



Service quality evaluation of São Paulo State Network of Technological Incubators (RPITec): a study on incubated companies' perception

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Abstract. Some researchers have shown that business incubators help firms survive and grow during their initial stages, business incubation and business soft landing to develop productive nets. At the same time, they stimulate innovation and regional development (Rosado-Cubero et al., 2023). Business incubators offer opportunities and development possibilities to those startups that innovates in products, services, or processes. To integrate institutions of innovation system and to promote direct incentives to startups the São Paulo State Network of Technological Incubators (RPITec) was created. RPI Tec is a public policy that aims to provide subsidies like physical space for the installation of startups and managerial and technological support for the development of small companies. In this sense, efforts are made to facilitate networking, training, consulting and promoting interaction with universities and regulatory agencies that assist in the opening of these technology-based companies. In total 71 business incubators were identified in the state of São Paulo. Among the incubators, only 16 are already members of RPI Tec. Through the theoretical basis and application of a survey, it was possible to evaluate the quality of the services related to the public policy according to companies inside the 16 incubators. The method used for this research was a survey. The survey was responded in october of 2021. The study was made in the subsequent stages as: research and study on the existing theory regarding technology, innovation, incubators, associations and support organizations, public policies and services. The theoretical framework allowed to build the questionnaire to evaluate the quality of the public policy. After the data collection, data was tabulated and gaps of users' perceptions of quality were identified. Finally, the authors make recommendations of improvements for RPI Tec. In total, 48 companies among the 16 incubators answered the questionnaire that allowed the analysis of the quality perception by users. Through descriptive analysis, it was possible to verify the quality in the five dimensions of quality: project quality, process quality, quality of the relation, quality of the result and reliability (Rhee & Rha, 2009). The questionnaire comprised ten questions. Additionally, we added one question over the general satisfaction with the public policy. Through descriptive statistics, we identified gaps and the need for improvements in the quality of these services was observed. The instrument used to assess the quality of public policies was adequate, as it allowed the analysis of the perception of its users. Four important critical gaps were observed in the following dimensions: a) project quality: there is a lack in the consultation of the needs of the incubated companies, aiming to add value to their users and RPI Tec; b) process quality: it lacks integration of incubated companies with production chains and with regulatory and investment agencies; c) quality of the relation: there are no



assessments of the quality of services provided to analyze the satisfaction of its users; d) quality of relations: there is a lack in the access to equipment at laboratories and research institutions or universities. Overall, we could identify that 56.3% are satisfied with the public policy while 33.3% of users consider themselves dissatisfied. In order to improve the quality of the most critic gaps, RPITec should improve the following aspects to increase users' satisfaction: a) it is necessary to carry out a study and monitoring of the needs of the incubated companies, with the objective of aligning the direction of public resources with the specific demands of the hosted companies; b) process quality: encouraging the integration of incubated companies with production chains is needed, seeking to provide sustainability for the companies' businesses. It is also necessary to make investments available to incubated companies, in order to meet specific projects and to develop joint projects between the incubator and the incubated companies in order to get financial support from development agencies for the maturation of these projects; c) evaluating the quality of the public policy periodically is needed and also the creation of a transparency portal, which discloses the financial results and actions of RPITec. It is also suggested to send official news to the incubated companies via e-mail, informing available capital, provide information on the application of financial resources and demonstrate results, with disclosure to all those involved; d) it is necessary to encourage partnerships between business incubators and research laboratories and also hold events within the incubators for the mutual exchange of information, knowledge and projects. Also, we should note that many of the incubated companies are unaware of the RPITec public policy in its entirety, so there is a lack of information from all RPITec parties. Many incubators do not have websites for consulting incubated companies or their projects under development. As a suggestion, organizations such as ANPROTEC and RPITec should be used to centralize information about incubators and make documents available with all business incubators in the state of São Paulo, not just accredited or associated ones. RPITec should assign more flexible accreditation criteria, so that all incubators can be part of this network, so that it can guarantee a greater coverage, including all business incubators in the state of São Paulo. It will be a mutual gain, both for RPITec to have control over all incubators, real information and enabling the development of more assertive action plans. Finally, we should note that gaps were observed in all the questions, so it is recommended to make future studies as the application of new surveys to evaluate the RPITec public policy.

Keywords: Quality in the public sector, Innovation System, Business Incubators.

References

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