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Corporate entrepreneurship education's impact on family business sustainability: A case study in Brazil

Glauciana Gomes Soares [a], Vitor Lélio da Silva Braga [b], Carla Susana da Encarnação Marques [c], Vanessa Ratten [d,*]

[a] UNIFOR, Brazil
[b] School of Technology and Management – Institute Polytechnic of Porto CIICESI, Portugal
[c] University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Portugal
[d] La Trobe University, Australia

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ABSTRACT

Family businesses display distinctive characteristics as compared with non-family companies, and family firms are of great importance to the global economy, which means that more research is needed on how to promote their growth and sustainability. Despite the prevalence of family business, they still need to actively engage in corporate entrepreneurship education in order to stay competitive. This study sought to analyze the effects of corporate entrepreneurship education on a Brazilian family business and to confirm whether company's investment in corporate entrepreneurship education has, over time, promoted competitive advantages, ensured sustainability, and facilitated a carefully planned succession process. The methodology was an exploratory-descriptive case study based on qualitative data based on individual's perceptions then subjected to discourse analysis. The data were gathered from interviews with the top management of the family firm under study in order to understand their perceptions of corporate entrepreneurship education. The results reveal that the company presents the expected family business characteristics and that the firm's investment in corporate entrepreneurship education has ensured its growth and sustainability and facilitated a smoother succession process. These findings indicate that the perception regarding investment in corporate entrepreneurship education contributing to family businesses' sustainability is generally positive. Based on the prevailing theories, these firms are extremely likely to cease to exist from the third generation onward often due to successors' lack of professional skills and the predominance of hiring based on relationships rather than qualifications. This study's results provide empirical evidence of how investing in corporate entrepreneurship education adds value to family businesses.

1. Introduction

Family businesses make up a large proportion of companies worldwide and contribute significantly to the economies of many countries by generating millions of direct jobs (Lansberg, 1997). From a conceptual point of view, no consensus yet exists among

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: Glauciana.soares@unifor.br (G.G. Soares), vbraga@estg.ipp.pt (V. Lélio da Silva Braga), smarques@utad.pt (C. Susana da Encarnação Marques), v.ratten@latrobe.edu.au (V. Ratten).

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researchers about what a family business is or what limitations to set on the use of broad or restrictive definitions when categorizing family companies. According to Chrisman, Chua, and Sharma (2005), this lack of consensus means many firms are classified as family enterprises based on different theoretical approaches. For example, Gómez-Mejía, Cruz, Berrone, and De Castro (2011) argue that one of the characteristics that distinguishes a family business from a non-family company is senior executives' position. In family firms, the management's remuneration is lower but their job security is higher. This means it is important for family businesses to actively engage in a process of continual learning in order to stay competitive in the global marketplace. To do this family businesses need to focus on entrepreneurship education as a way to learn new trends and innovations.

Entrepreneurship education plays an important role in developing manager competences particularly in terms of new training methods (Almeida, Daniel, & Figueiredo, 2019). As compared to other types of management education, entrepreneurship training involves focusing on risk taking, innovation and futuristic thinking, which are needed in the evolving marketplace reliant on dynamic change. Donnellon, Otila and Middelton (2014) state that individuals construct their entrepreneurial identity through entrepreneurship education. This makes it important for businesses to focus on developing entrepreneurial capabilities through education training programs aimed at corporate development (Iwu, Opute, Nchu, Eresia-Eke, Tengeh, Jaiveoba and Aliyu, 2019).

Jones, Penaluna, and Pittaway (2014) suggested that entrepreneurship education is a recipe for change. This means that the perceived value of entrepreneurship education will be based on the involvement of individuals in learning programs (Jones, Pickernell, Fisher, & Netana, 2017). This means increasingly businesses are utilizing corporate education for a diverse array of reasons including for sustainability (Avelar, da Silva-Oliveira, & da Silva Pereira, 2019) and for business performance (Bauman & Lucy, 2019). This means that entrepreneurship education often influences a business in a number of ways depending on the learning goals (Canziani & Welsh, 2019). More businesses are utilizing education as a way to respond to pressing needs imposed by changing workplace trends (Igwe, Okolie, & Nwokoro, 2019).

Regarding corporate entrepreneurship education in family-owned enterprises, a review of the relevant literature revealed no investigations that have focused on this topic. Prior research includes only studies about corporate entrepreneurship education or about family companies, but not both. Some researchers have examined training processes in family businesses, but corporate entrepreneurship education is much more extensive than organizations' internal training programs. Corporate entrepreneurship education refers to the process of training stakeholders throughout companies' business chain in order to align all actors with these firms' strategic plans and promote their sustainability.

This study, therefore, investigated corporate entrepreneurship education in the context of family businesses, including the problem of family company discontinuity. Often relationships built on trust arising from family dynamics prevail over employees with competencies originating in corporate entrepreneurship education programs. The present research focused on gathering information related to corporate entrepreneurship education 's impact on family businesses' growth and sustainability. The main objective was to investigate the effects of investing in corporate entrepreneurship education on family companies in order to identify if this investment facilitates these firms' growth and sustainability, as well as smoother succession processes.

According to Freire, Soares, Nakayama, and Spanhol (2009), relationship dynamics are important to both strategic results and functional corporate divisions since affective bonds are the basis of decisions. These connections are also responsible for building dominant paradigms and defining individuals' professional frontiers and companies' growth horizon. In addition, Freire et al. (2009) report that family businesses have their own positive and negative characteristics depending on how deeply rooted the founder's personality is in company culture and what strategic needs must be met to ensure these organizations' growth. The cited authors argue for a positive reading of the trust factor due to the resulting high degree of confidence in family firms but also a negative reading when trust is confused with the competencies employees need to perform their jobs well. In reference to family companies' confusion of trust with competence, Freire et al. (2009) report that, during promotion processes, employees encounter "affective blindness" in which the criteria used are subjective and undervalue skills.

Maia (2009) suggests that the management style of people in family businesses is characterized by affectivity and paternalism, in which opportunities for personal growth and encouragement are generated by bonds of trust and partnerships established between owners and employees. Basco (2015) asserts that founding families can contribute to social relationships based on trust because family members interact economically within their company and socially through other social and political institutions (e.g., sports clubs, political parties, activities, or non-profit organizations).

Thus, the present study sought to analyze the effects of corporate entrepreneurship education on family businesses' growth, sustainability, and succession processes involving qualified leaders. The results discussed below can help family entrepreneurs make informed decisions about investing in their organization's corporate entrepreneurship education, based on the empirical evidence found in this investigation.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Family business concepts and approaches

Anderson and Reeb (2003) define family businesses as firms that make use of family property or have family members on the board of directors. Martin-Reyna and Duran-Encalada (2012), in turn, categorize companies as family businesses when the founder or family members have more than 50% of the share capital. According to Donnelley (1967), family businesses are companies linked to one family that influences decisions and involves at least two generations of that family. Frugis (2007) builds on this definition by conceptualizing family businesses as firms that have been part of a family for at least two generations, in which shareholder control is exercised by the founder's successors and these individuals both influence corporate policy and protect family interests.

According to Basco (2015), the assumption that family businesses are a specific type of company is based on the juxtaposition of family logic and business logic. In addition, the presence and incorporation of family enterprises into regional productive structures can influence the allocation and use of regional factors and processes. Thus, family businesses are firms in which the family has sufficiently active participation to exercise control over—and/or ensure family representation in—the company's governance, thereby influencing corporate decisions and day-to-day management. Family members must also give explicit proof of their intent to transfer ownership and business operations to the next generation.

Dhaenens, Marler, Vardaman, and Chrisman (2018) report that, although a clear connection exists between organizational orientation and organizational commitment in the literature, this relationship become more complex in family businesses. Thus, the cited authors focused on this topic, finding evidence that supports the argument that family-guided businesses result in different levels of commitment depending on the status of family members in the organization. Although mentoring has more often been linked to affective impairment in businesses, Dhaenens et al.'s (2018) data indicate that the unique mentoring relationships present in family-owned enterprises can promote normative and continuity commitment under varied circumstances.

Family Businesses' Main Obstacles.

Magnus and Jaeger (2013) conducted a study of family business management in the cities of Gramado and Canela, in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The cited authors identified various difficulties encountered by family companies in these municipalities, namely, unstructured management, undefined family member activities, conflicts due to family-company interference, and resistance to changes, as well as unplanned successions. Subsequently, Pereira, Chagas, Sillos, Reis, and Alves (2015) carried out research on family companies' aspects related to hierarchy, complexity, and challenges faced by these firms. The cited study examined how the companies deal with existing conflicts, including knowing which position to take on issues and handling situations in positive ways. In addition, nepotism was highlighted as an unfair practice benefiting family members who do not merit promotions.

According to Limárcio, Alves, Leite, Antunes, and Daniel (2015), managers of family businesses believe that company management should be based on family traditions, so supervisors do not properly plan or define their leadership styles and positions on issues. Some family companies may succeed by following this strategy, but they are more likely to fail, with most joining the statistics that show the majority close when the firm is only two years old. Nonetheless, family business can be successful in the face of competition, making the most of these companies' advantages such as easier communication and more team participation in important decisions. However, these firms also have disadvantages, for example, increased friction, a lack of structure, and decentralized power.

Nordstrom and Jennings (2017) found that many studies of family businesses have examined how family ownership affects firms, so the cited authors concentrated on how family businesses can be managed to improve family members' wellbeing. The results suggest that the companies surveyed are successful not only in running a business but also in overcoming the many challenges faced by families. These include, among others, the conflict between work and family life; the preservation of values, norms, and traditions; high divorce rates; and inadequate options for the care of children and the elderly.

According to Gonzalez, Rodriguez, and Sossa (2017), family companies' boards of directors composed of external members contribute expertise and objectivity, diverse perspectives, on-the-job learning, and the development of key skills. Family members in these firms are overly worried about keeping their employees, and relatives have difficulty challenging their bosses. Thus, a lack of external board members can be considered a barrier to the improvement of family businesses' performance because decisions are not made based on what will strengthen performance. In summary, the present review of the literature revealed that family companies encounter various barriers such as succession problems, power struggles, and a lack of professionalism.

2.2. *Family businesses' growth and sustainability*

Duh (2012) notes that family businesses make up 75% to 90% of all businesses in the world regardless of countries' level of development. For example, in Europe, 70% to 80% of companies are family businesses. The data on family business growth around the globe show that, due to emerging economic and demographic trends contributing to minimal growth in domestic markets, many family firms' survival is likely to depend on their ability to increase substantially revenues and profits from international ventures. Borges, Brito, Lima, and Castro (2016), in turn, assert that various factors determine family businesses' sustainability. The cited authors underline the following as important: family and management systems, conflicts, role conflict, conflicting rights, intergenerational conflict, women's impact on family businesses, planning, transfer of authority, management by professional executives, transition planning, and corporate governance.

Breton-Miller and Miller (2016) further report that, from the perspective of family values, both long-term orientation and management costs have quite positive implications for family-owned businesses' sustainability. However, less optimistic viewpoints indicate that family ownership fosters increased conflict. Breton-Miller and Miller (2016) thus define sustainability practices as those that work to increase long-term benefits for all stakeholders in organizations—including the broader community. Examples of these practices are a generous and equitable treatment of employees, scrupulously fair relationships with clients, a focus on occupational health and safety, solidarity contributions to communities, minimalization of companies' ecological footprint, excellent products, and time-bound returns for all owners. Breton-Miller and Miller (2016) also suggest that these sustainable practices benefit all stakeholders of undertakings insofar as the practices contribute to companies, societies, and the environment's long-term wellbeing.

More recently, Ungerer and Mienie (2018) developed a conceptual framework to help family businesses become sustainable over multiple generations. The cited study focused on the challenge of sustaining a family business over longer periods, noting that family business experts have pointed to communication as the most successful leverage tool for business and family systems. More specifically, communication practices are linked to family harmony and leadership methods.

The survival of family firms in Latin America is of particular interest as this is where the company selected for the present case study is located. While the long-term sustainability of family firms is overall fragile, companies that have prospered over generations appear to rely on the key element that led to the firms' genesis: the family (Müller et al., 1981). The present research, therefore, sought to gather empirical data correlating family companies' sustainability with their investment in corporate entrepreneurship education, as this can resolve the problem of succession and prepare employees to achieve the firms' strategic objectives.

2.3. Corporate entrepreneurship education concepts and approaches

Meister (1999) defines corporate education as a system focused on developing people based on competence management, thereby strengthening the relationship between individuals' improvement and their company's performance strategies. In this definition, the cited author does not mention that employees' skills need to be aligned with business strategies. However, Quartiero and Cerny (2005) specify that corporate education comprises training projects offered by companies to their employees in order to institutionalize a culture of continuous learning and foster employees' acquisition of new competencies. These skills must be based on the organizations' strategy.

According to Eboli (2004), corporate education should enable workers' development to ensure they acquire the business and human skills considered critical to the achievement of business strategies, in a continuous, strategic, and systematic way. The cited author lists eight practices that organizations can use to implement corporate entrepreneurship education effectively, making the most of human resources responsible for managing the following areas. The first practice is educational initiatives and programs based on the identification of human and organizational competencies. The second practice is managing knowledge by stimulating the sharing of know-how and exchanging of experiences. The third and fourth strategies are an intensive use of education technologies to facilitate learning anytime and anywhere and a strong company commitment to corporate citizenship. The fifth practice is disseminating and strengthening company culture, while the sixth is leaders and managers who take responsibility for learning processes. The seventh practice is evaluations that consider the results of investment in education and the company's objectives. The last strategy is forming partnerships with higher education institutions.

Toledo and Domingues (2018) conducted a bibliometric study of the topic of corporate education over the last 20 years. The cited authors' analysis of the collected data led them to conclude that corporate education and its structures have stopped being regarded as mere accessories and a drain on financial resources. Currently, corporate entrepreneurship education 's strategic value is being recognized and managed with care. Studies have increasingly emphasized that human resource management needs to include well-defined roles and an alignment with organizations' strategies, which can generate and increase performance and productivity. Thus, corporate entrepreneurship education 's various definitions all include individuals' development in alignment with strategic objectives and organizational culture in order to achieve competitiveness.

2.4. Expectations of corporate entrepreneurship education

According to Nicolae, Jucan, and Sabina (2012), corporate education can be part of a holistic human resources approach to assessing employee performance and thus part of company review systems. In addition, organizations can use corporate entrepreneurship education and training to develop win-win arrangements with managers and employees. Almeida (2010) argues that family businesses are also undergoing transformations due to the current business environment. That is, these companies are increasingly sensitive to the process of globalization and internationalization that all organizations are experiencing. In this context, making family-owned companies more competitive and improving their management has become a major challenge for any manager or entrepreneur but, at the same time, fundamental to ensuring business continuity and maintaining family control. The professionalization process through corporate entrepreneurship education is one of the tools that facilitate positive organizational change.

Toni and Alvares (2016) recently stated that, in order to meet the challenges of competitiveness and achieve the ideal conditions for generating innovation, the workforce must remain highly qualified. Corporate entrepreneurship education has emerged as an alternative means to this end. Toni and Alvares (2016) thus proposed a method to analyze the relationship between organizational intelligence and corporate education processes. The cited study's results reveal a set of elements common to both these approaches: the "capturing" and "sharing" of knowledge and experiences and the sharing of "meaning" and a "culture" of individual and organizational learning.

However, creating a culture of learning is not just about offering training programs. It is about developing and sustaining an environment that inspires and supports employees to seek education based on a variety of formats, methods, and information flows. This process is a new and more personalized, inclusive approach to learning that is championed by executives and supervisors at all levels. A learning culture that positively reinforces learning and knowledge transfer not only looks to organizations for support but also to individuals. For example, the benefits of mentoring are as strong for teachers as for learners. More specifically, corporate entrepreneurship education 's benefits include feeling valued, sharing programs or corporate knowledge with direct benefits to employees' area of work, incorporating new perspectives into individuals' understanding, and reinforcing or refocusing personal development plans. Corporate entrepreneurship education can also generate new and innovative practices through a creative, informal approach (Murali & Rajaram, 2015; Souza, 2001), so this approach to education needs to be seen as a vital path to companies' success.

2.5. Successors and their search for corporate entrepreneurship education

In family businesses, the most fundamental premise is that human capital offers valuable experience and does a good job. Successors within this type of company must gain a generalized perspective on their firm's business as being a specialist is not a useful trait in successors because they need a more global vision of their company's operations (Teixeira, Pereira, Pereira, & Ribeiro, 2015). Given that only about 30% of family firms survive the second generation and less than 15% outlive the third generation, Martins, Maccan, Campanario, and Almeida (2008) assert that the main difficulty faced in family company management is the transition to control by third generation family members.

The cited authors verified that this transition is strongly associated with the family-company relationship due to the following factors. First, the succession process is influenced by family and emotional values and, second, by conflicts, rivalries, and divergences in strategic visions and business objectives between generations. The third factor is the absence of professional criteria applied when hiring relatives in these companies. The last factor is weak communication and a resulting information asymmetry among family members. Thus, research on this issue should focus, above all, on the importance of training successors and the way this affects their company's success.

A recent PricewaterhouseCoopers (2017) report was based on an international survey of more than 130 members of new generations in family businesses around the world. Out of these respondents, 35 were interviewed in more detail, providing rich insights into the current reality of these new generations. Their results confirm Wang and Jiang (2018) perspective who also report that succession in family businesses is vital to business continuity, but the existing research on approaches to the cultivation and training of successors remains limited. The cited authors examined this question and identified two more inspirational styles: learning beside and learning separately from current leaders.

Based on knowledge-based theory, Wang and Jiang (2018) discuss how the existing leaders' need to convey various types of tacit knowledge affects these leaders' selection of training styles. More specifically, the cited authors argue that family firms involved in manufacturing and industrial products are more likely to adopt the more stimulating style of learning besides the current leader. Family companies in service and consumer industries are more likely to adopt separate learning styles. Wang and Jiang (2018) also argue that the relationship between firms' type of industry and successors' learning style is stronger for larger companies, resulting in more successful educational experiences. However, this industry-learning style connection is weaker when a good relationship already exists between the owner and successor. A sample of 199 Chinese family businesses provided support for the proposed relationship.

Better and atypical transitions from one generation to the next can be facilitated by training successors and fostering an interactive environment of permanent learning and constant research in family businesses. Thus, the present study considered investment in corporate entrepreneurship education important to family firms' sustainability.

3. Methodology

The research design selected was a single case study, which according to Stake (2000), is appropriate when the case is used to determine if theoretical propositions are correct. This design also works well when the case under study is rare or extreme, that is, when few similar situations exist that allow other comparative studies. In addition, the method is appropriate when the case is revealing, namely, when it allows access to information not easily available otherwise. The current study's objective was to identify corporate entrepreneurship education 's effects on family businesses' growth and sustainability based on a Brazilian company case study, so the first and second conditions were met. A large proportion of the family companies invited to participate in this study had not implemented corporate entrepreneurship education, which also confirmed that this type of information is not easily available.

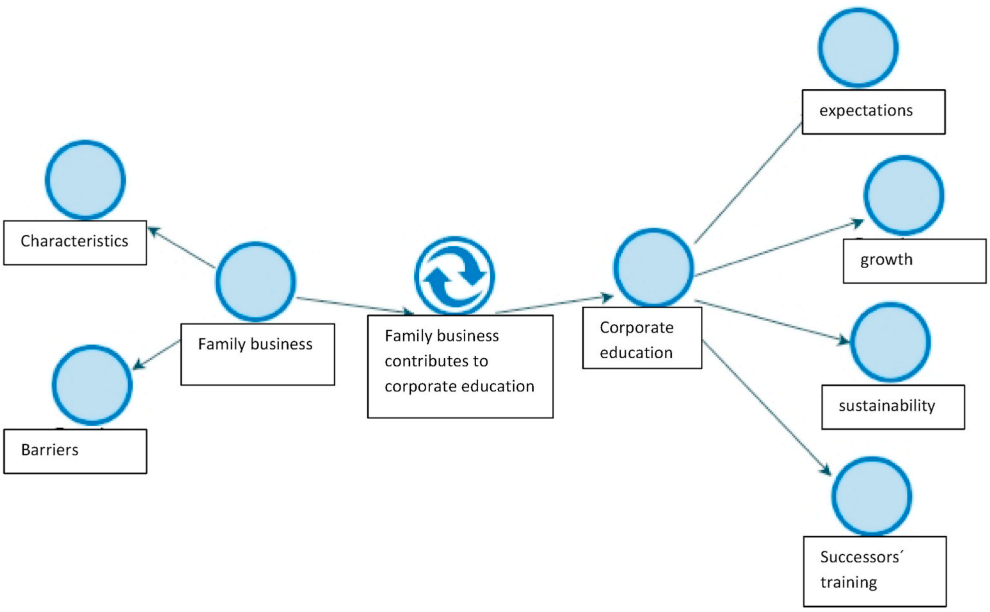

Fig. 1. Proposed research model.

The case study was conducted using data on Bethânia Lácteos, a family-owned company based in the city of Fortaleza, in northeastern Brazil, which was chosen for the company's corporate entrepreneurship education practices. The research included data collection techniques and tools applied through interviews with the firm's senior managers based on open-ended questions. Discourse analysis was used to construct a theoretical framework out of the data gathered from interviews with 11 company executives, who were identified as INT 01 to 11 to maintain the participants' confidentiality. NVivo 12 software was used to support the qualitative data processing. Discourse analysis allows researchers to examine closely the language in transcripts and to search for patterns, while NVivo software provides a means of storing, retrieving, categorizing, and coding texts (Gibbs, Friese, & Mangabeira, 2002; Wetherell et al., 2001).

4. Data analysis

The proposed research model shown in Fig. 1 was based on the analysis's results. The model consists of two broad dimensions: family business, with characteristics and barriers as its subdimensions, and corporate entrepreneurship education, with the subdimensions of expectations, growth, sustainability, and successor training. The family business dimension covers the firm's characteristics, as well as barriers to the implementation of corporate entrepreneurship education. The corporate entrepreneurship education dimension reflects expectations of what corporate entrepreneurship education will contribute, growth resulting from investments in corporate entrepreneurship education, the family business's sustainability, and the successor training facilitated by corporate entrepreneurship education. In order to simplify the analysis, each subdimension was focused on separately.

4.1. Family business: characteristics

The analysis of the first subdimension of family business examined the interviewees' views on whether the company has family business characteristics. This subdimension includes not only the managers' characterization of the family firm under study but also aspects associated with the family's participation in the company's decision-making processes. In addition, the interviewees mentioned the family members' positions within the company and the existence of protocols or documents with rules formalizing the family's responsibilities in the company. Another aspect that the managers emphasized was the influence of the founder's cultural values on the organization.

Various participants confirmed this is a family-owned business because, among other reasons, the managers associate ownership with the positions filled by the founder's family members including, more specifically, the company's president. One interviewee said, "what is at the center … of a family business is when the family is part of the management … as has happened in Bethany" (INT 11). Another manager interviewed stated, "the president is the founder's son. … The family is the main shareholder" (INT 05). INT 01, in turn, asserted:

> [I] n relation to participation in decision making, there is a … high degree of family participation. … The founder is on the board, and one of the children is the president and is also on the company's board. There are two other children who are not on the board, who are shareholders and work in the company's operations. … [They] always analyze the company's indicators and influence the decision-making process because they are shareholders.

The founder's cultural values are unanimously considered to be part of the company's organizational culture. One manager asserted that the "business is very much associated with the founder's cultural values. … Every part of [the firm's] values, which are strongly emphasized, is a function of the milk producers' emphasis on strengthening northeastern families" (INT 03). Still another interviewee reported, "some [values] are written down, such as his [the founder's] behavior at the time. … [T]he values he left behind as brand behavior have now been translated into company values" (INT 02).

4.2. Family business: barriers

The second subdimension of family business comprises the interviewees' perspective on barriers in the company that impede the implementation of corporate entrepreneurship education initiatives, particularly the existence of various kinds of favoritism. The respective factors that are the result of possible preferentialism affect the managers' decision process in terms of determining eligibility for corporate entrepreneurship education. Another aspect focused on in this subdimension is training policies, namely, performance reviews' frequency and the ways that these prevent or create possible barriers to corporate entrepreneurship education initiatives.

Regarding the existence of barriers to the implementation of corporate entrepreneurship education, one interviewee said:

I do not believe that we have and will have these barriers because the company is family-based, at least not in this second generation. The children came to the company at an early age, [so] there is a relationship of love between the company and the employees. They saw all the suffering the founder went through when he almost lost the company and [then] resumed management. The children show so much admiration for the company [and] respect [for us]. They say that they prefer to let go of the company's management if they become aware that they are hindering its growth. … [They] always demand total professionalism. (INT 08).

The managers interviewed discussed the existence of any favoritism and the respective factors that may exist because of preferential treatment during the process of determining eligibility for training. An interviewee mentioned that:

In the company, there are criteria used to evaluate executives and employees in general, and, of course, those executives that receive better evaluations tend to benefit from greater investment [in their training]. So, the correct word would not be "favoritism" because that would have a pejorative meaning of a lack of good judgment. … What happens is a managerial decision. … You cannot give training to everyone. Then there is a natural filtering process, which happens in any company. Then one has to choose those people who have the greatest potential to generate returns for the company based on their training. (INT 03).

The managers thus emphasized the lack of favoritism in the firm because, as one interviewee asserted, "all decisions are taken together. Each [person] has his [or her] own area, but no one makes isolated decisions" (INT 06). Another manager reported that "the company enables the training of all employees who will produce better results for the company, and, in the process of determining eligibility, the decision is made together, with extensive support from h[uman] r[esources]" (INT 10).

However, the managers interviewed made references to employees' possible confusion about the above process since workers in certain areas are favored in terms of training because they are given priority. This could be considered a kind of favoritism, although one interviewee emphasized that:

I would not say [there is] favoritism. There are limitations on resources. Because there are limitations …, sometimes you have to automatically prioritize some area where training is most needed in order to create a balance because …, as they say, the [company's] current strength is measured by its weakest link (ENT. 007).

Therefore, while strategies have been implemented to avoid favoritism, the company still has some barriers to corporate entrepreneurship education that need to be overcome, namely, by defining specific eligibility criteria that are communicated to the organization's employees. The firm's business strategies need to be taken into account when determining which workers' acquisition of knowledge through corporate entrepreneurship education is more valuable.

4.3. Corporative education: expectations

The subdimensions associated with the effects of corporate entrepreneurship education on this family business include expectations, which comprise what the top management believes corporate entrepreneurship education will contribute to organizational performance. This subdimension covers the interviewees' perceptions of these expectations and of corporate entrepreneurship education 's importance to the family business's growth and sustainability.

Regarding expectations in the areas of growth and sustainability, the two types of expectations mentioned are, first, "on the company's side, the executives [and] the president, and[, second, among] the employees. One of the employees' [expectations] … is to increase their level of training" (INT 02). The same interviewee said:

To focus a bit more on the company's perspective, this consists of … giving more know-how to the employees as a whole. … [E]mployees [with] … a greater level of knowledge … make the company grow and have no losses. As the company has a characteristic liking for the "home silver" [and] shaping the "house silver"—I hear this a lot—the family loves it when someone from the bottom levels manifests an effective … [store] of knowledge. [Everyone should g]o learn and apply their knowledge in the company. The relatives love this. [The founder, the son, and the sister] value this almost too much. (INT 02).

Thus, from the firm's perspective, as a manager put it:

Investing in education to develop people [and] in achieving the organization's goals is of paramount importance. Being the biggest and best are always the [family's] expectations of these investments: that employees will help the company grow and implement its strategies. (INT 04).

Another manager said, "it is important to highlight the interconnection between corporate entrepreneurship education and company strategy. The training in return, [when] linked to strategy, improves results. No doubt about it. They appear at the end of the line. And it [training] also reduces risk" (INT 05).

In addition to increased training for employees, corporate entrepreneurship education also strengthens employee retention. An interviewee stated:

My main expectation as a manager is exactly this: it [corporate education] is to help not only to develop new talents in my team but also to keep the ones that already exist, and, in this way, to make Bethany continue to grow, keeping this [organizational] intelligence at home and making sure that the employees are happy and grateful to be here. (INT 10).

With regard to the importance of corporate entrepreneurship education for the firm's growth and sustainability, one manager asserted that:

[Corporate entrepreneurship education] professionalizes the company [and] brings in elements that mature professionals on an intellectual level [and] in terms of their analytical and decision making capacities. [Corporate entrepreneurship education] helps [the company] directly. If the owners [and] if the family business is mature enough to realize its [corporate entrepreneurship education] importance and encourage this, it is a support tool contributing to the company's development. (INT 02).

4.4. Corporate entrepreneurship education (EC): growth

The subdimension of growth refers to whether the company's investment in corporate entrepreneurship education facilitates growth. This subdimension differs from the previous subdimension by focusing on the concrete ways that the association between investment in corporate entrepreneurship education and company growth can be validated. For example, managers can assess this connection by checking for return on investment, or indicators can be used to monitor the evolution of results.

According to most of the interviewees, investment in corporate entrepreneurship education in recent years has had a direct relationship with company growth. One manager emphasized the investment made in two major areas:

[The] first [is] in the industrial production area to increase the competence of the factory's maintenance team. … [P]erhaps close to more than one million [has been invested] only in team development, courses, machinery, new methodologies, [and] accelerating methods used to train new maintenance workers. And the other [area is] the [sales force]. (INT 02).

However, other interviewees mentioned that this investment covers the entire business chain. INT 03 said:

The investment in training is made in people throughout the entire production chain not only of the company but also, for example, of the dairy producers. The company invests in training milk producers. This is corporate education of stakeholders that are outside the firm's staff but are part of the company's production chain. So, all this is reflected in the growth of our business.

The interviewees revealed some difficulties encountered in demonstrating a direct association between investment in corporate education and company growth. One manager reported:

[I don't have] this number to give you [the interviewer]. I can't say if what was invested is reflected in growth, but we have grown. And it [the company] has invested in corporate education. I do not know how to explain this to you. (INT 05).

Another interviewee stated, "you can't confirm the link directly. We invested in corporate education and the orders came. You cannot tell for sure. What you can say is this: if you had not done it, it [growth] might not have come" (INT 02). Some managers referred to an increase in sales and earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortization, without clarifying the way the company quantifies this relationship.

However, in certain areas of the company, the interviewees said they could establish follow-up indicators, namely, in cost reduction in, for example, industrial production. One manager asserted that corporate education's impact could be detected:

[In terms of] machine efficiency, with regard to electronics, we can follow if these machines are functioning well or need to improve. I can say that the investment in education has improved the machines' efficiency, with reductions in maintenance and … costs and improvements in the company's financial results. (INT 06).

Some of the managers interviewed proposed possible indicators with which to monitor the evolution of corporate education results. An interviewee stated that:

One of the things that we can say is that we have a biannual performance analysis, and this analysis in the last two years has been a holistic analysis in which I do my self-assessment [and] in which I evaluate all colleagues related to my work. I evaluate my peers, and I am evaluated by my boss more or less. This could be one of the measures used to know if a person has improved their performance [and] if they are becoming more informed [and] studying [or] are accessing more information and knowledge, which should improve your performance if a balance is maintained. (INT 07).

4.5. Corporative education: sustainability

Similar to the growth subdimension, the sustainability subdimension refers to whether investment in corporate entrepreneurship education contributes to the family firm's sustainability. This subdimension comprises sustainability aspects (i.e., social, environmental, and economic) associated with investment in corporate entrepreneurship education. In addition, sustainability includes interviewees' perceptions of the importance of corporate entrepreneurship education initiatives to the family's continuity in terms of multiple generations managing the company.

With regard to the three sustainability aspects, one interviewee reported that the company currently has "another vision. It adopts the main management tools that exist in the market … [that allow] you [to] become stronger in terms of structure [and] … sustainability" (INT 07). Another manager highlighted the founder's legacy in the company's organizational culture and its influence on the firm's sustainability:

The [founder's] DNA is very present in the [company's] values and in the way people deal with everything [and] with people [and] the way we work. … Then, [there's] the courage thing—the faith thing at work—[and] the trust in others to make it happen. The way of thinking about the ecosystem [produces] this sustainability, which, in a very intuitive process, he [the founder] took care of. He knew that, if he did not take care of the producers, the business was unsustainable. (INT 11).

The interviewees revealed a broad consensus on the importance and interconnection of social, environmental, and economic aspects of sustainability. A manager said:

[T]here are three very thin lines, [so] this triple bottom line of sustainability is very specific. From the moment you adopt an environmental vision, you ensure the business's permanence—even in legal matters. And we work with food: milk producers. This also involves social issues, …[with] thousands of families involved. And when these two lines [sic] of this great tripod are sustained, you ultimately guarantee the economic factor [is taken care of]. So, the business is sustainable with regard to its solid basis in the perennial care taken with the three aspects: social, economic and environmental. That is my understanding of it: they are deeply interconnected. (INT 03).

Of the three sustainability aspects mentioned, the most significant are economic and environmental facets. Regarding the economic aspect, one interviewee stated:

[This aspect is] the most basic part of our business. This is very important. If we do not have [financial] education, we're going to have a group that tends to lead us into a hole. With education, I have a group that will always be helping me and pointing me in new directions. (INT 06).

Corporate entrepreneurship education is seen as a determining factor of any company's sustainability and as an extremely important contributor to the family business's continuity over multiple generations. Nonetheless, another interviewee asserted that:

Regardless of whether the family is in or out of the business [and] operating the business, it's indifferent. You're going to have to take care of it [the business]. You're going to have to make it work. … [T]he family is in this business for it to work. … It has to work out regardless of this [corporate entrepreneurship education]. (INT 08).

Thus, in general, corporate entrepreneurship education can be said to have assumed a significant role in the organization. One manager argued that:

[Corporate entrepreneurship education] is important because a company that intends to grow and remain competitive in the market must invest in knowledge, in education of people, [and] in [organizational] intelligence. Only this can guarantee the business's sustainability for many years, and that means anticipating and creating customer needs, for which intellectual capital is needed. (INT 09).

In conclusion, investment in corporate entrepreneurship education —regardless of whether the beneficiaries are family members—can promote the firm's sustainability. A further manager explained that:

From the moment you have a process of corporate education and professional training covering not only family members but the entire corporation, you are ensuring that the concept of perennial business [is reinforced], especially when it is based on extremely professional and meritocratic criteria. (INT 03).

4.6. Corporate entrepreneurship education: successor training

The successor training subdimension refers to whether the family-owned business's corporate entrepreneurship education program includes initiatives that specifically promote the identification of potential successors and ensure these successors have the necessary qualifications. This subdimension addresses the question of successors in both family and non-family companies, that is, identifying and promoting potential successors who are fully qualified for senior management positions among the existing employees.

With regard to family successors to leadership positions in the company, the interviewees reported that the details are only known by the family. The succession is also not openly discussed because of the relatively young age of the family members who run the company, particularly the president. One manager asserted that:

[The staff widely believe] that this is not the time to discuss this. The president of the company is 40 years old. Even though we have an obligation to discuss [this issue], we are not yet doing so. … It is discussed internally, within the family, but no … this is not coming up before any company board meetings. This is not a topic discussed within the company. It is outside the company's purview. (INT 08).

4.7. Another manager said

[In terms of] the family succession, …the [president] will stay on until the age of *x*, [and the sister] will stay on until the age of *y*. What training package she would need to assume control or [what her younger brother needs], … that is the family's [decision]. And [regarding] the third generation, who are their children, the oldest child of the [president] is 16 years old, so there is time there [for the children to receive training]. Because he [the president] has two daughters, [the sister] has a daughter, and [the younger brother] does not have a child yet—that is, from this group of girls who are already growing up—what will the family's [corporate] education be? I do not know yet. (INT 02).

The interviewees unanimously agreed that non-relatives have access to the corporate entrepreneurship education program. A manager asserted, "all are eligible to participate in the program," although "normally not everyone participates" (INT 01). According to another interviewee, the entire process is currently conducted as follows:

First, we have to define a tool that we can use to choose these people [successors]. … [W]e currently use the nine-box [grid], and we hold meetings to conduct this assessment. We understand that the method we use to choose these people already provides in-depth insights into the [company's] entire state of affairs and people and that [the method] has already been chosen. So, given this understanding, we are going to follow, from then on, this path to make the transformation happen [and] prepare this person for succession. The PDD [personal and professional development] is helping us a lot at one level of the organization, but we will set up a specific succession program for all levels of the organization. (INT 11).

Therefore, the process of selecting successors has been defined, and the grooming of successors has started mainly at higher levels of the organization with training programs such as PDD. However, more concrete measures to be taken at the company's other levels have yet to be determined.

5. Discussion

This study's central objective was to contribute to solving the problem of family business discontinuity by investigating the impact of investment in corporate entrepreneurship education on family companies. The goal was to identify if this investment enhances these firms' growth and sustainability, as well as ensuring that the process of succession includes qualified candidates. The research included verifying whether the problem of family company discontinuity means many companies of this type cease to exist after several generations. The results reveal that few firms can maintain their sustainability in the long term, but this problem can be solved by investing in corporate entrepreneurship education. This develops the staff competencies needed to achieve firms' strategic objectives, and those professionals who have the trust of the family that owns the business can also become more competent, thereby ensuring that all employees and family members in this type of company have the right skills.

The qualitative data analyzed were gathered in interviews with top management executives of Betânia Lácteos, a family-owned company. The interviewees confirm that this family firm has implemented a corporate entrepreneurship education process. These managers think that family companies can be defined as those in which the founder's values are present and the family participates extensively in decisions. In addition, the selected firm's top management has high expectation regarding corporate entrepreneurship education 's contribution to improved financial results, and these executives report that investment in this type of education promotes company growth, the selection of qualified successors, and the firm's sustainability.

This study was not designed to examine these issues exhaustively in terms of the impacts of investment in corporate entrepreneurship education on family businesses' growth and sustainability but instead to create a scientific record of data on this subject. The results offer the owners, managers, and relatives involved in family businesses insights into corporate entrepreneurship education 's return on investment for this type of organization. The findings include the importance of investing in the development of the skills needed by all the organization's professionals so that these people can facilitate the company's growth through the achievement of strategic objectives.

This research's results contribute only the initial installment in terms of scientific knowledge on this topic, by relating two topics (i. e., family business and corporate entrepreneurship education) that until now have been studied separately. The proposed correlation was tested in order to verify if investment in corporate entrepreneurship education fosters family businesses' growth and sustainability. The study's objective necessarily limited the research to a case study of one company because it alone possessed the required family business characteristics and a corporate entrepreneurship education program more than five years old, thereby ensuring the conditions needed to achieve this research's objectives.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Managerial implications

This article has focused on understanding how corporate entrepreneurship education in family businesses impacts performance. This will help managers understand how training programs can positively impact on their business in terms of sustainability practices and succession issues. As they key issues faced by many family businesses are around planning for successors, this findings of this article help managers focus on ways to learn about new business practices that future generations can follow. This enables family business managers to stress the way growth and expectations around the business can be planned in a proper manner. This is important in facilitating better management practices internal to the business but also enables further development of stakeholder relationships. In emerging countries like Brazil it is particularly important that family business managers learn best practices so corporate entrepreneurship programs play an important part in this process. In order to embed a orientation towards entrepreneurship education within their business structures, family business managers need to highlight the efficiency gains from such programs. This will enable family businesses to grow and thrive in the competitive business environment.

6.2. Policy implications

Family businesses comprise a significant proportion of overall businesses in the global economy so policy planners can utilize the finding of this study to help further develop family business capabilities. To do this policy planners at the local level need to foster a grassroots campaign about the importance of entrepreneurship education (Belousova, Hattenberg, & Gailly, 2020). This is particularly important in emerging economies where the number of individuals studying entrepreneurship might be lower than individuals in developed countries (Ramadani, Dana, Sadiku-Dushi, Ratten, & Welsh, 2017). Thus, policy makers can prioritize entrepreneurship education as a strategic way for family businesses to develop and increase their profitability. This might be helpful for family businesses in Latin America that need to internationalize in order to further develop their businesses (Palalić, Ramadani, Dana, & Ratten, 2017, pp. 208–226). Policy makers can facilitate the introduction and usage of entrepreneurship education within a region by subsidizing or offering such programs. This would help in increasing the overall number of family businesses who have access to entrepreneurship education that can make a substantial difference to their overall operations (Ramadani, Hisrich, Anggadwita, & Alamanda, 2017). At the regional level it might be useful to focus on key types of family businesses in terms of the type of industry characteristics that have growth prospects (Ramadani & Hoy, 2015). This will enable entrepreneurship educators to tailor their programs to these industries and further increase the positive impact of training programs.

6.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

This article has taken a qualitative approach to understanding the role of corporate entrepreneurship education in a developing country context. This provided a detailed analysis of the perceptions about how family businesses learn based on entrepreneurship education programs. This is useful in understanding the expectations and goals of such training programs on resulting family business growth and development. Whilst the approach was considered the most useful given time and cost restraints there is a need for further empirical work on this topic given the emphasis made by Dana and Dana (2005) on expanding the scope of methodologies used in entrepreneurship research. This could include comparing the results of our study on other geographic contexts to see if family businesses respond in the same way to corporate entrepreneurship education (Groenland & Dana, 2019). This would help to ascertain whether there are distinct cultural attributes attributable to family businesses in Brazil that impact their propensity to learn. This could include studying in more depth the role of transnational entrepreneurs on entrepreneurship education to see how internationalization has affected family businesses. Another interesting research avenue would be to do more studies on corporate entrepreneurship education but on different countries in Latin America such as Mexico and Argentina to see if the results are the same or different. As much emphasis has been placed on the role of family businesses and internationalization this would help to understand more about the impact of entrepreneurship education (Garcia, Sharma, De Massis, Wright, & Scholes, 2019). Moreover, further longitudinal analysis taking both an entrepreneurial and innovative learning approach would enable an understanding about how family businesses change over time. This would contribute to the ongoing research about the role of family businesses in innovation processes (eg Leitão, Nunes, Pereira, & Ramadani, 2020; Ratten & Dana, 2017; Ratten & Tajeddini, 2017). This means that there are exciting times ahead for researchers of family business on the impact of corporate entrepreneurship education on performance.

Author statement

We confirm that the article titled 'Corporate entrepreneurship education's impact on family business sustainability: A case study in Brazil' is submitted solely for the Entrepreneurship Education special journal issue of the International Journal of Management Education.

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