

Cross Perspectives on Support in Entrepreneurship: Trends and International Best Practices

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ABSTRACT: The field of entrepreneurial support is an essential issue for the economic development of our country. In light of this challenge, this chapter provides a deeper understanding of this phenomenon through a reevaluation of the literature, aiming to achieve terminological precision that differentiates accompaniment stricto sensu from other related concepts. This analysis enables the examination of its various meanings and uses, ultimately enriching current work. It also proposes the forms of support mobilised in different contexts, which can serve as a conceptual framework better to understand the multifaceted or protean nature of entrepreneurial support.

By referring to the literature on entrepreneurial support, this article aims to explore the ecosystem of support for entrepreneurship in Morocco and subsequently assess its adequacy in meeting the expectations of project leaders.

This work is based on an exploratory qualitative study conducted with actors of the entrepreneurial support ecosystem and 18 entrepreneurs.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurial support; ecosystem; entrepreneur.

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Introduction

In the 1990s, the entrepreneurial economy replaced the managerial economy, bringing about changes in most developed countries (Baumol, 2002; Baumol et al., 2007; Audretsch, 2007). In the years that followed, entrepreneurial support took centre stage in the entrepreneurial field (Msseghem et al., 2000), and it became necessary to study its evolution over time (Chabaud et al., 2010). These support measures for individuals, groups, and organisations were implemented gradually. It was in 1998 that the field of entrepreneurial support became a topic of research interest. Desroche, Honoré,

Fustier, Saint-Arnaud, Houde, and Pineau researched to decipher the first signs of entrepreneurial support (Paul, 2004).

In 1987, Henri Desroche highlighted that the idea of support existed in the field of training according to a maieutic approach that combines several functions.

- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Facilitation
- Assistance
- Research cooperation

Currently, the concept of entrepreneurial support has expanded considerably and is undergoing rapid development, both in terms of its various practices and the multitude and diversity of its stakeholders (Aoboén, 2009).

Today, within the Moroccan entrepreneurial support ecosystem, there are numerous structures specialising in entrepreneurial support that offer a range of services, including raising awareness about business creation, training, consulting, hosting, networking, and financing.

Research Aim and Research Questions

This article aims to shed light on the existing range of entrepreneurial support services. To achieve this, we will identify and categorise the key support players in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, define their roles and missions, and then examine entrepreneurs' perceptions of the services offered by these structures.

Therefore, the main research question guiding this work is as follows: What are the characteristics and specific features of the Moroccan support ecosystem? To what extent does this ecosystem meet the expectations of entrepreneurs? To answer our questions, our work will be based on an exploratory qualitative study that will enable us to categorise and analyse the support ecosystem initially, and then examine entrepreneurs' perceptions of the existing range of entrepreneurial support services.

Our article will be structured as follows: in terms of the conceptual framework, we will attempt to define the concept of entrepreneurial support, after which we will present the various forms of support, including coaching, counselling, consulting, tutoring, mentoring, campaigning, and sponsorship. We will then present the entrepreneurial support process. Next, we will define the methodological framework and finally present the main results of our work.

This research aims to investigate the characteristics and specific features of the entrepreneurial support ecosystem in Morocco, and to identify entrepreneurs' perceptions of the services provided by these structures.

To achieve our objectives, we will use an exploratory qualitative study. In this regard, Blumberg, Cooper, and Schindler (2005) explain that a qualitative study is best suited to understanding, studying, and shedding light on a given phenomenon. Our study is based on semi-structured interviews conducted using two interview guides, the first aimed at support organisations and the second aimed at entrepreneurs. The average duration of our interviews was approximately one hour and thirty minutes.

Our sample consists of all incubators present in the Moroccan entrepreneurial support ecosystem. We interviewed 18 entrepreneurs. We did not consider it necessary to interview a larger number of entrepreneurs, as this would not add any new information to our research. Some researchers refer to this as theoretical saturation. According to Charmaz (2006), theoretical saturation is reached when no further data can be found that generate new theoretical insights. The results of our study will be presented in two parts: in the first part, we will map the support ecosystem in Morocco by presenting and studying the characteristics, specific features, missions, and roles of the key players in this ecosystem; in the second part, we will study entrepreneurs' perceptions of the services offered by these players.

Research Results

a. Mapping and analysis of the entrepreneurial support ecosystem in Morocco:

The entrepreneurial support ecosystem comprises various private and public structures that work professionally, effectively, and efficiently to promote and develop entrepreneurship. The following actors are worth mentioning: incubators, accelerators, associations, and funding organisations. Public and private universities are also significant players in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, as they host numerous university incubators that play a crucial role in supporting project leaders. Regarding the services offered by incubators, our study reveals a similarity in the services provided. These mainly include awareness-raising, training, hosting, mentoring, and networking.

Nevertheless, there are some differences in terms of their missions and targets. Some incubators specialise in supporting social projects, while others focus on digital or environmental initiatives. There are also disparities in terms of the incubation capacity of project leaders, processes, and support programs. It is also worth noting that the support offered is primarily aimed at start-ups with high growth potential.

b. Entrepreneurs' perceptions of existing entrepreneurial support services

The results of the study, which focused on project leaders, allow us to draw the following conclusions:

In most cases, project leaders are dissatisfied with the services offered by incubators, as these services do not meet the expectations and aspirations of the entrepreneurs they support. There is also a lack of training in areas such as accounting, fundraising, commercial negotiation, management information technology, digital marketing, innovation processes, and prototyping.

Entrepreneurs also lack knowledge of the support services and mechanisms available to them. Based on the results obtained from our field investigation, which can be summarised as entrepreneurs' dissatisfaction with the support provided by support structures, we recommend creating synergy among the various support actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, encouraging collaboration and collective intelligence to achieve the desired objectives. Similarly, it would be wise to support entrepreneurs throughout the entire entrepreneurial process, from pre-creation to creation and, above all, post-creation, which is a crucial stage in the life cycle of a business. Additionally, it is essential to design support programs tailored to the aspirations and expectations of entrepreneurs. Incubators are also required to develop the skills of their support staff. Monitoring and evaluating the performance of incubators is also recommended.

Conclusions

In this article, we have examined entrepreneurial support in terms of both theory and application, demonstrating its pivotal role in strengthening the entrepreneurial field and enhancing the quality of the productive sphere. Entrepreneurial support is educational in nature, making it an excellent tool and an essential vehicle for the creation, development, and sustainability of startups. Support can play an important role as a catalyst for the development of entrepreneurship in Morocco. Its scope of intervention must necessarily encompass economic, ecological, and social dimensions.

On a theoretical level, our work has enabled a better understanding and comprehension of the concept of entrepreneurial support. It highlights the importance of support in the process of creating and developing businesses. From a managerial perspective, our work has enabled us to map all the key players in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, analyse their often overlapping and confused roles and missions, and identify the support practices adopted by these players, providing a better understanding of the entrepreneurial support ecosystem. For a better understanding of the entrepreneurial support ecosystem in Morocco, we recommend supplementing our purely exploratory study with a quantitative study that will cover a larger and more diverse sample.

Entrepreneurial support is a facilitator and attribute of business success. However, improvements are needed to make it more effective and efficient, in particular by giving it the flexibility to intervene at all stages of a company's development. Our research also enabled us to study entrepreneurs' perceptions of the services offered by these actors. It would therefore be helpful to adopt an ecosystem approach that enables us better to understand the roles and missions of each actor, define the relationships that govern them, and assess to what extent these actors can work in a complementary manner to serve the entrepreneurial ecosystem more effectively.

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