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Analysis of internal competitiveness in private basic incubators: an international comparative case study

CARRETERO-LARREA, María Alejandra *† RÍOS-MANRIQUEZ, Martha

Universidad Politécnica de Querétaro. Carr. Estal 420 S/N, El Rosario, 76240 Qro.

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Abstract

Competitiveness is a term used from the origins of humanity when, human tried to do things better than his competitors, improving, innovating or presenting a competitive advantage (Rubio, 2011). Most of the researches tend to establish economic factors as the principal quantitative indicator to measure the competitive (Solleriro & Castañon, 2005); however, according to Rubio & Aragón (2002), the internal variables have more influence in organizations competitiveness.The present investigation shows the results of a case study comparing three private institutions located in Costa Rica, Brazil and Mexico, which are generators of companies, commonly called "Business Incubators".
The competitiveness of these institutions was measured by internal factors:

- Human Resources
- Strategic Planning
- Financial
- Innovation and technology
- Certifications
- Quality
- Information systems
- Marketing

From the descriptive statistical analysis, we conclude that Brazil incubator is more competitive in the internal factors than Mexico and Costa Rica.

Competitiveness, business incubators, Entrepreneurship

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*Correspondence to Author (email:alejandra.carretero@upq.edu.mx)
† Researcher contributing first author.

Introduction

The business competitiveness has been used in the business, political, socioeconomic, as well as in the general scope to compare one entity with another under the same established indices, with the aim of establishing parameters of comparison within the environment where it is conceptualized.

Among the various indicators that have been used for this purpose are two mainly; internal and external factors, which depend on the context in which competitiveness is being measured and as mentioned by Müller (1992), cited by Solleiro (2004), if a company remains in the industry over time it must be competitive because it has obtained a market share.

To stay in the industry and survive in a competitive world, business incubators have been used by entrepreneurs as a means to transform their business idea into a formal organization (Toledo, 2007).

The missions of these institutions aim mainly to graduate competitive companies, which is supported by statistics because the comparison in the survival time of companies graduated from an incubation system is greater than the rest of the companies.

Justification

Currently Mexico has 142 basic incubators registered in the incubation network and recognized by the Secretaría de Economía (SE) through the Instituto Mexicano de Empresarios (INADEM), which can access government support and its application must be reflected in the number of competitive companies graduated and the creation of sources of employment, therefore, it is necessary to carry out studies that in the future will help the 3 main interest groups in decision-making; to the entrepreneurs so that they can have a way of comparing business incubators and accelerators and thus choose the best option to incubate their idea and have a greater chance of having a competitive company, the Government and mainly the Secretaría de Economía(SE) for the evaluation of the supports granted and thus increase the competitiveness of the country and finally to the subjects of study of this research, the incubators of companies so that together or individually they can create strategies that support the fulfillment of their objectives and above all his vision.

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Problem

In recent years the figure of the entrepreneur has noticed an increasing attention in the political, economic and social spheres derived from the fundamental role that these play in global economic growth, that is why governments around the world and different international organizations such as the Bank Global and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have launched different initiatives where entrepreneurship is promoted to improve the economy of the country, which are mainly applied to developing countries (Minniti, 2012) Statistics show that of the SMEs in Mexico, four out of ten die during the first year of life and their life expectancy at birth is from 7 to 22 years, depending on the size of the companies, since the index of life expectancy has an increasing behavior as the size of the company increases (INEGI, 2015), however, a company developed under a model of business incubation increases its survival rate, statistics of the Pyme Universe (Torreblanca, 2013) mention that 80% of the incubated companies survive the first two years of operations.

For this reason, many local economic development agencies, governments and other public or private institutions have adopted incubators as a tool to reduce the probability of failure and to accelerate the process of business creation (Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005); they also maintain that the importance of incubators is growing, since over the years they have been seen as mechanisms to improve the economic and technological development of the countries, to promote the emergence of promising and promising ideas and in turn to promote the growth of the newly created company.

During the last decades of the twentieth century, companies are in a process of change and adaptation to the systems that surround them, where the nature of competition and its struggle for survival is increasingly important, the problem is based on that there is no evidence that shows a system for measuring the competitiveness of incubators that allow them to compare entrepreneurship options, beyond the cost implied by the incubation process.

Hypotesis

The age of the private business incubator is related to the competitiveness index measured through its internal factors.

Objectives

General objective

Compare the internal competitiveness of the private basic incubators of Mexico, Costa Rica and Brazil

Specific objectives

- Measure the competitiveness of each of the basic private incubators through internal factors.
- Identify the main differences that exist in the management of private basic incubators in each country.

Theoretical framework

Business incubators have been used since the 1950s by government agencies as a mechanism for economic reactivation in the creation of companies to cope with the unemployment rate (Huffman & Quigley, 2002) and increase the chances of survival of new companies (Lewis, 2001)

The definition of an incubator according to the National Business Innovation Association (2016), is a dynamic process of entrepreneurship development that encourages the creation of new companies, helping them to survive and grow during the birth period when they are most vulnerable. The incubators provide administrative advice, access to financing and scope to commercial or technical services considered critical. In addition, they offer entrepreneurial services shared office services, access to equipment, a flexible rental and a large space, all in the same place

The history of business incubators has emerged since the 1950s in the United States (Huffman and Quigley, 2002) when the first business incubator was installed in Batavia, NY and the basic model of an incubator is created (Lewis, 2001), Europe reached its first business incubator in 1875 (Maroto Sánchez, Andrés, García Tabuenca, 2004) and in 1984, Brazil began to work under these models and it was not until 1990 that the first formal incubator was created in Mexico with the support of the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT).

The incubators of companies in Mexico are cataloged according to the type of companies to be incubated, classifying them into two main categories (INADEM, 2016):

- Basic incubators; Traditional business incubators focus their efforts on the creation of companies whose requirements for physical infrastructure, technology and operating mechanisms are basic, such as the commerce, service or light industry sectors. The average incubation time is three to six months

- High impact incubators; they are organizations that support the constitution of companies whose physical and technological infrastructure requirements, as well as their operating mechanisms, are specialized and incorporate elements of innovation. These are projects with high growth potential, high sales rates and internationalization possibilities. The average incubation time is from 1 to 2 years.

The incubators of private companies are entities that generate profits and therefore must seek to be competitive.

Competitiveness is a very broad term used according to Rubio (2011), from the origins of mankind, when the human being tried to do things better than his competitors, improving it, innovating or presenting a competitive advantage to gain the will or use on the part of consumers.

It is very common to hear today the rankings of competitiveness of countries or companies and the position that is occupied, is one of the factors that affect the decision making for investment and in the case of entrepreneurs to decide where to incubate your business idea

The concept of competitiveness seen from the Rubio company scope (2011), defines it as "the capacity of a public or private organization, lucrative or not, to systematically maintain comparative advantages that allow it to reach, sustain and improve a certain position in the socioeconomic environment" , the term successful competitiveness (Achanga, Shehab, Roy, & Nelder, 2006, Bárcenas Estrada, De Lema García Pérez, & Trejo Sánchez, 2009, O'Regan & Ghobadian, 2002, Rubio & Aragón, 2002, cited by Bárcenas et al. ., 2009), is defined as the ability to achieve a better position in the market in relation to other competitors in its sector, obtaining results in a sustainable way over time.

A large part of the research tends to establish economic factors as the determining quantitative indicator for the measurement of competitiveness (McFetridge, 1995, Unger et al., 2013, European Commission, 2003, Sobrino, 2005, Bueno, 1995; Waterhouse, 1995, Álvarez and García, 1996, Marbella, 1998, Donrrosoro et al 2001, Camisón, 2001, Industry Canada, 1995, cited in Solleiro and Castañón (2005), however, this type of research leaves out many other items. of internal and external competitiveness that are not reflected in financial returns but are qualitative, such as knowledge management, quality, technology, innovation, human capital, market, demand, legal aspects among many others (Zahra, Neubaum and Naldi, 2007, Okamuro, 2007, Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983, Navas and Ortiz de Urbina, 2002, Rubio and Aragón, 2002, Zevallos, 2007, Bárcenas Estrada et al., 2009.) Derived from the restrictions for the development of The investigation will consider only the internal factors that do not involve economic factors.

As mentioned in the characteristics of competitiveness, these can be classified into internal and external factors; although according to Rubio and Aragón (2002), internal variables have a greater weight in the competitiveness of organizations.
Regarding the internal factors besides the financial one can be determined:

Human resources (Colombo and Grilli, 2005, Aragón and Rubio, 2005, De la Cruz, Morales and Carrasco, 2006, Bruderl, Preisendorfer, and Ziegler, 1992, Llopis, 2000, Monfort, 2000, Zapata, 2012, Alderete and Diez, 2014; Chaves et al., 2013; Solleiro and Castañón, 2005).

Strategic planning (Rudd et al., 2007; Kraus et al., 2006; Guzmán, Rebolloso and Vallejo, 2007; Martínez and Álvarez, 2006; Bravo et al., 2015; Arrieta et al., 2015; Mora-Riapira, Vera -Colina and Melgarejo-Molina, 2015, Haro and Basurto, 2016).

Innovation and technology (Rubio and Aragón, 2002, Donrrosoro et al., 2001, Ahuja and Katila, 2004, Baldwin and Gellatly, 2006, Roberts, 1999, Saavedra, 2012, Ríos and Marroquín, 2012, Alderete and Diez, 2014, Solleiro and Castañón, 2005, Quijano, Arguelles and Aguilar, 2015, Vázquez-Ávila, Sánchez-Gutiérrez and González-Uribe, 2015, Ramírez and Parra, 2015, Heredia, Castillo and Juárez, 2016).

Certifications (Ayala et al., 2004; Sánchez, García and Estrada, 2009; Diaz, Delgado and Páez, 2016).

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Quality (Martínez and Álvarez, 2006, Solleiro and Castañón, 2005, Rubio and Aragón 2002, Quiroga, 2003, Donrrosoro et al., 2001, Artail, 2007, Miñarro and García, 2006, Prajogo and Brown, 2006, Jiménez, 2016)

Marketing (Donrrosoro et al., 2001, Rubio and Aragón 2002, Quiroga, 2003, Solleiro and Castañón, 2005, De la Cruz, Morales and Carrasco, 2006, Valladares, 2008, Corla, Andrade and Ortega, 2012, Aguilasocho, Galeana and Peña, 2016).

Information Systems (Llopis, 2000, Donrrosoro et al., 2001, Katz and Hilbert, 2003, RICYT, 2009, Best, 2010 cited by Melchor, Pedraza and Ábrego, 2012).

Research Methodology

Type of Research

The research design is quantitative, the strategy to obtain the data is non-experimental, and when the data is collected in a single moment, it falls into a transectional investigation with a correlational analysis where the variables are described and their incidence is analyzed. interrelation at a given moment (Hernández, Fernández, Baptista, 2014).

Development Methodology

The instrument used was developed based on the identification of internal factors of competitiveness in the review of the literature and later it was endorsed by four experts in the area, obtaining an instrument with 5 sections where the quantitative evaluation of the internal factors of competitiveness is designed on a scale of Likert 1 to 5, consisting of 8 variables, 14 indicators and 26 questions as shown in table 1.

Variable	Code	Number of questions
Human Resources	RRHH	5
Strategic planning	PE	5
Financial	FIN	3
Innovation and technology	IT	5
Certifications	CER	4
Quality	Q	2
Information systems	SI	3
Marketing	MKT	2

Table 1 Operationalization of variables. (Own elaboration)

Este instrumento fué validado en una prueba piloto a nivel internacional donde se obtuvo un alfa de Cronbach de 0.883 y obteniendo los estadísticos descriptivos básicos mostrados en la tabla 2.

Dimension	Item	V	Mín.	Max	Average	Desv tip
CER	4	32	1	5	3.84	0.85
FIN	3	24	3	5	4.29	0.69
IT	5	40	1	5	3.48	1.01
MKT	3	24	3	5	4.25	0.74
PE	5	40	3	5	4.43	0.68
Q	2	16	3	5	4.31	0.6
RRHH	5	40	2	5	3.98	0.8
SI	2	16	3	5	3.56	0.63

Table 2 Statistical descriptive pilot test. (Own elaboration

The instrument was applied by email through google forms to the Directors or Managers of the 3 incubators of basic companies, of private origin subject to this investigation during the month of April being the Mexican incubator the oldest, since it was created in 2004; the incubators of Costa Rica and Brazil have a date of creation in 2014.

Results

Regarding the comparison of infrastructure to serve entrepreneurs, as shown in Table 3, the Brazilian incubator is the most equipped, followed by Mexico and finally Costa Rica.

Origin of the incubator	Offices	Workshops	Laboratories	Meeting room	Computation areas	Training room
COSTA RICA	Yes	No	No	Si	No	Si
MÉXICO	Si	No	No	Si	Si	Si
BRAZIL	Si	Si	Si	Si	Si	Si

Tabla 3 Equipamiento de las incubadoras privadas

(Own elaboration)

In terms of the number of collaborators who have the largest number is Brazil with 9, while Mexico and Costa Rica have 4 each under the scheme of hiring by fees and only the incubator of Mexico has an average of 25 external advisors who support in particular projects.

The incubators of Mexico and Brazil make strategic alliances with the public sector, mainly to strengthen some business areas and political relationships, while Costa Rica is not interested in strategic alliances. Regarding the criteria to enter the incubator again, Mexico and Brazil indicate that a high potential for growth must be demonstrated, while the Costa Rican incubator with only having the business idea is sufficient and this is reflected in the time Maximum of exit for Mexico is 6 months, Costa Rica 1 to 2 years and Brazil up to 3 years to incubate a basic company.

Regarding the competitiveness of internal factors of the 3 private incubators, the results for variables are shown in the following tables.

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Table 4 shows the results of the human resources category, which shows that Brazil is the incubator that obtains the highest average, followed by Mexico and Costa Rica; being the indicators conditions of the job and participation of the collaborators in the decision-making that make the difference between Brazil and the other two incubators.

HUMAN RESOURCES (RRHH)			
	COSTA RICA	MÉXICO	BRAZIL
	5	4	5
	5	4	5
	3	3	5
	3	4	3
	3	4	5
Average	3.8	3.8	**4.6**

Table 4 Comparative results of category human resources

(Own elaboration)

Regarding strategic planning, it can be seen in table 5 that Brazil and Mexico have the same average and the main difference between these two and Costa Rica is the indicator on the use of control tools.

STRATEGIC PLANNING (PE)			
	COSTA RICA	MÉXICO	BRAZIL
	5	5	5
	3	4	4
	3	4	4
	3	4	4
	4	4	4
Average	3.6	**4.2**	**4.2**

Table 5 Comparative results of category strategic planning

(Own elaboration)

In the financial aspect, it stands out a lot because, as indicated for Brazil, it is not important to obtain financial profitability or to manage funds to finance projects, since the private incubator has subsidies that cover most of the costs, therefore, as shown in the table 6 Mexico and Costa Rica are on par.

FINANCIAL (FIN)			
	COSTA RICA	MÉXICO	BRAZIL
	5	5	4
	4	4	1
	4	4	1
Average	**4.33**	**4.33**	2.00

Table 6 Comparative financial category results.

(Own elaboration)

The category of technological innovation, as shown in Table 7 and 11, is the lowest of all the internal aspects of competitiveness, especially in Mexico, since it obtains the lowest average when it does not consider that it has the machinery and equipment of laboratories. at the level of other incubators at a national or international level, between Brazil and Costa Rica, the indicator that differentiates them is the development of new products, services or processes.

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION (IT)			
	COSTA RICA	MÉXICO	BRAZIL
	3	1	4
	3	1	3
	3	4	3
	3	3	5
	4	4	4
Average	3.2	2.6	**3.8**

Table 7 Comparative results of technological innovation category.

(Own elaboration)

In terms of certifications for Mexico and Brazil, both have international certifications of administrative and academic innovation methodologies, while Costa Rica despite having the same age of Brazil does not have certifications of any kind. The only difference that existed between Mexico and Brazil was the degree of importance of having procedural manuals defined as shown in Table 8.

CERTIFICATIONS (CER)			
	COSTA RICA	MÉXICO	BRAZIL
	3	4	4
	3	4	4
	4	3	4
	3	4	4
Average	3.25	3.75	**4**

Table 8 Comparative results of category certifications

(Own elaboration)

The quality evaluated under the quality and efficiency management indicators of the three incubators subject to this study obtain the same score as shown in table 9, which is why quality is considered to be one of the main aspects, regardless of the country of origin of the incubator.

QUALITY (Q)			
	COSTA RICA	MÉXICO	BRAZIL
	4	4	4
	4	4	4
Average	**4**	**4**	**4**

Table 9 Comparative results of quality category

(Own elaboration)

The information systems under the indicator of production, control, storage, recovery and dissemination of information and its sources, as shown in Table 10 Brazil is by far the incubator that obtains the highest score, considering all the items with a high degree of importance and application, followed by Costa Rica and in the end Mexico.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS (IS)			
	COSTA RICA	MÉXICO	BRAZIL
	4	3	5
	3	3	5
Average	3.5	3	**5**

Table 10 Comparative results of category information systems

(Own elaboration)

The last variable is marketing, within which, as shown in table 11, Mexico and Brazil obtain the same score, differentiating themselves from Costa Rica only in the item focused on conducting business fairs where the products of the incubator are shown.

MARKETING (MKT)			
	COSTA RICA	MÉXICO	BRAZIL
	4	4	4
	4	4	4
	3	4	4
Average	3.67	**4.00**	**4.00**

Table 11 Comparative results of marketing category

(Own elaboration)

Conclusions

The most competitive incubator in its internal factors as shown in table 11 is the Brazil incubator, since the sum of its internal factors is 31.60, followed by Mexico and finally Costa Rica. Which rejects the hypothesis raised because it does not influence the lifetime of the incubator in the competitiveness of it.

Igualmente se observa que el factor interno de la competitividad más importante es el recurso humano.

	COSTA RICA	**MEXICO**	**BRAZIL**	Average
RRHH	3.80	3.80	4.60	**4.07**
PE	3.60	4.20	4.20	4.00
FIN	4.33	4.33	2.00	3.56
IT	3.20	2.60	3.80	3.20
CER	3.25	3.75	4.00	3.67
Q	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
IS	3.50	3.00	5.00	3.83
MKT	3.67	4.00	4.00	3.89
SUM	29.35	29.68	**31.60**	

Table 10 Comparative results of internal factors competitiveness

(Own elaboration)

Subsequent studies will focus on determining competitiveness in internal factors to perform the calculation of incubators with greater competitiveness by evaluating the best practices of them and share them, in order to strengthen the entrepreneurship and the economy of the countries.

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