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THE PERFORMANCE OF INCUBATORS IN FRANCE

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INTRODUCTION: The economic model of incubators implies finding constantly external sources of financing because the incomes resulting from the sale of services to the incubated companies are not enough to ensure their finance equilibrium. So, the stakeholders of incubators, and more particularly the people who finance them, generally estimate that incubators must influence, first of all, the survival of incubated firms and the employment of this kind of enterprise, and consequently, the taxes collected. In this perspective, our research aims at determining if the incubators allow the incubated companies (which they accompany during the first months of their activity) to be more efficient and perennial than start-ups which don't use their services.



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METHODS: In order to evaluate the incubators performance in France, we questioned 404 creators in 40 incubators. We sought to appreciate if the fact of being installed in an incubator essential in entrepreneurs' decision to create, to establish the really important services for them, and finally to evaluate the determinants of the work quality provided by the incubator team.

RESULTS: Our empirical approach made it possible to clarify a certain number of conclusions concerning French incubators:

- * Graduates (having more than one degree) are more likely to seek help in the first developmental stages of their company,
- * The nature of the diploma (technical or technological versus others) does not have any importance,
- * Entrepreneurship education does not have any impact on the turnover, nor on the number of employees of the companies whose entrepreneur followed this type of program,
- * Needs of entrepreneurs vis à vis incubators are clearly targeted on functional services and infrastructures. For services, the councils on general management of their firm and the assistance with obtaining capital are two crucial needs for entrepreneurs and have a strong impact on their incubator satisfaction,



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* The access to resources and services through an incubator are determinant for entrepreneurs in the action of creation,

* The work quality of the incubator team constitutes a main interest of entrepreneurs vis à vis an incubator. Moreover, the entrepreneur's satisfaction of the work provided by the whole of the incubator team is primarily a function of its director.

CONCLUSIONS: Finally, these results show the social utility of incubators in France. Indeed, they encourage entrepreneurs to pass to the act of creation, also contributing to the success of the incubated firms. Moreover, these companies create more jobs than the other startups. However, the services provided by incubators could be more developed and focus more on the assistance in the search for potential investors.



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