The Effect of Political Entrepreneurship on Sustainability of Applied Research Projects in Private Companies and Unions

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ABSTRACT: Political entrepreneurship in research projects is currently considered as a significant factor, which requires investigation to help sustain and thrive such projects. Autoethnography method was used to examine and deduce the results. The present study was an applied research revealing that political entrepreneurship directly affects the sustainability of research projects. The results showed that political entrepreneurship could be used in intra-organizational research projects as well as personal and intra-organizational relations. The present study revealed a significant research gap in research projects so that the present findings bear certain scientific importance for organizations and business researchers. It would provide a suitable body of knowledge for companies and organizations that tend to undertake long-term research projects.

Keywords: Political entrepreneurship, Applied research, Companies, Trade unions.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, dramatic changes in management theories and problems associated with employing manpower in a competitive environment have made managers seek solutions to their problems to survive so that they may align themselves with these changes and maintain their enterprises. Political entrepreneurship is considered as one of the most modern tools to create a dynamic, goal-oriented organization that can maintain its research projects and competitive nature in such challenging environment. Political entrepreneurship is associated with power that may be defined as the individuals’ capacity to exercise their will on others. Political behavior is the practical realm of power applied through certain techniques used to influence people (Buchanan & Badham, 1999; Andrew, 2003). Political entrepreneurship may be considered as a set of activities and behaviors used to achieve goals (Astley & Sachdeva, 1984). It is often considered as a function or capacity entailing the utilization of the opportunities available in the market or a company.

Specifically, it may be encapsulated as a combination of discovering opportunities (Kirzner, 1973) and uncertainty (Boonstra, 2005). It typically refers to the presence of people seeking success in the organizations. Political entrepreneurs tend to create an invisible movement beyond their main roles, such as project management, through connections with entrepreneurial activities conducted by employees so that they create innovations to survive (Prasad, 1993). Political entrepreneurship requires the ability to act in an organization and a flexible repertoire of skills entailing such activities as intervention in political processes, conducting certain agendas, influencing decisions and decision-makers, tackling crises and challenges, endurance and promoting validity to achieve goals (Buchanan & Boddy, 1992).

Political entrepreneurship is one of the most recent approaches for managers and employees to deal with crises and challenges, influencing decisions and decision-makers, endurance and promoting validity of projects. Unless organizational researchers have a presupposition of powerful structures and policies in the organization, they may not adapt to political conditions so that organizations fail to manage political relations as the most significant factor to influence and exploit the available opportunities in a market or organization. Through political entrepreneurship,

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organizational researchers may develop subtle innovations to maintain the organization and its projects. Political entrepreneurship bears a crucial importance so as to influence organizational projects and take advantage of opportunities to allocate scarce resources to achieve the advantages of organizational research projects. In private companies and trade unions, the general premise is based on competition and influence in organizations and market to maintain applied research projects. This may be realized through appropriate measures such as political entrepreneurship and application of influential policies. Due to active participation of private sector, political entrepreneurship has currently found a significant niche. Thus, it is readily understood that political entrepreneurship is a key success factor for private companies and trade unions. Unless private commercial enterprises and unions utilize political entrepreneurship, they may fail to sustain and stabilize their research projects conducted to create and concentrate on resources, interests and desired outcomes. It is particularly important to investigate the effect of political entrepreneurship on the sustainability of research projects consistent with the goals and position of the organization. In early stages of research projects, researchers pay attention to theoretical aspects. However, as the projects proceeds, less attention is paid to applied theories. This is frequently observed in applied research projects.

The present study aims to investigate the effect of political entrepreneurship on organizational researchers and research activities. Investigating the implementation of political entrepreneurship and the role of organizational researchers in applied research projects would help create a body of knowledge for both the academic community and organizations. The study is based on research projects in developing private commercial enterprises and trade unions. It specifically focuses on the role of applied researchers as political entrepreneurs. In other words, considering the effect of political entrepreneurship on how the managers and researchers behave to sustain the projects, the study set to create a sustainable environment to develop applied research projects in organizations.

Theoretical aspects of applied research

Lewin (1973) first introduced the methodology of traditional applied research providing researchers with a cooperative context that included problem solving, participatory planning cycle, taking action and evaluation of an organization. In a broader context, applied research pinpoints important issues (O’Leary, 2008; Ameer, 2010). First, this methodology involves a variety of experiments to modify real organizational problems. Second, it aims to make contribution using a set of repeated cycles such as identification of the problem, planning, taking action and evaluation. Third, applied research aims to challenge the current situation from the viewpoint of a participant so that it is concerned with desired changes. Finally, it tends to create a simultaneous synergy for the knowledge base including not only insights for the academia but also applied knowledge for organizations, customers and socio-political actions in daily life. It may be inferred that applied research aims to develop new local operations, which is simultaneously a general knowledge. Researchers and employees affiliated with an organization are considered as the agents of change and the important factors contributing to organizational success though they are not sufficiently described in applied research (Ralph, 2010; Strohhecker, 2013).

Integration of internal and external roles

Internal-external team research is described as the continuous communication between external researchers and insiders (Schneider, 1992). A well-conducted internal-external research project may help create unique insights. In the present study, organization personnel somewhat accepted outsider roles so that every employee searched the society as both a researcher and political entrepreneur and consistently used the outsiders to challenge the confidential premises of the company. Access to the company, presupposition and creation of opportunities to turn a plan into political entrepreneurship become viable through membership in an organization (Jan de Vries, 2013; Ucbasaran, 2009). In the present study, a combination of internal and external roles creates a sense of togetherness rather than foreignness so that it created an environment where the researchers could participate as organization employees to challenge the research questions. This twofold role as both the researcher and participant was a significant factor beyond their especial role as an agent of change. This researcher role is distinct from the traditional role of applied researchers.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a methodology of shared ethnography, surveillance ethnography (Adler, 1994) and particularly reflexive ethnography. The auto-ethnography methodology used in this study concentrates on culture and policy in companies and organizations. This methodology was adopted to study the effect of political entrepreneurship on sustainability of research projects, to investigate the role of organization researchers, employees and trade unions, and to do the research in stages. This method involves three stages as follows.

Stage 1: Theoretical literature was first reviewed and interpreted followed by the assessment of these interpretations by two experts within every company or union as well as the supervision conducted by the research supervisor. These activities were then arranged into two domains.
a) Establishing research framework: this refers to important activities such as interviews, discussions, repeated discussions and explanations. It deals with intra-organizational coordination in early stages of applied research projects used to maintain the coordination throughout the project.

b) Implementation: it refers to operationalization of research projects within the specified framework through agreements between organization employees, organization and research plan.

Stage 2: A series of meetings was held to evaluate applied research, and case studies were conducted. The behavior of political entrepreneurs were studied and categorized. In this stage, political criteria and political entrepreneurs’ behavior were studied.

Stage 3: Outsider evaluators conducted assessments including the development of findings and further analysis. This stage helped identify four domains related to political entrepreneurship concerning eight applied research projects. Based on the research method and process, a number of four research projects were conducted in commercial enterprises as follows.

I. Study of innovative past research projects: this aimed to evaluate development-oriented activities when the two studied companies were successful and to examine whether or not aspects of political entrepreneurship may contribute to a better understanding of creativity in organizations.

II. Second study: this covered a wide range of organizational issues and evaluated company employees with a curious investigation of the items related to political entrepreneurship.

III. Third study: this was derived from organizational entrepreneurship, which aimed at conducting an integrated study on political entrepreneurship in the organization and supporting a plan of strategic change. A researcher-made questionnaire was used to determine political entrepreneurship in the organization.

IV. Fourth study: this referred to the dynamism of political entrepreneurship and leader-team relations, which concentrated on the internal role of management as the political entrepreneur, team and different areas of political entrepreneurship for new aspects of creativity and a shared competition spirit.

These four studies were conducted in private trade unions where the long-term research projects concentrate on improving perceived customer satisfaction and involving members/users in developing new services. The four studies are briefly explained below. The first research study involved the role of members and political entrepreneurship in developing union services. The second study investigated the strategic effect of political entrepreneurship on customer satisfaction in the unions. The third study investigated quality control, analyzing the use of equipment at the service of political entrepreneurship. The fourth study dealt with setting up multi-member groups, which used empirical data for the projects, in the unions to study political entrepreneurship. In these research projects, both insider and outsider researchers were studied in cooperation with internal service developers and respective managements.

RESULTS

The present findings are concerned with the main research framework and can be crucial to companies, organizations and unions. The findings revealed that political entrepreneurship factors and power ambitions contribute to improvements in research projects in private companies and unions. Innovation is one of the determining factors in business, which includes the ability to create new institutions and commercial enterprises. The study on the effect of political entrepreneurship on private commercial enterprises showed a high level of support and acceptance in these companies. In trade unions, strategic renewal was mainly emphasized through listing members and offering services to fulfill member needs. The research agenda and conducted projects aimed to systematize activities. The activities conducted by applied researchers within the companies were examined carefully. The results showed that they were mostly concerned with activities and behaviors such as being concerned with the management, increasing friendliness among colleagues, maintain legitimacy and allocating fiscal and time resources, which were directed towards higher benefits. Based on eight research studies in the present study, the activities and behaviors that contributed to the sustainability of long-term applied research projects were found to include identification of important issues, utilization and publication of results and positioning the respective projects. The present findings showed that companies made preparations for applied research projects though it is the behavior of researchers that determine the sustainability of research projects. The results showed that developing innovations through improved sharing of information and scientific networks are some of the measures taken to maintain long-term research projects, which provide for high profitability in long-term research projects. The findings also showed positioning of the respective research plans indicating that the early stages of long-term research projects included the assessment of invisible organizational risks whereas the researcher commitment to a company/organization was determining as a political factor. The results revealed the importance of sponsor management and good internal networks in all applied research. In commercial enterprises, sponsors usually play a significant role in applied research projects.

Using political entrepreneurship, employees and researchers as the agents of political entrepreneurship within the organization contributed to the creation of opportunities within companies/organizations. Political entrepreneurship contributes to strong ties with sponsors, expansion of internal networks, developing cooperative research projects and influencing companies and unions. The results of studies conducted on trade unions showed that political entrepreneurship helped coordinate the members of organizations, companies and unions. It also influenced the
continuous development, application and evaluation of this process. The findings suggest that political entrepreneurship essentially refers to the ability to make innovations, influence people, manage political relations and utilize available opportunities in private companies and trade unions, which exert a significant influence on the sustainability of applied research projects in these companies and unions. Utilization of union employees and managers as well as other insider and outsider activists as the agents of political entrepreneurship reveals the importance of political entrepreneurship in evaluating research opportunities and political activities to sustain applied research projects. It seems that researchers’ political credibility, reputation, commitment and activeness help increase the credibility of researchers and their long-term research projects. This is evident in trade unions where the researcher or employee as the agent of political entrepreneurship has considerable organizational experience that increases research accuracy so that organizational and research activities gain higher credibility. This shows the direct effect of intra-organizational researchers and company and union managers as the agents of political entrepreneurship on the credibility and accuracy of internal and external activities in a company/organization.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study aimed at investigating the effect of political entrepreneurship on the sustainability of applied research projects in private companies and trade unions. Considering the studies conducted on private companies and trade unions, the results showed a direct relationship between political entrepreneurship and sustainability of applied research projects so that such behaviors as being concerned with the management, increasing friendliness among colleagues, maintaining legitimacy and allocating fiscal and time resources contribute to the sustainability of applied research projects. The findings about trade unions provided significant insights that can be studied as a plan to develop a new professional model. Certainly, political entrepreneurship capabilities provide companies with competitive advantage in different research areas. The activities of political entrepreneurship agents help identify the needs, create ideas, develop and sustain research projects (Coghlan, 2001; Hahn, 2012). This suggests the importance of setting the stage for political entrepreneurship. The government should develop political entrepreneurship in different areas of research projects. The case study of private companies and trade unions was a limitation of the study the implication of which could be ascertained through further studies on a broader array of areas. The results may bear certain scientific importance for companies, trade unions and researchers in other organizations. The present study may be used as a plan to develop the new professional model of applied research.

REFERENCES


