerging economies. The book is part of the De Gruyter Studies in Knowledge Management and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems series, that covers pertinent ecosystems issues around universities, and sustainability by leading authors.

This book addresses fairly important questions on why technology business incubators (TBIs) emerge and what role they play in startup promotion and how they go about performing this role in an ecosystem. Because of the nature of these questions, it becomes imperative to firstly place the research in its contextual backdrop and appropriate extant literature. And then frame the research problem that lends itself for empirical study given a scope. Following this the nature of evidence can be evaluated from the measurements and then draw inferences and provide policy recommendations. This book is structured to address each of these components adequately yet succinctly and is organized across seven chapters.

In chapter 1, the authors firstly provide the need for technology business incubation for an economy and why it is a sought after as a policy mechanism globally. The historical origin and growth of TBI movement is covered initially before providing the India specific developments. This is covered in detail to provide the necessary backdrop for the study and how TBI movement developed in India over the last three decades. The objectives of the study address the empirical need given this backdrop. The objectives of the study broadly aim to examine the TBIs’ focus, objectives and services, to classify and examine startups that are incubated in these TBIs, to examine the R&D inputs and finally to understand the R&D outcomes at venture level. In chapter 2, the authors provide an in depth synthesis of extant literature on TBIs covering their varied typologies, objectives, and functions and services. Further they cover the TBI led processes leading to certain performance outcomes. Due consideration is given to how TBI performance can be assessed, and they make case for an

indicator based measurement that is adopted for the study. From this large canvas of literature covered, where several theoretical lenses are adopted to study TBIs, the authors derive a concise yet very useful conceptual framework for the study. Chapter 3 goes into the finer details of the research methods and scopes the study covering some of the largest hubs of startup activity in the country.

Chapters 4 through 6 cover the empirical study results in detail, each addressing the proposed research objectives. The dominance of government and university in sponsoring TBIs, and high human capital in the leadership teams of the TBIs, the specialization or focus of the TBIs to specific industry sectors, providing early stage support are covered in detail. This gives adequate motivation to the reader to further understand the objectives and nature of support offered by the TBIs. In Chapter 5, the processes of selection, incubation and graduation are examined against the incubator characteristics. The quality of networks enabled by the TBIs and their external reputation seems to affect the nature of applicants and the type of incubation service delivered. Chapter 6 provides the main analysis details covering the indicator measurements on R&D inputs and outputs. The significant lack of dedicated R&D personnel employed in many of the TBIs is striking given the nature of activities performed by the startups. The contrast with developed economies emerges sharply in this chapter, particularly when we see the results around patenting and their downstream influence on performance. Chapter 7 provides a summary of the study and draws recommendations for policy action. Some key models that have worked well in the India context is touched upon in this chapter, particularly emphasizing the success of universities that have spanned interventions supporting from idea generation all the way to startup scaling and every stage in between. Overall, the book provides a ring side view of TBIs in India, and unravel how they still have a long way to go to impact technology entrepreneurship support in a big way.

References

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