

**CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PRACTICES AND
REVENUE GENERATION BY GOVERNMENT FUNDED
UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

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Abstract

The practices of corporate entrepreneurship are important for organizational survival, profitability, growth and renewal. Higher education stakeholders in Kenya are demanding universities to be more entrepreneurial in order to produce incomes from commercial exploitation of their intellectual assets. In pursuit of this realization, the government of Kenya is encouraging public universities to find ways of self-sustenance by introducing corporate entrepreneurship practice to avoid over-reliance on government support. However, the extent to which the practice has generated additional funds for universities has been established. Thus, this study was designed to measure the influence of risk taking, autonomy and innovativeness in corporate entrepreneurship practices at Meru University of Science and Technology. Using descriptive survey design and random sampling techniques, 80 managerial/supervisory level respondents were selected. The research established that front line managers/supervisors did take risks but were negatively affected by organisational internal barriers. Further, autonomy was recognized as a very important factor in management of the income generating units. The research also established that bureaucratic structures and systems of organisation hindered the growth and development of income generating units. In addition, the levels of innovativeness of frontline managers were negatively affected by lack of supportive policies, procedures and support systems in the organization. The study concludes that corporate entrepreneurship practices can be successful if the frontline managers and top management have the right attitude towards corporate entrepreneurship practices by setting up a corporate entrepreneurial culture.

Key Words: Corporate entrepreneurship, Risk-taking, Innovations, Autonomy, Income generation

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1.1 Background of the Study

Changes in the business environment and management philosophy have led to an increase in the number of companies demanding internal entrepreneurship (Christensen, 2004). Internal entrepreneurship or Corporate Entrepreneurship as it is broadly known is an idea of making a positive environment for employs to try with new thoughts that will help them become business visionaries inside their organization systems (Zimmerer & Scarborough, 2008). Entrepreneurship within corporate environment can hence be considered as an effort to expand series of advantages in an organization.

Governments and communities are demanding universities to be more entrepreneurial in order to produce incomes from commercial exploitation of their intellectual assets (Colin, 2006). Due to these expectations, University administrators in Kenya are faced with challenges of managing contracting public funds and promotion of corporate entrepreneurship. Thus, universities have to seek alternative means for producing incomes to support their mission. One such approach involves the use of corporate entrepreneurship practices.

Corporate entrepreneurship practices are important for organizational survival, profitability, growth and renewal. Corporate entrepreneurial practices have received valuable attention as an important activity for university's vitality (Shaker, 1996). Indeed, being innovative, risk-taking, autonomous and ready to pioneer into new frontiers has proved to contribute significantly to the financial performance, growth and profitability (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005).

Corporate entrepreneurial practices can be regarded as a process through which both formal and informal initiatives are encouraged, aimed at the creation of new products, services, processes and businesses to improve and sustain a company's competitive position and financial performance. (Scheepers M.J, J. Hough & J.Z. Bloom, 2008). George & Marino (2011) states these corporate entrepreneurial practices are measured through three dimensions namely: autonomy, innovativeness and risk-taking.

In Kenya, the government has undertaken a comprehensive review of its education and training programme and articulated a long-term policy for development and management of the sector (GOK, 1988). The implementation of the 8-4-4 system of education and the cost-sharing policy marked a fundamental change in the philosophy governing university education in Kenya. In addition, demand for higher education continued increasing exponentially year after year. The financial constraints and structural adjustment programmes meant that the government of Kenya had to introduce pay-as-you-eat (PAYE) programme, de-link admission from residential provision, increase university fees, and

encourage universities to engage in income generating activities (GOK, 1994). With cost-sharing in operation and the increased high cost of education, it was pertinent to examine the efficiency of operations in public universities with the aim of revitalising financing of university education (Education Sessional Paper, 2012).

Pressed by deficient government financing, Kenya's state funded universities have been trying to diversify their sources of income that broadened activities to supplement government allocations. Nonetheless, the significance of these activities in the financing of state funded universities in Kenya has not been empirically recorded. Further, the capabilities of these entrepreneurial activities in general financing of universities has remains unverified.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Diffusion and adoption of corporate entrepreneurship by corporations has positively affected organizations' performance. It has been linked to diversified products and markets as well as being instrumental to producing significant financial profitability (Zahra & Garvis, 2000) and (Kuratko, Ireland, & Hornsby, 2001). Subsequently, the government of Kenya encouraged public universities to find ways of self-sustenance by introducing corporate entrepreneurship practice to avoid over-reliance on government support. However, the extent to which practice have generated additional funds for universities has been established. Thus, this study aims to investigate the role of corporate entrepreneurship practices in revenue generation at Meru University of Science and Technology, Kenya.

1.3. Objective of the Study

1. To measure the influence of risk taking, autonomy and innovativeness in corporate entrepreneurship practices at Meru University of Science and Technology.

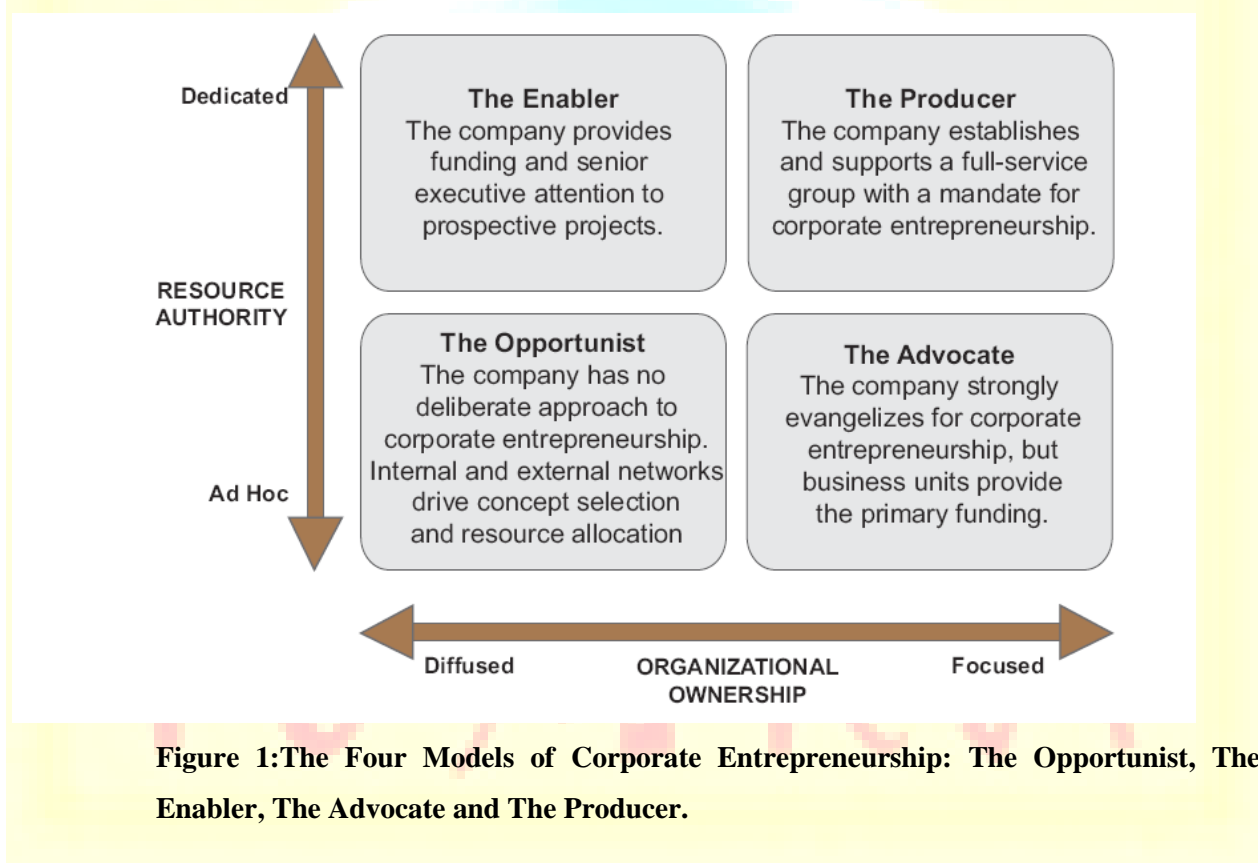
2.0 Literature Review

According to (Korhonen 2010) the term entrepreneurship means shifting economic resources out of an area of lower productivity to greater yield. The entrepreneurial function involves the discovery, evaluation and management of opportunities, new products, services or new markets for products and inputs that did not previously exist (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) and (Reynolds, 2005). On the other hand, corporate entrepreneurship (CE) can be described as a entrepreneurial behaviour inside established organizations that challenge bureaucracy and encourage innovation. It is also responsible for stimulating innovation and exploitation of new opportunities (Antoncic & Hirsh 2003), (McFadzean, O'Loughlin & Snow 2005), (Morris & Kuratko, 2002).

Corporate entrepreneurship takes three forms. One is the creation of new business within an existing organization (Kuratko et al., 2005). The second one is pervasive activity associated with the transformation or renewal of existing organizations (Stopford & Fuller, 1994). The third one is where the enterprise changes the rules of competition for its industry in the manner suggested by (Schumpeter, 1934). This may result in 'new' organisations being created as 'spin-out ventures' (Altman & Zacharckis 2003).

2.1 Corporate Entrepreneurship Model

This study is anchored on the four corporate entrepreneurship models advanced by Robert C. W. and M. J. Lippitz, (2007). The four models, The Opportunist, The Enabler, The Advocate and The Producer are mapped and described in figure 1.



The opportunist model performs well in a trusting and open organizational culture that supports social interaction and relies on the creativity of every member. On the other hand, the enabler model reserve financial resources and set-up processes, but don't dedicate the development task to any special entity of the organization. In the advocate model, the corporation's new business innovation ownership is handed to one dedicated organization expected to be funded by the operative business units. In producer model, both the resources and the ownership of the new business ventures are assigned to one unit. This model combines

elements of the enabler and the advocate models. The corporate entrepreneurship practices mixes of these models in order to stimulate innovation and produce enterprising minds in an organization.

Corporate entrepreneurship tends to be analysed at diverse levels, such as organizational, venture or individual levels. It is seen as entrepreneurial strategy, entrepreneurial management and entrepreneurial orientation mainly described as a firm behaviour (Carrier, 1996).

2.2. Innovativeness, Risk-Taking and Autonomy Dimensions

Innovativeness refers to the creation of new products, administrations, courses of action, advances and plans of action (Morris & Kuratko 2002). Innovation is further regarded as capability, capacity and willingness of an enterprise to support creativity and experimentation to solve recurring customer problems. Innovation is not simply about generating creative ideas, but also involves the commercialisation, implementation and modification of existing products, systems and resources (Antonicic & Hisrich, 2001). Risk-taking involves the readiness to make resources available to exploit opportunities and launch projects with uncertain outcomes and tentative projected returns on investment. Risks can be minimised by the knowledge an entrepreneur or company has of the opportunity or technology, or unique capabilities or networks to exploit the opportunity (Morris & Kuratko 2002). Autonomy is this degree to which employees are empowered and function autonomously in their jobs. This element alludes to the prudence with which, representatives are enabled to settle on choices about performing their own particular work in the way they accept is best (Hornsby et al. 2002).

2.3 Empirical Review

The empirical evidence that corporate entrepreneurship improves performance by increasing the company's pro-activeness and willingness to take risks by pioneering the development of new products, processes, and services as presented in (Kuratko, Montagno, & Hornsby, 1990). A longitudinal study by Zahra and Covin (1995) provided strong evidence of a corporate entrepreneurship performance relationship. Their study examined the longitudinal impact of corporate entrepreneurship on a financial performance index composed of both growth and profitability indicators. Using data from three separate samples and a total of 108 companies, they identified a positive and strengthening linkage between corporate entrepreneurship and subsequent financial performance.

Entrepreneurs to some certain extent are willing to take some measurable and predetermined risk Kuratko (2009). They decide to involve themselves in a business venture in an extremely calculated way. Their

strategies include getting other investors, suppliers, business partners to share in their inherent financial and business risk. Thus, to Kolakowski (2011) a risk averse person will prefer being a low-paid employee with apparent job security rather than being a self-employed entrepreneur with the possibility of earning a large sum of money. On the contrary, Miner and Raju (2004) and Xu and Reuf (2004) have shown doubt on the degree to which the risk-taking propensity is being seen as an entrepreneurial characteristic. They proposed that entrepreneurs are no longer risk tolerant, but in some instances, are even more risk avoidant, than other managers and permanent employed persons. Hisrich and Peters (2002) argued that empirically no conclusive causal relationship has been found with regards to risk and entrepreneurial characteristics.

2.4 Conceptual Frame Work

Figure 2 presents the diagrammatical framework for the study showing factors that lead to revenue generation in universities.

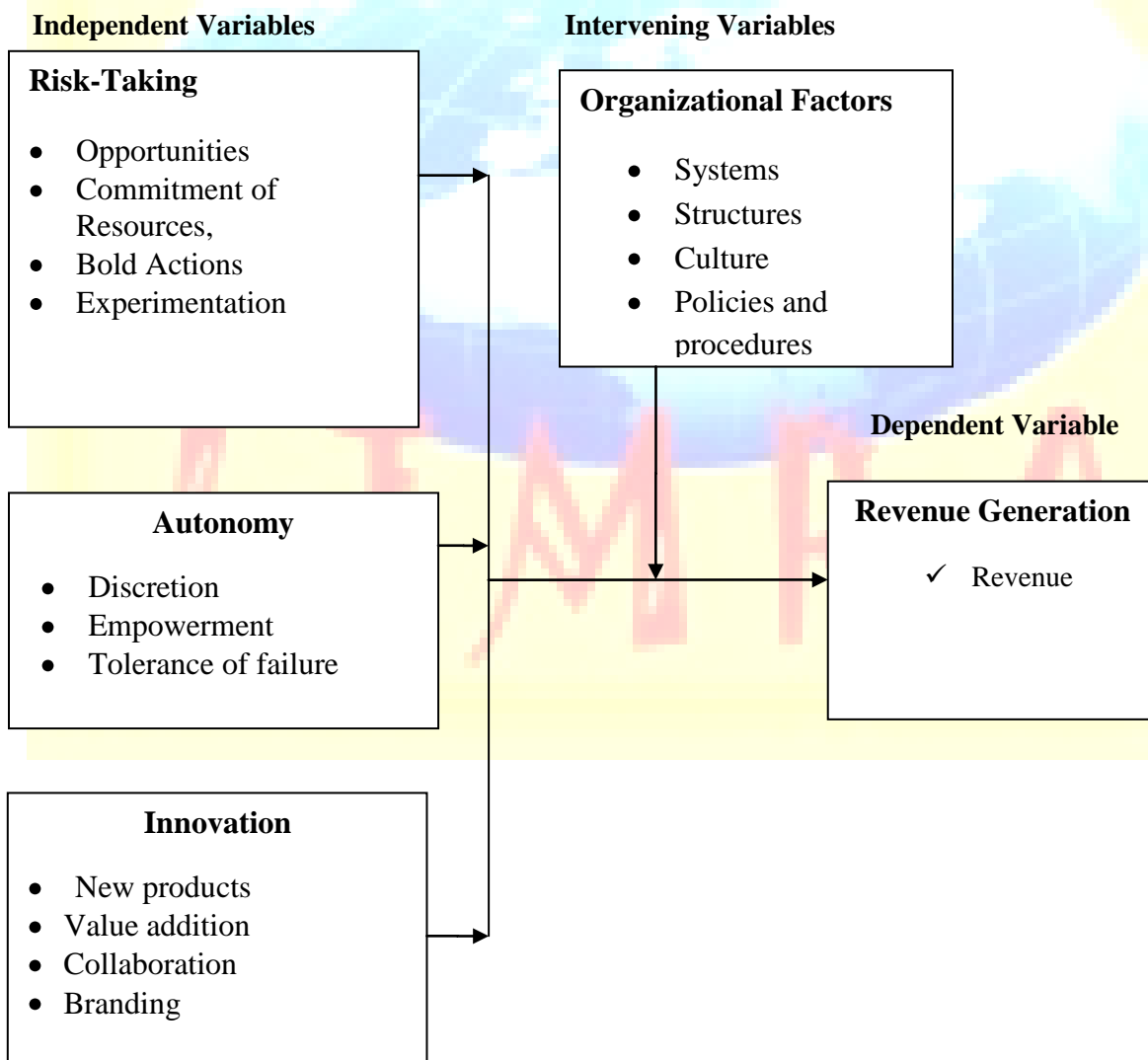


Figure 2: Conceptual Frame Work

In the Figure, the universities are considered to experience different factors that have an effect on their corporate entrepreneurship practices. These factors which are the independent variables are risk taking, autonomy and innovations. These factors will affect the revenue generation performance either positively or negatively. The intervening variables that may affect the relationship between the dependent and independent variables of the organization factors namely systems, structures, culture, policies and procedures.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study employed descriptive design where variables understudy were investigated without any manipulation or alteration (Kothari, 2008). The target population for this study constituted individuals working in income generating units and decision makers regarding income generation at Meru University of Science and Technology. They range from the University management, supervisors, heads of department and frontline managers totalling to 80 in number. Data for the study was collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaires had both open and closed ended questions to enable the researcher to get greater insight into the feelings, decisions and thinking of respondents (Mugenda & Mudenda, 2003) (Ogula, 2005), (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2000) and (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Data was processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics

4.0 Result and Discussion**4.1 Demographics**

The respondents in the sample populations near to equal gender ratio (male - 52%, female 48%) with age ranges of 29 to 50 years who were non-risk evasive, innovative, autonomous and responsive to corporate entrepreneurship practice. More than a half the respondents (56%) had first degree levels of formal education and were capable of understanding concepts of corporate entrepreneurship practice. About a half of the respondents had 6 – 15 years of service in employment confirming their ability to understand effects of corporate entrepreneurship at the University.

4.2 Risk- Taking

The research aims at measuring the influence of risk taking in revenue generation at Meru University of Science and Technology. Risk-taking involves the readiness of the university to make resources available to exploit opportunities and launch projects with uncertain outcomes and tentative projected returns on

investment. The study established that 68% of the respondents were always seeking new ways to commit university resources. It was evident that majority of the frontline managers were committed to experiment with the university resources in order to optimize availed resources. This research confirms that new ideas will turn to new businesses only if they are embraced by the management and analysed in a transparent manner (Robert C. W& M. J. Lippitz 2007). Majority of the respondent (84) had desire to achieve in the university. Further, a Chi-square test calculated at 95% level of confidence concluded that the frontline managers were always seeking new ways to experiment with university resources and that their desire to achieve in the university was quite high ($p\text{-value} = 0.001, \alpha = 0.05$).

In addition, the findings of the study showed that 60% of the respondents never like work which requires lowest effort. Management of income generating units (IGUs) requires one to endure taking risk, risk minimizing and uncertainty tolerance as well as coping with the stress associated with working in such an environment (Cunningham & O`Gorman, 1997).

Besides, 52% of the respondents like work which is repetitive, 68% like work which is challenging and 72% like abstract work where they have to decide what to do. Chi-Square test statistics result showed the following result lowest effort ($p\text{-value} = 0.003, \alpha = 0.05$), repetitiveness ($p\text{-value} = 0.021, \alpha = 0.05$), challenging ($p\text{-value} = 0.001, \alpha = 0.05$) and abstract work ($p\text{-value} = 0.000, \alpha = 0.05$).

From these results, it is deducible that frontline managers rarely like work which requires lowest effort and repetitive, prefer abstract work where they decide what to do and is challenging.

These results are confirmed by Stopford and Fuller (1994) who suggested that more pervasive activity is associated with the transformation or renewal of existing organizations. majority of the frontline managers prefer work which enables them to take risk and endeavour to come up with solutions to enable them manage the income generating units. It is also supported by Antoncic and Hirsh (2003); McFadzean, O`Loughlin and Snow (2005); Morris and Kuratko, (2002) who suggested that corporate entrepreneurship adopts behavioural styles and practices that act to challenge bureaucracy and encourage innovation.

4.3 Internal Barriers

Regarding internal barriers, the study established that 52% of the respondents agree that established control system is a barrier to overcome in the organization, 60% agree that organization structures are a barrier to overcome while 36% strongly agree that policies and procedures is also a barrier that one has to overcome in the organization. In addition, 60% of the respondents agree that management and leadership

is a barrier in an organization, 52% agree that strategic direction is also a barrier as well as 48% who agree that organization culture is another barrier in an organization. Table 1 shows Chi-Square test statistics for internal barriers.

Table 1: Internal Barriers

	Established control system	Organization structures	Policies and procedures	Management and leadership	Strategic direction	Organizational culture
Chi-Square	15.800 ^a	30.400 ^b	9.400 ^a	19.640 ^a	10.680 ^a	12.280 ^a
df	3	4	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.001	.000	.024	.000	.014	.006

From Table 1, it was established that control system, organization structures, policies and procedures, management and leadership strategic direction and organization culture are barriers that frontline managers need to overcome in the university. The results confirms research findings by Korhonen (2010) which states that corporations start to talk about corporate entrepreneurship, when they attempt to get the entrepreneurial spirit of innovation and risk-taking back in the organization.

Table 2: Risk Mitigating Issues

	I like finding out how our operations, processes or products could be made to work better	I prefer to strategically plan ahead to make sure that the chances of my success are increased	I acquire my knowledge by learning from results of what I do	I am aware of perceived barriers (personal or external) to my achievement and seek help to overcome such perceived barriers	Convention and rules are meant to be broken	The university is open to testing any new initiatives brought forward by the employees
Chi-Square	3.240 ^a	11.560 ^a	15.800 ^b	25.200 ^c	6.800 ^c	10.800 ^c
df	1	1	3	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.072	.001	.001	.000	.147	.029

From Table 4, it can be concluded that the front line managers prefer to strategically plan ahead to make sure that the chances of my success are increased, acquire their knowledge by learning from results of what they do. They are also aware of the perceived barriers (personal or external) to their achievement and seek help to overcome and they were undecided on whether the university was open to testing any new initiatives brought forward by the employees.

However, respondents disagree on how operations, processes or products could be made to work better and also strongly disagree that convention and rules are meant to be broken.

These results confirm research findings by Morris and Kuratko (2002) that states risks can be minimized by the knowledge an entrepreneur or company has of the opportunity or technology, or unique capabilities or networks to exploit the opportunity. The results also confirm innovativeness as the capability, capacity and willingness of an enterprise to support creativity and experimentation to solve recurring customer problems Knight (1997).

4.4 Autonomy

This is the degree to which employees are empowered and function autonomously in their jobs. 56% of the respondents agree they are open to new information or ideas while 52% of them disagreed working alone. More than half (60%) of the respondents agree they prefer to have a high level of independence in what they do. Slight below a half (40%) of the respondents disagree with the fact that funding is made available by the university in the event of a new initiative. However, more respondents (52%) feel that there were no restrictions imposed on new initiatives introduced in the university. Table 5 shows various autonomy elements practiced in the study area.

Table 3: Elements of Autonomy

	I am open to new information or ideas	I prefer to work alone	I prefer to have a high level of independence in what I do.	It is easy for employees to seek and obtain help in exploring any new initiatives they have.	When required funding is made available by the university in the event of a new initiative.	There are no restrictions imposed on new initiatives introduced in the university
Chi-Square	10.640	13.560	16.440	25.200	6.800	10.680
df	2	3	3	4	4	3
Asymp. Sig.	.005	.004	.001	.000	.147	.014

From Table 5 it is evident that front line managers are open to new information or ideas, prefer to work alone, have a high level of independence, easy for employees to seek and obtain help in exploring any new initiatives and there are no restrictions imposed on new initiatives introduced in the university .

However, funding was not made available by the university in the event of a new initiative.

4.5 Innovation

The findings of the study showed that 64% of the respondents rarely introduce new innovations to their university work places while 76% of the respondents said that the university rarely introduce new innovation. Chi-Square tests illustrate that front line managers often introduce new innovations to the university ($p=0.000$, $\alpha = 0.05$). It was also established that the university does not often introduces new innovation ($p=.162$, $\alpha = 0.05$).

The results of the study indicated that 96% of the respondents opined that it's very important to get ideas to make innovations better, 80% for the implementation of innovative ideas, 56% suggest that human processes be integrated into innovation initiatives and 80% opined that the organizational processes should explore innovations. The respondents' opinions were suggested to Chi-Square tests. Table 6 shows the result for the test statistics for innovation.

Table 4: Test Statistics for Innovations

	Getting ideas on how to make innovations better	Implementing innovative ideas	The human processes that explore innovation	The organizational processes that explore innovation
Chi-Square	21.160	9.000	.360	9.000
df	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.003	.549	.003

The findings concluded that it is very important for frontline managers to get ideas on how to make innovations better, implement innovative ideas and the organizational processes that support innovations be explored. However, the university human processes did not explore innovative strategies.

The study sought to establish the respondent's expertise in terms of knowledge gained in the university, experience gained, level of motivation and creative thinking skills. The respondents also gave their opinions on management of creativity and innovation and flows free flow of knowledge at work place for decision making. Table 7 shows statistical results of the same.

Table 5: Test Statistics for Innovativeness

	Your expertise in terms of knowledge gained in the university	Your expertise in terms of experience gained in the university	Your level of motivation	Your creative thinking skills (combining rather unrelated elements to develop new ideas)	The management of creativity and innovation	Knowledge flows freely and openly at my work place and assist in decision making
Chi-Square	6.080	8.760	12.400	17.720	11.640	5.200
df	2	3	4	3	3	4
Asymp. Sig.	.048	.033	.015	.001	.009	.267

The findings conclude that the frontline managers have expertise in terms of knowledge and experience gained in the university, have a high level of motivation, creative thinking skills and that creativity and innovation processes were managed well. Nevertheless, the statistics confirm that knowledge do not flow freely and openly at my work place and do not assist in decision making.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

Successful implementation of corporate entrepreneurship is important for managers who run income generating units and practice corporate entrepreneurship. The implementation and use of corporate entrepreneurship practices in income generating units has a positive impact on the financial performance of the university. The study confirms that majority of employees were willing to take risks but there were certain organisational internal factors that negatively affected the managers' ability to take risk. Risk taking among the frontline managers was low due to the internal university barrier which contributes to low corporate entrepreneurial practices.

Further the study affirmed that the frontline managers recognize that autonomy is a very important factor in management of the income generating units which allows them to make independent decisions about new initiatives or ideas. The research also established that bureaucratic structures and systems of organisation hinder the growth and development of IGUs. The research findings confirm that the frontline managers needed to understand the role of innovation in the management and development of the income generating units. In addition, the levels of innovativeness of frontline managers were negatively affected by lack of supportive policies, procedures and support systems in the organization. The study concludes

that corporate entrepreneurship practices can be successful if the frontline managers and top management have the right attitude towards corporate entrepreneurship practices by setting up a corporate entrepreneurial culture.

The study recommends that organization policies should outline procedures, structures in place and systems in order to optimize the returns in the income generating units. The frontline managers should be put on continuous professional development to enhance their corporate entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. Finally, organizational internal barriers needed to reduce in order to create entrepreneurial environment for the members of the organization.

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