

Received date: 22.03.2024

Accepted date: 12.04.2024

Publication date: 12.12.2024



Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems

International Academic Journal

ISSN: 2790-0169; E-ISSN 2790-0177; OCLC Number 1322801874

The importance of accompaniment in supporting entrepreneurial activity in Algeria

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| DOI: 10.56334/sci/7.4.20

Abstract:

This study aims to explore the extent of contribution of accompaniment mechanisms in improving entrepreneurial activity in Algeria, focusing on a case study of a nursery and facilitation center for small and medium enterprises, the research relied on the qualitative approach through conducting interviews with a purposive sample of experts and beneficiaries, and the data was analyzed using the NVivo program. The results showed that the hypothesis of the contribution of accompaniment in improving entrepreneurial activity has been achieved to a degree of "Acceptable", where the correlation coefficient reached (0.477), which indicates a positive relationship but less than average. The study revealed the existence of substantial deficiencies in the accompaniment process, most notably weakness in follow-up after project creation and absence of financial support, which limits its effectiveness in promoting innovation and increasing the number of startup enterprises, and the study recommends the necessity of improving accompaniment programs and adapting them with the needs of entrepreneurs to maximize their impact on the entrepreneurial environment.

Keywords: Accompaniment, Entrepreneurship, Support Mechanisms, Small and Medium Enterprises,

JEL: L26, M13.

Introduction

The interest in the small and medium enterprises sector in Algeria has passed through several stages, especially by the end of the twentieth century, beginning with the emergence of support and accompaniment mechanisms for small projects, particularly with the proliferation of the unemployment phenomenon due to the layoff of workers from national

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enterprises, which necessitated the creation of mechanisms in order to absorb unemployment and encourage entrepreneurial activities.

And with the beginning of the year 2001, the launch was with the regulation of a set of decrees for mechanisms specializing in providing accompaniment and training for project holders, as well as mechanisms specializing in providing material support represented in financing and incubation, seeking to improve entrepreneurial activity and encourage the entrepreneurial culture towards the private sector.

And by referring to the study of (KRIS AERTS and all, 2007) on European business incubators; and how to set criteria for screening and testing idea holders, and the necessity of evaluating business incubators in order to improve their performance, and the most important element is testing the failure and success of idea holders in European business incubators.

As for the study of (Belaidi Abdullah, 2017) it focused on the role of business incubators in accompanying and supporting small and medium enterprises, and the Chinese and Malaysian experiences were referenced as models through analyzing statistics from previous years and focusing on the factors for the success of accompaniment in advancing small and medium enterprises, and the necessity of benefiting from these experiences.

However, in our study, we will focus specifically on the accompaniment process for its effective role in guaranteeing the success of the idea and its concretization, and the accompaniment process occurs in several stages, either preliminary by conducting the economic feasibility study for the project, or during the initial practice of the project, as well as after the project's growth, and thus it is possible to reduce environmental uncertainty in light of dynamic changes due to the rapid change of variables, and the complexity in light of the multitude of activities.

From this standpoint, we pose the following problematic:

How does accompaniment contribute to improving entrepreneurial activity in Algeria?

Formulating the Study Hypothesis

Through the study's problematic, and after reviewing previous studies and through the study of (mohamed djelti et bouchama chouam, 2016) which is an article that focused on a set of Algerian support mechanisms of various types, and it was supported by a case study of the Oran Technological Incubator, so it addressed how to select project holders, the accompaniment process and focusing on its importance, as well as the training process for controlling the project and improving management quality or developing capacities, then the formation process which focuses on areas of management, marketing, entrepreneurship, ICT, law and finance and psychology and others to enhance the cognitive capacities of the project holder, and the results of this study came as follows: what happens on the ground contradicts what was planned by the public authorities despite the existence of many support structures, and the performance of the Oran incubator was tangible to some extent, especially in the areas of training and management and business creation and entrepreneurship and marketing. The following hypothesis can be proposed:

Accompaniment by the support mechanisms (SMEs) under study contributes to improving entrepreneurial activity in Algeria.

Study Type and Context

Reliance will be placed on the qualitative case study, which depends on conducting interviews with a group of experts; the nature of each person's selection differs according to their degree of connection and relation to the support mechanisms under study, and the analysis of the interviews will be via the Nvivo program, version number 10.

Study Sample

The study sample consists of a group of experts from the nursery and the facilitation center as well as external experts, in order to conduct interviews with them due to the nature of the qualitative study. Selection was done via a purposive sample from the nursery: both the director and the accompanist. As for the facilitation center, the director and the accompanist were also selected. And as external parties, an external expert was selected and a framework in the National

Agency for Youth Support and Employment, who is also an academic researcher, and the sixth expert is a project holder in the nursery and a beneficiary of its services.

Study Axes:

- I. The first axis: The theoretical framework for accompaniment and entrepreneurship.
- II. The second axis: Introduction to the nursery and the facilitation center for small and medium enterprises.
- III. The third axis: Qualitative analysis of the data using the Nvivo-V10 program.

I. The first axis: The theoretical framework for accompaniment and entrepreneurship.

In this axis, the focus will be on the basic concepts of the research variables and giving an overview of them to clarify the path.

1) Definition of Entrepreneurship

Definitions of the term entrepreneurship have varied according to each thinker and their intellectual orientations, and the adjacent table shows a group of them as follows:

Source	Definition
Knight (1921)	Entrepreneurship is the profits that come from bearing risk and uncertainty.
Schampiter (1934)	Entrepreneurship is the carrying out of new combinations of the organization, of new products, new services, new sources of raw materials, new methods of production, new markets, and new forms of organization.
Hoselitz (1952)	Entrepreneurship is uncertainty... between resources of production...and the introduction of innovations and providing capital.
Cole (1959)	Entrepreneurship is purposeful activity to initiate and develop profit-oriented business.
Casson (1982)	Entrepreneurship is the decisions and judgments regarding scarce judgments.
Cartners (1985)	Entrepreneurship is the creation of new organizations.
Stevenson, Roberts and Grousbeck (1989); Barringer and Ireland (2006)	Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity without regard to resources currently controlled.
Hart, Stevenson, and Dial (1995)	Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity without regard to resources currently controlled, but constrained by the founders' prior choices and industry-related experience.
Shane and Venkataraman (2000)	Entrepreneurship is a field of business that seeks to understand how opportunities to create something new arise.
Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004)	Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change and creation.

Allen (2006)

Entrepreneurship is a mindset or a way of thinking which is opportunity focused, innovative and growth oriented. It can be found in large corporations and socially responsible non-profits...

Source: marc j. dollinger, entrepreneurship: strategies and resources, 4th ed, marsh publications, USA, 2008, p9.

2) Definition of Accompaniment

- Accompaniment is a dynamic process for developing and growing business projects that are going through the establishment, or creation and start-up phase; until they are able to survive and grow, especially at the start of activity, through many financial, technical assistances and other facilitations and necessary help.(Ait Saïd & Ben Hamouda, 2017, p. 873)
- Accompaniment includes services of awareness, reception, information, advice, training, logistical support, financing, creation and follow-up for new enterprises. (Ait Saïd & Ben Hamouda, 2017, p. 873)

Through the two definitions of the accompaniment process, we conclude that accompaniment is the continuous follow-up starting from the project idea until it is embodied in the form of an enterprise, and accompaniment is represented in providing consulting services, economic feasibility study, and informational and awareness services.

II. The second axis: Introduction to the nursery and the facilitation center for small and medium enterprises in Bordj Bou Arréridj Province.

In this axis, the focus will be on introducing the two support mechanisms under study: the Enterprise Facilitation Center and the Enterprise Nursery, and their objectives for accompanying and supporting entrepreneurial activities in Algeria.

1) Introduction to the Enterprise Facilitation Center for Bordj Bou Arréridj Province

The Facilitation Center is a public institution of an administrative character, enjoying moral personality and financial independence under the guardianship of the Ministry of Industry and Mines, established pursuant to Executive Decree No.: 03-79 dated: February 25, 2003. The project was received in Bordj Bou Arréridj Province on date: August 15, 2010.

The Facilitation Center receives project holders of all age categories starting from 19 years old and above, for an unlimited accompaniment period, and this by providing all stages of the accompaniment and follow-up process from the idea to the startup enterprise. It also receives owners of enterprises that are active in the field but suffer from difficulties in various administrative functions or suffer from financial distress, and here the role of the Center also emerges in diagnosing the situation of enterprises by experts and providing consultations and possible solutions that can be applied to improve their situation.

The Facilitation Center for (SMEs) is located in the center of Bordj Bou Arréridj city at the address Mohamed Boudiaf Mutual, it consists of a ground floor + first floor and a car parking station. (Direction du Centre de Facilitation des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises de la Wilaya de Bordj Bou Arreridj).

2) Objectives of the Facilitation Center (SMEs) for Bordj Bou Arréridj Province

- Establishing a window that adapts with the needs of startup enterprise owners and entrepreneurs;
- Developing the culture of entrepreneurship and reducing the timeframes for the establishment, expansion, and recovery of enterprises;
- Ensuring the management of files with the assistance of funds established with the Ministry of Industry and Small and Medium Enterprises and investment promotion according to the regulations in force;
- Encouraging the development of new technologies among project holders;
- Creating a meeting place between the business world and enterprises and central or local administrations;

- f) Urging the valorization of research by providing an atmosphere for exchange between project holders, research centers, consulting companies, training institutions, and technological, industrial, and financial poles;
- g) Encouraging the development of the local economic fabric and promoting the generalization and encouragement of skill;
- h) Valuing human competencies and rationalizing the use of financial resources;
- i) Establishing a database on the spatial density of the small and medium enterprise fabric and on technology foresight;
- j) Disseminating devices directed towards assisting and supporting small and medium enterprises;
- k) Accompanying small and medium enterprises for integration into the national and international economy. (Direction de l'Incubateur des Entreprises de la Wilaya de Bordj Bou Arreridj)

3) Definition of the Nursery (SMEs) for Bordj Bou Arréridj Province

The Bordj Bou Arréridj incubator is an integrated framework for an environment that provides space, equipment, services, facilitations, and support, consulting, and organization mechanisms, dedicated to assisting idea owners and recently established enterprises in managing and growing small and medium enterprises in addition to nurturing and supporting them for a limited period, in order to reduce usual risks and provide greater opportunities for success. (Direction de l'Incubateur des Entreprises de la Wilaya de Bordj Bou Arreridj)

4) Objectives of the Nursery (SMEs) for Bordj Bou Arréridj Province

- a) Encouraging the creation of innovative projects in the fields of electronic services and job creation;
- b) Assisting students and new graduates in creating their projects;
- c) Instilling a culture of belonging to the private sector, and driving the spirit of innovation;
- d) Developing cooperation with the institutional environment;
- e) Providing support to startup enterprise owners;
- f) Encouraging enterprises to be better organized;
- g) Raising awareness about the importance of business incubators;
- h) Introducing loan-granting institutions;
- i) Increasing the institutional fabric at the state level. (Direction de l'Incubateur des Entreprises de la Wilaya de Bordj Bou Arreridj)

III. The third axis: Qualitative analysis using the Nvivo program.

In this axis, the study hypothesis will be tested relying on the outputs of the Nvivo program as a tool to assist in analysis, and this by linking each variable with the node that expresses it and each node contains the experts' answers, and this by relying on a set of approaches to determine repetitions, the correlation coefficient, and coverage percentages, and then verifying them.

We formulated the hypothesis as follows: Accompaniment by the support mechanisms (SMEs) under study contributes to improving entrepreneurial activity in Algeria.

1) Results of the Lexical Approach L'Approche lexicale

Its aim is to describe what we are talking about, as it relies on frequency statistics (frequency of word impacts), and the similarity between the words used. (Chergui & Brika, 2016, p. 103)

Table (1): Represents the impact of word frequency for the node of accompaniment with entrepreneurship

The Word	Length (Number of Letters)	Frequency
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Enterprises	8	39
Projects	7	34
Accompaniment	8	32
Problems	7	18
Deficiencies	7	17
Facilitation	7	14
The Nursery	7	11
Entrepreneurship	11	9
Improvement	5	8
Information	9	9
Work	5	8
Awareness-raising	9	5
Difficulties	8	5
Consultations	10	4
Guidance	9	4
Creativity	7	3

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on Nvivo outputs.

From the results of the lexical approach, we notice that the term "Projects" was repeated (34 times), which indicates that the nursery and the facilitation center provide non-material support, while the term "Enterprises" was repeated (39 times), which shows that the support mechanisms under study also provide non-material support to existing enterprises active in the market. As for the term "Accompaniment," it was repeated (32 times), indicating the actual existence of the accompaniment process in the support mechanisms under study, and this is also supported by the presence of repetitions for the term "Information" provided to project holders and enterprises, which was repeated (9 times), and also awareness campaigns (5 times), and consultations and guidance (4 times) for each. It is noticeable from the repetitions that the words "Deficiencies" and "Difficulties" were repeated (17 times) and (5 times) respectively, indicating that the accompaniment process is not activated sufficiently to improve entrepreneurial work, which was repeated (9 times), and this is confirmed by the weak repetition of the term "Creativity" (3 times), which is one of the indicators for measuring entrepreneurial activity.

2) Results of the Thematic Approach L'Approche thématique

This approach enables knowing the coverage percentage of each expert regarding each node of the study nodes relying on the Nvivo program, so the coverage percentages for the node of accompaniment and the node of the reality of entrepreneurship were extracted.

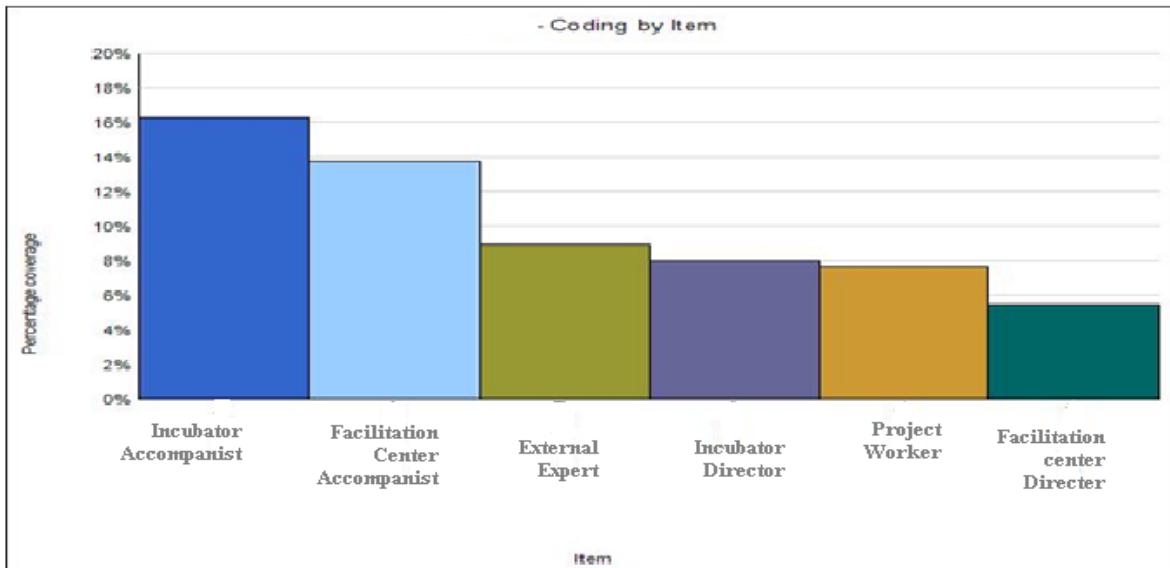
a) Node of Accompaniment

Table (2): Represents the coverage percentages for the node of accompaniment

Item	Percentage coverage
Internals\interviews\ The External Expert	8.92%
Internals\interviews\ The Project Holder	7.69%
Internals\interviews\ The Nursery Director	8.00%
Internals\interviews\ The Facilitation Center Director	5.46%
Internals\interviews\ The Facilitation Center Accompanist	13.72%
Internals\interviews\ The Nursery Accompanist	16.25%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on Nvivo outputs.

Figure (1): Represents the coverage percentages for the node of accompaniment



Source: Prepared by the researchers based on Nvivo outputs.

From the results of Table (1) which represents the coverage percentages for the node of accompaniment, we notice that the coverage percentages of the experts range between (5.46%) and (16.25%), and the average coverage percentage reached (10.05%). The highest percentage was for the nursery accompanist (16.25%), and the facilitation center accompanist (13.72%). These high percentages for the accompanists compared to the other experts are due to the direct communication with idea and project holders, and the familiarity with the various main and secondary stages that the accompaniment process goes through, and providing various economic, financial, and management consultations and guidance, and all that the enterprise needs for its establishment.

As for the other experts, the percentages were less than (10%) as we notice in the adjacent bar chart. This deficiency in covering the accompaniment node by the project holder (7.69%) is because the nursery has not risen to the required level and has not improved the entrepreneurial work. As for the external expert (8.92%), he addressed the accompaniment process in general and emphasized that it is the core work of these mechanisms. As for both the nursery director and the facilitation center director, their coverage percentages were (8%) and (5.46%) respectively, and this is

due to the lack of direct involvement in the accompaniment process, which is attributed to the nature of the administrative position as directors.

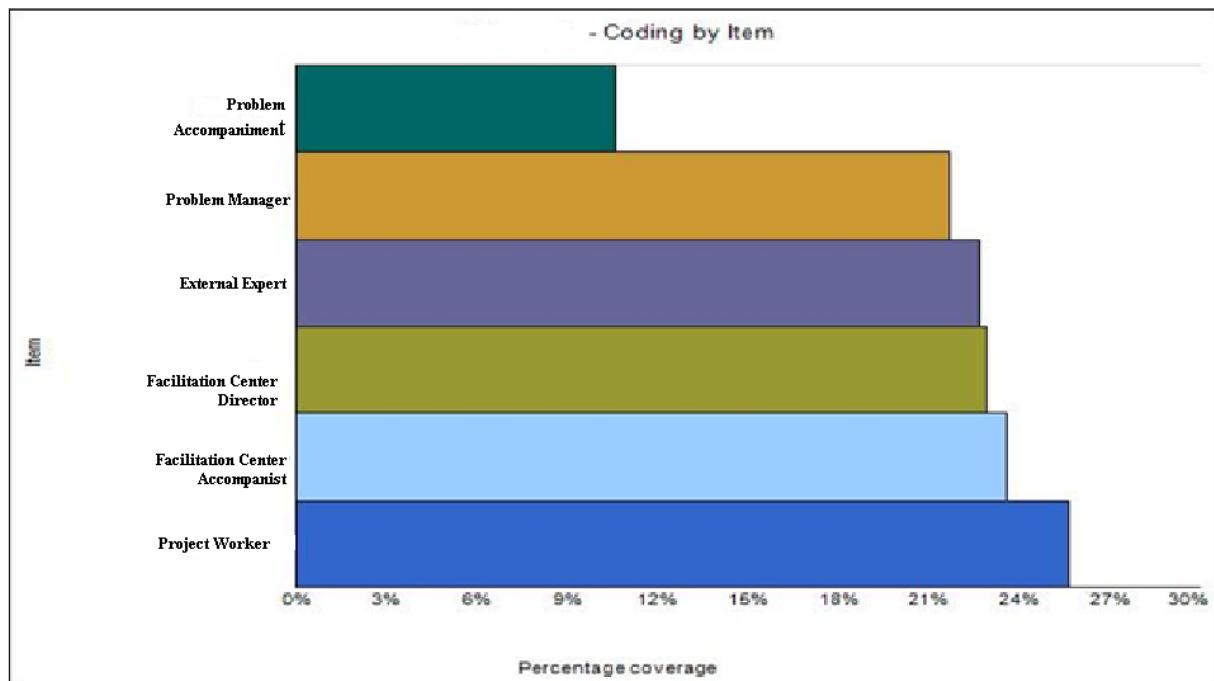
b) Node of the Reality of Entrepreneurship

Table (3): Represents the coverage percentages for the node of the reality of entrepreneurship

Item	Percentage Coverage
Internals\interviews\External Expert	22.64%
Internals\interviews\Project Holder	25.64%
Internals\interviews\Incubator Director	21.67%
Internals\interviews\Facilitation Center Director	22.91%
Internals\interviews\Facilitation Center Accompanist	23.61%
Internals\interviews\Incubator Accompanist	10.62%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on Nvivo outputs.

Figure (2): Represents the coverage percentages for the node of the reality of entrepreneurship



Source: Prepared by the researchers based on Nvivo outputs.

From the table related to the experts' coverage percentages for the node of the reality of entrepreneurship, we notice that the percentages are confined between (10.62%) and (25.64%), and the average coverage percentage reached (21.18%).

From the figure related to the bar chart, it is clear that the project holder had the highest coverage percentage of (25.64%), and the external expert (22.64%), indicating sufficient familiarity with the reality and changes happening in the business environment. As for the nursery director, the facilitation center director, and the accompanist, their coverage percentages were also high, and this also indicates giving serious importance to entrepreneurship. The lowest percentage was for the nursery accompanist due to the superficial and brief answers regarding the reality of entrepreneurship without delving into it.**

3) Results of the Linguistic Approach L'approche linguistique

In the linguistic approach, a comparison will be made between both the node of accompaniment and the node of the reality of entrepreneurship, in order to know the interconnection between the two nodes to prove the second hypothesis of the study.

Table (4): Represents the correlation coefficient between accompaniment and the reality of entrepreneurship

Node A	Node B	Pearson Correlation Coefficient
Nodes\participate\Entrepreneurship Reality	Nodes\participate\Accompaniment	0.477577

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on Nvivo outputs.

From Table (4), we notice that the correlation coefficient between the node of accompaniment and the node of the reality of entrepreneurship is (0.477577). By observing the correlation coefficient, it appears that it is somewhat below average, due to the existence of several differences between the experts' statements regarding the accompaniment process, and the existence of difficulties raised especially from the external parties of the study sample contrary to what was brought by the accompanists in the nursery and the facilitation center; and these will be addressed in detail in the hypothesis testing table.

4) Hypothesis Testing

Table (5): Represents the testing of the study hypothesis

General Hypothesis and Partial Differences	Expressions Indicating the Relationship between Accompaniment and Entrepreneurship	Degree of Verification

Hypothesis: "The accompaniment of the support mechanisms (SME) under study contributes to improving entrepreneurial activity in Algeria."

Comment:

The statements of the experts shared certain points, but there were several differences, the most important of which are:

- Some statements affirm that there is not enough accompaniment, and one must always make a personal effort to obtain information or resort to personal relationships.
- The accompaniment process does not contribute to increasing the number of emerging enterprises nor to improving creativity and innovation.
- The accompaniment process should be preliminary—before the beginning of the project, accompaniment during project implementation, and post-project accompaniment to follow up the enterprise's progress—and this is rarely implemented correctly.
- The essence of accompaniment work includes several stages, among which is accompaniment during financing, which does not exist in reality.
- The incubator conducts awareness campaigns that are sometimes unsuccessful, due to not inviting the owners of emerging enterprises to exhibitions to present their products and contribute to the success of these campaigns. However, recently there has been a growing need for promotion and awareness.

- Repetition of the effect of the terms through the lexical approach.
- The correlation coefficient between the accompaniment node and the entrepreneurship node among the study's experts reached (0.477577).
- The average percentage coverage of the accompaniment node reached (10.05%).
- The average percentage coverage of the entrepreneurship reality node reached (21.18%).
- The accompaniment process is carried out by providing guidance and consultations to idea and project holders in areas such as law, marketing, enterprise management, taxation, etc., and by identifying the problems facing the project.
- This process begins with the creation of the idea by the project holders and its presentation to the accompanist so that the path to follow becomes clear.
- There is no focus on certain categories or educational levels; what matters is that the idea or project is feasible and likely to succeed.
- There are relations between the support mechanisms under study and the university through approaching various faculties and presenting awareness campaigns on entrepreneurship and the need to turn toward the private sector.

Acceptable
(Close to
average) (D+)

Source: Prepared by the researchers with reference to the scoring and evaluation model for the degree of hypothesis verification at the University of Montreal.

General Hypothesis and Partial Differences	Expressions Indicating the Relationship between Accompaniment and Entrepreneurship	Degree of Verification
<p>Hypothesis: "The accompaniment of the support mechanisms (SME) under study contributes to improving entrepreneurial activity in Algeria." Comment: The statements of the experts shared certain points, but there were several differences, the most important of which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some statements affirm that there is not enough accompaniment, and one must always make a personal effort to obtain information or resort to personal relationships. • The accompaniment process does not contribute to increasing the number of emerging enterprises nor to improving creativity and innovation. • The accompaniment process should be preliminary—before the beginning of the project, accompaniment during project implementation, and post-project accompaniment to follow up the enterprise's progress—and this is rarely implemented correctly. • The essence of accompaniment work includes several stages, among which is accompaniment during financing, which does not exist in reality. • The incubator conducts awareness campaigns that are sometimes unsuccessful, due to not inviting the owners of emerging enterprises to exhibitions to present their products and contribute to the success of these campaigns. However, recently there has been a growing need for promotion and awareness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetition of the effect of the terms through the lexical approach. • The correlation coefficient between the accompaniment node and the entrepreneurship node among the study's experts reached (0.477577). • The average percentage coverage of the accompaniment node reached (10.05%). • The average percentage coverage of the entrepreneurship reality node reached (21.18%). • The accompaniment process is carried out by providing guidance and consultations to idea and project holders in areas such as law, marketing, enterprise management, taxation, etc., and by identifying the problems facing the project. • This process begins with the creation of the idea by the project holders and its presentation to the accompanist so that the path to follow becomes clear. • There is no focus on certain categories or educational levels; what matters is that the idea or project is feasible and likely to succeed. • There are relations between the support mechanisms under study and the university through approaching various faculties and presenting awareness campaigns on entrepreneurship and the need to turn toward the private sector. 	<p>Acceptable (Close to average)</p> <p>(D+)(The degree of verification is at a good level with a score of (D+), based on the scoring</p>

Source: Prepared by the researchers with reference to the scoring and evaluation model for the degree of hypothesis verification at the University of Montreal.

Conclusion:

We tested the study hypothesis related to the contribution of accompaniment in improving entrepreneurial activity, which was verified to an acceptable degree, meaning close to average, relying on the qualitative analysis program Nvivo. The experts focused on the existence of the accompaniment process in the nursery and the facilitation center, and the accompaniment process provides guidance and consultations to idea and project holders in the fields of law, marketing, how to manage the enterprise, taxes, and others, and identifying problems facing the project. This process starts from the creation of the idea with the project holders and presenting it to the accompanist to clarify the path to be followed, and there is no focus on specific categories or educational level; what is important is that the idea or project is feasible and successful. Relying on the results of the lexical approach, it proved the existence of words indicating that accompaniment contributes to improving entrepreneurial activity, but the average coverage percentage reached (10.05%) per expert,

which is a weak percentage indicating a lack of focus on the accompaniment process in the interviews in general. Whereas the average coverage percentage for the node of the reality of entrepreneurship reached (21.18%) per expert. As for the Pearson correlation coefficient between the node of accompaniment and entrepreneurship, it reached (0.477577), which is below average, and the reason returns to statements justifying this:

And with the study of (mohamed djelti et bouchama chouam, 2016) it reached almost the same results, and this with the existence of the accompaniment process and its contribution to improving entrepreneurial activity with the existence of deficiencies and a focus on its importance.

Research Results

- There is not sufficient accompaniment; rather, one must always make a personal effort to obtain information or resort to personal relationships.
- The accompaniment process does not contribute effectively to increasing the number of startup enterprises nor to improving creativity and innovation.
- The accompaniment process should be preliminary, i.e., before the project starts, accompaniment during project implementation, and post-accompaniment for following the enterprise's progression, and this is rarely applied correctly.
- The core of accompaniment work involves stages, including accompaniment during financing, which is absent in reality.
- The nursery sometimes conducts awareness campaigns that are not successful due to the failure to invite startup enterprise owners to exhibitions to present their products and contribute to the success of these awareness campaigns, but currently there is a growing need for promotion and awareness.

Research Recommendations

- The necessity of improving the accompaniment process with idea and project holders, and exploiting the largest possible number of ideas to transform them into startup enterprises.
- Working on improving accompaniment programs and adapting them to the needs of idea and project holders.
- The necessity of improving the relationship between the university and economic institutions locally and nationally.
- Working on enhancing the fabric of formal relationships with large enterprises at the local level to adopt and finance idea and project holders.
- Working on reducing the gap between projects that are received and projects that are accompanied.
- Focusing on strengthening relationships with various local administrations to facilitate and reduce the period for establishing enterprises.

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Appendix : Represents the scoring system related to the degree of hypothesis verification.

Degree of Verification	Point	Value	Percentage
Exceptional	A*	4.0	1
Excellent	A	4.0	1
Very Good	B+	3.5	0.875
	B	3.0	0.75
Good	C+	2.5	0.625
	C	2.0	0.50
Acceptable	D+	1.5	0.375
	D	1.0	0.25
Rejected	F	0.0	0.0

Source: Harizi Farouk, The Use of Intranet on the Sustainability of Human Resources Management in the Algerian Enterprise: A Study of a Group of Economic Institutions in the Wilaya of M'sila, Doctoral Dissertation, University of M'sila, 2017, p. 341.