PROMOTING TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION IN SMES WITH A NEW MODEL OF REVERSE MENTORING

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Abstract –

Nowadays companies are trying to tune their antennae to new technologies and trends and respond quickly by adapting their technology and business strategy in the face of rapid changes in the business and technology environment.

One of the tools to achieve this that has gained popularity in large companies in recent years is the Reverse Mentoring (RM) model.

Although the prevailing RM model- junior mentoring senior employees- benefits both and assist companies to promotes technology and innovation, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) do not implement this model due to the lack of economies of scale, lower organizational capacities, and scarcity of skilled junior employees. This study proposes and examines the feasibility of a new (RM) Model in promoting technology and innovation in SMEs.Empirical testing was implemented in Ceara, Brazil.

The new RM Model overcomes the abovedisadvantages through two major alterations.

1. To overcome limits in organizational capabilities and size, it was suggested that the program not be executed by each individual company, but by an external intermediate professional organization. The Industry Federation of the State of Ceara (FIEC) served as an intermediate professional trusted organization that executed the program for several companies simultaneously
2. To address the shortage of skilled, up-to-date junior employees in SMEs outstanding graduates with a specialization in innovation studies from all over Brazil were recruited as mentors

The findings support the new model's feasibility and efficacy for SMEs. It stimulates SMEs to update their technology and introduce significant innovative ideas. This resulted in out-of-the-box thinking, better evaluation of constraints, stimulating technology transfer, identification of potentials for innovation opportunities by the company's management team and adaptation of an open innovation approach, which is important for SMEs with relatively limited financial and non-financial resources and capabilities.

This study contributes to the literature on promoting technology and innovation in SMEs and RM by providing valuable information on the prevailing RM model and offering a new model that can overcome existing market failures experienced by SMEs. Empirical testing demonstrates its feasibility.

Keywords - Technology Transfer and Management, SME; Reverse Mentoring; Innovation and Technology Management; Technological Change; Brazil