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**Intrapreneurship in the German Plant
Engineering and Construction Industry**

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Key words

Intrapreneurship, Germany, Plant, Industry, Survey

Abstract

Intrapreneurship means entrepreneurship within an existing organization. Currently, researchers ask for an analysis of intrapreneurship in different industries. This paper analyzes intrapreneurship in the "German Plant Engineering and Construction Industry". The analysis uses and modifies Antoncic and Hisrich's intrapreneurship model. The findings are based on mail survey data and show how organizational and environmental variables interact with intrapreneurship and how intrapreneurship influences firm performance.¹

1 Introduction

Researchers use different terms for intrapreneurship like corporate entrepreneurship, corporate venturing, internal entrepreneurship, and intrapreneuring (Draeger-Ernst 2003, p. 24). Nevertheless, they all refer to the idea of entrepreneurship within an existing organization, which goes back to Pinchot (1985). In other words: intrapreneurship is a management approach, which inspires all employees to develop and realize their ideas.

Currently, researchers ask for an analysis of intrapreneurship in different industries (e. g. Draeger-Ernst 2003, p. 297; Lackner 2002, p. 280). Accordingly, this paper analyzes intrapreneurship in the "German Plant Engineering and Construction Industry" (GPECI). But what is the GPECI? The GPECI includes companies such as ABB Lummus Global GmbH, MAN Ferrostaal Industrieanlagen GmbH, SIEMENS AG Power Generation, and ThyssenKrupp Fördertechnik GmbH (VDMA 2006, p. II). The products in this industry are capital-intensive, made-to-order, and have a long time horizon (Backhaus 1997, p. 431). These can be for example power plants, metallurgical plants, or even technologies to cover the entire paper production process. Typically, business in the GPECI can be subdivided into four stages (Ilgen 2001, p. 147). The first stage deals with marketing issues and is called "pre-offer". During the second stage, which is named "acquisition", an offer is prepared and submitted to a bid invitation. In case that the offer succeeds an order is acquired. The third stage is referred to as "construction". Now the product is engineered and constructed. The last stage is called "after-sales" and includes services like inspections or guaranteeing.

The company Buehler states in its annual report 2004 (Bühler AG 2005, p. 29): "Furthermore, (...) entrepreneurial thinking and behavior of employees are to be promoted." In addition, there are three main reasons for analyzing intrapreneurship in the GPECI. First of all, the GPECI is one of Germany's key industries. Its world market share amounts to 20%, its incoming orders add up to \$ 20 bn annually, and it employs about 53,000 highly qualified people (VDMA 2006, p. IV). Secondly, the GPECI has to face an increasingly tougher global competition (Gleich et al. 2005, pp. 5, 14, 15). In this respect, intrapreneurship is an appealing management approach, as its positive effects on innovation and firm performance have been proved in several empirical studies (Antoncic and Hisrich 2004, p. 539; Marcus and Zimmerer 2003, p. 16; Zahra 1995, p. 55; Zahra 1993, p. 332). The third reason refers to Ilgen's (2001, p. 70) conclusion that management has to consider the specific conditions of an industry. This is especially true in the GPECI as it has unique characteristics, such as complex, customized products, long construction processes, integration of many subcontractors, and international customers (Gleich et al. 2005, pp. 7-12).

2 Theoretical model

The main measure of intrapreneurship is the "intrapreneurship model", which was developed by Antoncic and Hisrich in 2001 and revised in 2004. In this measure corporate entrepreneurship (or intrapreneurship) is influenced by environmental and organizational variables. Intrapreneurship itself is seen as an important predictor of firm performance. Additionally, Antoncic and Hisrich analyze interaction and mediation between environmental (organizational) variables, corporate entrepreneurship and firm performance (see figure 1).

¹ This paper is dedicated to my academic teachers Professor Dr. Ronald Gleich (European Business School, Oestrich-Winkel, Germany) and Professor Dr. Peter Russo (Strascheg Center for Entrepreneurship, Munich, Germany).

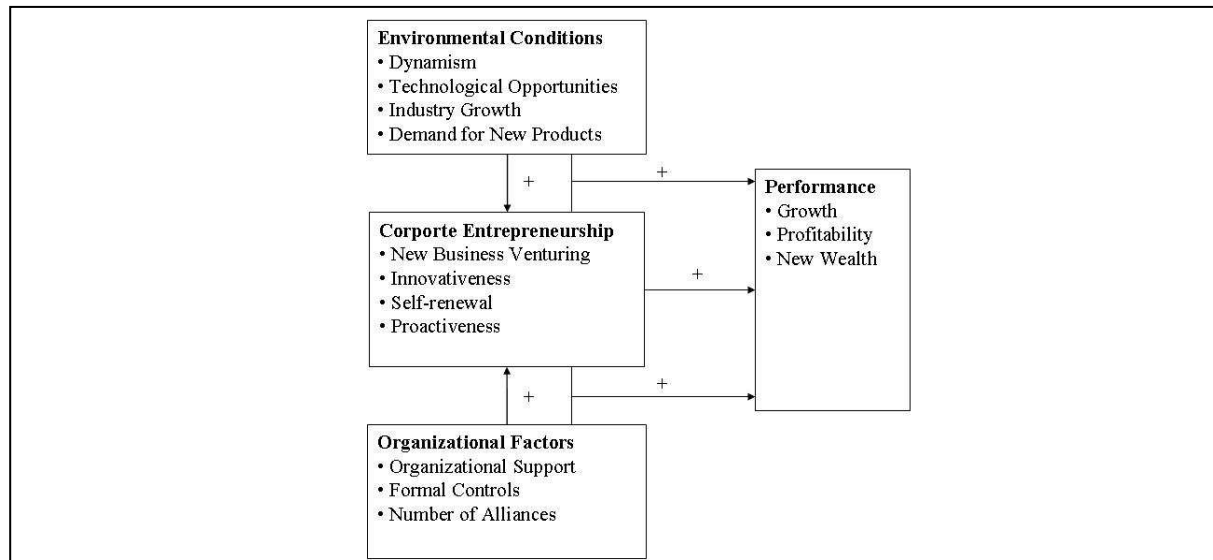


Figure 1: Intrapreneurship model. (Antoncic and Hisrich 2004, p. 534)

The intrapreneurship model (Antoncic and Hisrich 2001; Antoncic and Hisrich 2004) is the basis for the following analysis. However, some parts of it are modified. First of all, the organizational variables are adapted to the findings of Draeger-Ernst (2003). She highlights that an integrative view of intrapreneurship is essential. More precisely, she demands that strategy, culture, structure and human resource management (HRM) have to be considered (Draeger-Ernst 2003, p. 52). Secondly, the variable “orders” is included in the model, which is an important and typical performance indicator in the GPECI (VDMA 2006, pp. III, IV, 11). Furthermore, this paper is mainly interested in the direct relationships between environmental variables, organizational variables and intrapreneurship as well as the direct relationship between intrapreneurship and performance. Figure 2 illustrates the modified intrapreneurship model and shows which relationships are expected in the GPECI. These relationships as well as the individual variables are discussed below.

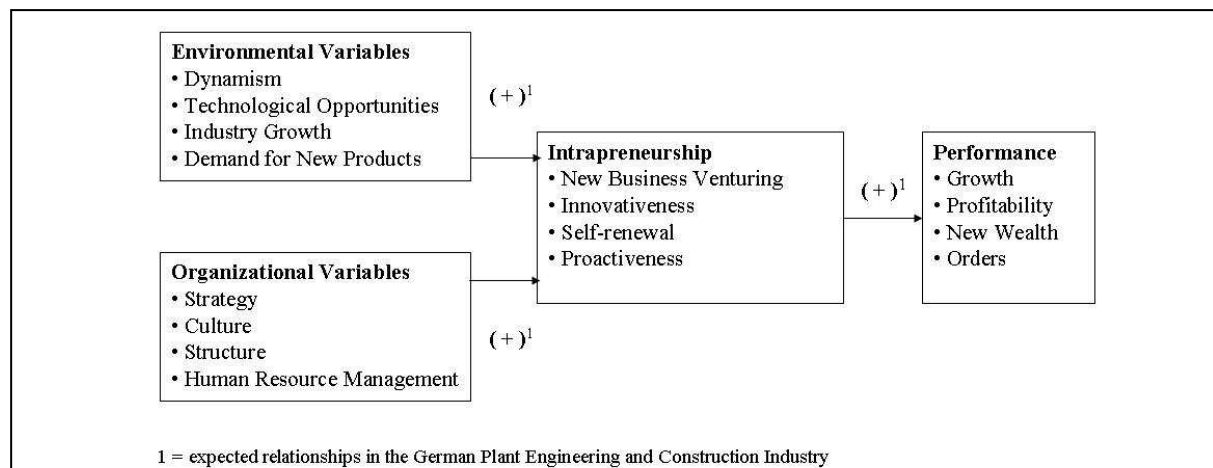


Figure 2: Modified intrapreneurship model and expected relationships in the German Plant Engineering and Construction Industry.

Environmental variables include dynamism, technological opportunities, industry growth, and demand for new products. Dynamism refers to instability and continuous changes in a company's markets (Zahra 1991, p. 263). A technological opportunity means that demand can be created on basis of a new or existing technology (Zahra 1993, p. 322). Industry growth reflects the increasing or decreasing demand for products in an industry (ebenda, p. 323). Demand for new products represents the competitive value of developing new products (ebenda, p. 323). – In both of their studies Antoncic and Hisrich hypothesize a positive relationship between the four environmental variables and intrapreneurship (Antoncic and Hisrich 2004, pp. 525, 534; Antoncic and Hisrich 2001, pp. 504, 505). It is expected that the same relationship exists in the GPECI. It is also expected that

dynamism, technological opportunities, and demand for new products are high, but that industry growth is low in the GPECI.²

Organizational variables include strategy, culture, structure, and HRM (Draeger-Ernst 2003, pp. 117-243; Russo and Stiller 2006a³, Russo and Stiller 2006b⁴). A strategy describes how a company wants to achieve its objectives (Picot 1981, p. 529). Culture stands for values, norms, as well as ways of thinking and acting, which have been learned and accepted by the people in a company (Bleicher 1988, p. 2132). Structure means the structural organization of a company as well as its processes. HRM refers to recruiting, leadership, and compensation (Draeger-Ernst 2003, p. 190). – Several authors have discussed in-depth how an intrapreneurial strategy, culture, structure, and HRM should look like (e. g. Schaper and Volery 2004, pp. 364-384; Draeger-Ernst 2003 pp. 117-243; Hisrich and Peters 2002, pp. 49-51; Pinchot and Pellman 1999, pp. 25-44, 87-144; Bitzer 1991, pp. 19-44). Thus, if organizational variables are shaped adequately, they have a positive impact on intrapreneurship.

Intrapreneurship variables include new business venturing, innovativeness, self-renewal, and proactiveness. New business venturing “refers to pursuing and entering new businesses related to the firm’s current products or markets” (Antoncic and Hisrich 2001, p. 495). Innovativeness ranges from new products and services to new technologies and processes. Self-renewal stands for reorganization and strategy reformulation. Proactiveness means top management orientation, which pursues enhanced competitiveness (ebenda, p. 495). – Previous research findings support a positive relationship between intrapreneurship and firm performance (Antoncic and Hisrich 2004, p. 539; Marcus and Zimmerer 2003, p. 16; Zahra 1995, p. 55; Zahra 1993, p. 332). It is expected that this is also true in the GPECI.

Performance variables include growth, profitability, new wealth, and orders. Growth refers to absolute and relative growth. Absolute growth means growth in number of employees and in total sales. Relative growth means growth in market share in comparison to competition (Antoncic and Hisrich 2001, p. 496). Profitability is also measured absolutely and relatively. Absolute profitability refers to return on sales, return on assets, and return on equity. Relative profitability compares the company’s profitability with the profitability of its competitors (ebenda, p. 512). New wealth is defined as “the creation of new available funds” (ebenda, p. 518). Finally, the variable “orders” refers to “incoming orders” and to “orders in hand”.

3 Empirical study

The empirical study was conducted in cooperation with the “Large Industrial Plant Makers Group”. This group belongs to the German Engineering Foundation⁵ and represents the GPECI. Questionnaires were sent to the entire population of the GPECI. Thus, each of the 51 CEOs received a questionnaire.

The questionnaire was quantitative. Mostly five-point likert scales were used. The items came from different sources. Items for environmental, intrapreneurship, and performance variables⁶ were derived from Antoncic and Hisrich’s work (Antoncic and Hisrich 2004, pp. 531-532; Antoncic and Hisrich 2001, pp. 509-511). Items for organizational variables were derived from Draeger-Ernst’s dissertation (2003, pp. 135, 136, 140, 141, A10-A14), Hitt et al. (1982, p. 272), Pinchot and Pellman (1999, pp. 25-42), and Zahra (1991, p. 284). If necessary, translation and back-translation was used to gain German items. The questionnaire was discussed with researchers and pre-tested on two companies in the GPECI. Only some minor changes in wording were suggested.

In the final survey 17 responses were received, which is a 33% response rate. All questionnaires were usable. However, some missing data occurred in the performance section. As far as possible other sources, such as the company’s annual reports, were used to complete missing performance data. Nevertheless, two items – return on assets and return on equity – had to be excluded due to missing data.

² In preparation for this paper several experts were interviewed. This conclusion is based on an interview with Volker Stroh. Mr. Stroh is referee at the “Large Industrial Plant Makers Group” and was interviewed on 12/15/05. The “Large Industrial Plant Makers Group” belongs to the German Engineering Foundation (www.vdma.org) and represents the GPECI.

³ This article is still under review. Hence, the page numbers are still unknown.

⁴ This article is still under review. Hence, the page numbers are still unknown.

⁵ For detailed information please go to www.vdma.org.

⁶ One exception is the variable “orders”, which was added to the performance section.

4 Findings

Figure 3 illustrates, which types of plants are offered by the 17 responding companies.⁷ Accordingly, most of the respondents build chemical or metallurgical plants – followed by power or miscellaneous plants. Plants for paper production, raw material, and wood processing are each offered by one respondent. Companies, who engineer and construct different plants such as for electrotechnology, construction material, gas liquefaction, or gas generation, did not participate in this study.

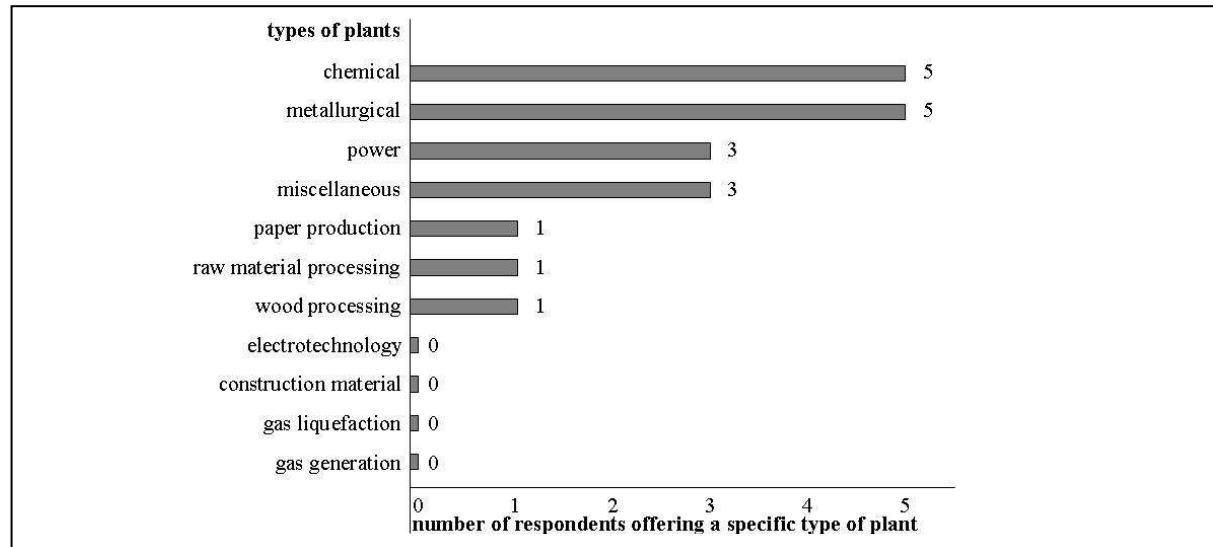


Figure 3: Number of respondents offering a specific type of plant.

In order to examine the relationships between the different variables, an analysis of correlation was conducted. Therefore Pearson's correlation coefficient was used. The results of this analysis are depicted in figure 4. The two black boxes with bold lines indicate significant correlations at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) between structure and culture as well as between intrapreneurship and demand for new products. The other three boxes with dashed lines highlight significant correlations at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) between technological opportunities and dynamism, between intrapreneurship and strategy, as well as between performance and industry growth.

		Strategy	Culture	Structure	HRM	Dynamism	TechOpp	Industry Growth	Demand	Intrapreneurship	Performance
Strategy	Korrelation nach Pearson	1	,052	,259	-,087	,154	-,180	,210	,185	,513*	,399
	Signifikanz (2-seitig)		,844	,316	,739	,555	,490	,419	,477	,035	,113
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Culture	Korrelation nach Pearson	,052	1	,640**	-,143	-,192	-,284	,026	,097	,160	-,066
	Signifikanz (2-seitig)	,844		,006	,585	,460	,269	,922	,712	,540	,800
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Structure	Korrelation nach Pearson	,259	,640**	1	-,106	-,300	-,396	-,057	,075	,210	,010
	Signifikanz (2-seitig)	,316	,006		,685	,242	,116	,828	,775	,420	,970
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
HRM	Korrelation nach Pearson	-,087	-,143	-,106	1	,264	-,017	,081	,268	-,111	,089
	Signifikanz (2-seitig)	,739	,585	,685		,305	,948	,756	,299	,670	,733
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Dynamism	Korrelation nach Pearson	,154	-,192	-,300	,264	1	,567*	,258	,291	,101	-,068
	Signifikanz (2-seitig)	,555	,460	,242	,305		,018	,317	,257	,700	,796
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
TechOpp	Korrelation nach Pearson	-,180	-,284	-,396	-,017	,567*	1	,206	,141	-,101	-,160
	Signifikanz (2-seitig)	,490	,269	,116	,948	,018		,428	,590	,700	,540
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
IndustryGrowth	Korrelation nach Pearson	,210	,026	-,057	,081	,258	,206	1	-,029	-,011	,513*
	Signifikanz (2-seitig)	,419	,922	,828	,756	,317	,428		,911	,967	,035
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Demand	Korrelation nach Pearson	,185	,097	,075	,268	,291	,141	-,029	1	,625**	-,118
	Signifikanz (2-seitig)	,477	,712	,775	,299	,257	,590	,911		,007	,653
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Intrapreneurship	Korrelation nach Pearson	,513*	,160	,210	-,111	,101	-,101	-,011	,625**	1	,239
	Signifikanz (2-seitig)	,035	,540	,420	,670	,700	,700	,967	,007		,356
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Performance	Korrelation nach Pearson	,399	-,066	,010	,089	-,068	-,160	,513*	-,118	,239	1
	Signifikanz (2-seitig)	,113	,800	,970	,733	,796	,540	,035	,653	,356	
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17

⁷ Two of the responding companies offer two different plant types.

Figure 4: Analysis of correlation.

For in-depth information about these correlations two regression analyses were conducted. The first regression analysis used the following predictors: dynamism, technological opportunities, industry growth and demand for new products, strategy, culture, structure, and HRM. The dependent variable was intrapreneurship. R square, which indicates the goodness-of-fit, turned out to be 0.625. Thus, the predictors explained 62.5% of the variance in intrapreneurship. Questions of significance were not discussed, due to the small sample size of only 17 questionnaires. However, two main findings have to be highlighted: First of all, the environmental variable demand for new products (standardized coefficient = 0.643) and the organizational variable strategy (standardized coefficient = 0.357) dominated the other predictors and positively influenced intrapreneurship. Secondly and unexpectedly the environmental variable technological opportunities (standardized coefficient = -0.132) and the organizational variable HRM (standardized coefficient = -0.253) had remarkably negative impacts on intrapreneurship.

In the second regression analysis the predictors new business venturing, innovativeness, self-renewal, and proactiveness were used. The dependent variable was performance. In this case R square was only 0.350. The first finding in the second regression analysis refers to the variable self renewal (standardized coefficient = 0.398). It dominated the other predictors and positively influenced performance. The second finding was unexpected again. It concerns the variable new business venturing (standardized coefficient = -0.373), which had a remarkably negative impact on performance.

The premises of the two regression analyses were checked and turned out to be correct. Two scatter plots including unstandardized predicted values and intrapreneurship as well as unstandardized predicted values and performance showed linear relationships. Thus, the choice of a linear function as basis for the regression analyses was adequate. Two other scatter plots including unstandardized predicted values and unstandardized residuals showed no patterns. This was a sign of homoscedasticity. Furthermore, all variance-inflation-factors were smaller than five. Hence, multi-collinearity was not the case. As a consequence, factor analyses to reduce the independent variables were not necessary, even though the previous analysis of correlation had shown significant correlations between structure and culture as well as between technological opportunities and dynamism.⁸ Finally, two Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests proved that the test distributions of the unstandardized residuals were normal.

5 Conclusions and summary

A positive relationship between environmental variables and intrapreneurship was expected in the GPECI. Evidence for this relationship was found. Especially, the variable demand for new products was an important driver of intrapreneurship. However, the variable technological opportunities negatively influenced intrapreneurship. This was unexpected and needs further investigation, as companies, who face high-tech environments, normally develop an entrepreneurial posture (Khandwalla 1987). Furthermore, it was expected that the variables dynamism, technological opportunities, and demand for new products were high, but that industry growth was low in the GPECI. This expectation was supported partially. On the one hand technological opportunities (arithmetic mean = 4.1) was high.⁹ On the other hand, industry growth (arithmetic mean = 3.5), demand for new products (arithmetic mean = 3.4), and dynamism (arithmetic mean = 2.8) turned out to be on an average level.

A positive relationship between organizational variables and intrapreneurship was expected in the GPECI. This relationship was supported. It turned out that the variable strategy was a dominant predictor of intrapreneurship, but that the variable HRM negatively influenced intrapreneurship. This was unexpected and needs further investigation, especially as the literature shows how HRM can drive intrapreneurship (Draeger-Ernst 2003, p. 189-243; Wunderer 1996; Wunderer 1999).

A positive relationship between intrapreneurship variables and firm performance was expected in the GPECI. The results of this study suggest such a relationship. However, the predictors could only explain 39.8% of the

⁸ An analysis of correlation between the four intrapreneurship variables was also conducted, but showed no significant correlations.

⁹ The arithmetic means refer to a five-point-likert scale from 1 to 5.

variance in performance. Nevertheless, self-renewal was found to be an important positive driver of performance. In contrast, new business venturing negatively influenced performance. This was unexpected and needs further investigation.

Based on the conclusion that the strategy of a company is the dominant driver of intrapreneurship, some actions can be derived as guidance for managers. As mentioned before, a strategy describes how a company wants to achieve its objectives (Picot 1981, p. 529). Doing so, it ensures that the employees work effectively. If management wants to promote entrepreneurial thinking and acting of employees, intrapreneurship has to be part of the strategy. However, it is not sufficient to simply add a paragraph about intrapreneurship to the strategy. In contrast, the strategy has to arouse enthusiasm among employees. Only if they identify with the strategy, they will make it happen. So first of all, it is crucial to involve employees when crafting such a strategy. Secondly, the strategy's content should make clear that innovation is not only a task of the R&D department but that each employee is encouraged to innovate. Next, the new strategy has no value, if it is unknown. Therefore, it has to be communicated permanently and via different media. Eventually, managers should, in order to be credible, use the new strategy to make and explain their decisions (Pinchot and Pellman 1999, pp. 25, 26, 94, 95).

Additionally, some theoretical implications need to be mentioned. In the second regression analysis (of intrapreneurship variables and performance) R square was only 0.350. This might be a sign of underfitting and needs further investigation. Further investigation is also needed regarding the unexpected negative relationships – namely between technological opportunities and intrapreneurship, between HRM and intrapreneurship, as well as between new business venturing and performance. Finally, the analysis of correlation showed a significant correlation between performance and industry growth. Thus, mediation and interaction effects should be included in future research.

Finally, the main limitation of this study is its sample size. 33% of the population participated in the survey. However, the GPECI consists of only 51 companies so that 33% equals 17 questionnaires. Consequently, questions of significance could not be discussed.

Recapitulating, intrapreneurship means entrepreneurship within an existing organization. This paper analyzes intrapreneurship in the "German Plant Engineering and Construction Industry". Therefore, Antoncic and Hisrich's intrapreneurship model is modified and used. The findings are based on mail survey data. Regression analyses are conducted and show a positive relationship between organizational and environmental variables and intrapreneurship. Furthermore, intrapreneurship variables positively influence firm performance. It is also shown, that the strategy of a company is a dominant driver of intrapreneurship. Thus, managers in the "German Plant Engineering and Construction Industry", who want to promote intrapreneurship, should craft an intrapreneurial strategy together with their employees and then permanently communicate and apply this strategy.

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