

## **Entrepreneurial support : Origin, evolution and types of structures in literature**

## **Accompagnement entrepreneurial : origine, évolution et types de structures dans la littérature**

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**Date submitted :** 28/12/2024

**Date of acceptance :** 19/02/2025

**To cite this article :**

BEN YAKOUB S. (2025) «Entrepreneurial support : Origin, evolution and types of structures in literature»,  
Revue Internationale des Sciences de Gestion « Volume 8 : Numéro 1 » pp : 1160 - 1170

**Abstract :**

Aimed at supporting entrepreneurs and project leaders, strategies have emerged in parallel with the progress of the economic world to help projects survive and develop. Among these strategies, entrepreneurial support has recently become essential for entrepreneurs through different practices in several types of support structures.

Entrepreneurial support appears as an ecosystem of support for entrepreneurship and functions as a dynamic and collaborative network, composed of various stakeholders such as incubators, nurseries, mentoring and coaching firms, or financial support organizations, as well as business services and government initiatives. Each element plays a distinct, but interconnected, role in promoting entrepreneurial success, but the common goal is to allow an entrepreneurial project to survive and ensure proper functioning in the market. The purpose of this article is to clarify the origin of this strategy, its evolution and its different structures in the French and English literatures.

**Key words :** Entrepreneurship ; Support ; Structures ; Support ; Project

**Résumé :**

Visant à soutenir les entrepreneurs et les porteurs de projets, des stratégies ont été apparues en parallèle avec la progression du monde économique pour aider les projets à survivre et à se développer.

Parmi ces stratégies, l'accompagnement entrepreneurial qui devient dernièrement primordial pour les entrepreneurs à travers des différentes pratiques dans plusieurs types des structures d'accompagnement.

L'accompagnement entrepreneurial apparaît comme un écosystème d'appui à l'entrepreneuriat et fonctionne comme un réseau dynamique et collaboratif, composé de diverses parties prenantes telles que des incubateurs, des pépinières, des cabinets de mentorat et coaching, ou organismes de soutien financier, ainsi des services aux entreprises et des initiatives gouvernementales. Chaque élément joue un rôle distinct, mais interconnecté, dans la promotion de la réussite entrepreneuriale mais le but commun est de permettre à un projet entrepreneurial de survivre et assurer un bon fonctionnement au marché.

Le but cet article, est de clarifier l'origine de cette stratégie, son évolution et ses différentes structures dans les littératures Francophone et Anglophone.

**Mots clés :** Entrepreneuriat ; Accompagnement ; Structures ; Appui ; Projet

## Introduction

In recent years, the promotion of entrepreneurship as a possible source of job creation, empowerment and economic dynamism in a rapidly globalizing world has attracted increasing attention from governments and researchers, which has led to the establishment of various strategies to support entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurial support is a practice that appeared in the 1960s and developed in the 1980s in the wake of restructuring plans. And recently, this strategy appeared due to the shift from managerial economics to entrepreneurial economics. Managerial economics is an economy in which economic performance is related to the size of firms, economies of scale, routine production and innovation.

Support is as rich as it is vast, as is proven; it is above all transversal. It is the nodal point of several programs and practices provided by support structures.

The contribution of the creation and start-up of a project in an economy has long been recognized, but the dilemma in many emerging markets has been the question of how best to nurture, develop and support the creation of new businesses and how to help existing businesses to develop and grow.

Support is among many interventions aimed at stimulating business creation that have emerged. Indeed, entrepreneurship is considered a "miracle" solution to the problem of job creation, the bet is visibly very difficult to win when we know that many entrepreneurs still operate in the all sectors.

In this regard, and for greater efficiency and relevance, entrepreneurial support practices by different structures should be adapted to the unique needs of entrepreneurs

Several studies have been carried out with a view to addressing this strategy and its role, but those which have aimed to theoretically explain its origin, its evolution and the distinction between the Anglophone and Francophone structures remain weak.

The research question that arises :

*What are the origins of entrepreneurial support ? How has it Evolved ? And what is the typology of its structures ?*

The first axis of the article will be focused on the origin of support, the second on its evolution and the third on the different types of its structures.

## 1. Origin of entrepreneurial support

Entrepreneurial support appeared in the French literature towards the end of the 20th century, a refreshing subject for management researchers, as it is considered to be a powerful strategy to ensure the sustainability of projects and to fortify them against the attack of different challenges and collisions that can lead to failure.

In Anglo-Saxon literature, the concept of support is defined through the concept of business incubation, which has undergone considerable evolution and division into several similar institutions and approaches (Mian et al. 2016).

Entrepreneurial support structures have become an integral part of the modern entrepreneurial ecosystem, supporting the growth of new businesses based on a wide range of measures. In fact, we have seen the emergence of so many different forms of entrepreneurship support and even more names for them that there has been a significant degree of confusion regarding the terms incubator and accelerator and their delineation and relationship to connected concepts.

In general, an entrepreneurial support structure can be considered as a supportive environment for start-up projects (Peters et al., 2004). Business incubation is a policy tool that facilitates the development of entrepreneurship by creatively initiating and implementing programs focused on providing targeted resources and services (Ayatse et al 2017), as well as strengthening the skills and capacities of the individual entrepreneur.

As support through incubation structures is increasingly used as a tool to promote entrepreneurship and start-ups, leading to new political incentives, the content of the concept becomes more and more polysemic (Aernoudt, 2004).

In ancient times, to have a visionary dream, people would go to a Roman (or Greek) temple and lie down on a fresh skin of newly sacrificed animals. This practice was called incubatio. One of the most advanced reasons for practicing incubatio was to obtain a vision on how to overcome one or another disease, which explains why incubatio was preferably held in the temple of Aesculapius, the head of medicine. Aesculapius is well known for his incarnation in the form of an animal, namely a snake. It is his picture that we still find today on many medicines. This brings us to the medical world. Indeed, gradually, an incubator became the place where prematurely born infants were nurtured and cared for.

The principle of incubation and support by incubators is that premature infants require temporary care in controlled conditions. These conditions should help the newborns survive, grow and develop once they leave the incubators. The support structures of the projects nurture

the young projects, helping them survive and develop during the start-up period when they are most vulnerable.

The American National Business Incubation Association (ANBIA) describes business incubation as a dynamic process of developing entrepreneurial projects. The term refers to an interactive development process where the goal is to encourage people to start their own businesses and to support start-ups in developing innovative products. A real incubator is therefore not just an office space with a shared secretary and a common fax machine. Because, in addition to hosting, an incubator must offer services such as hands-on management, access to finance (mainly through links with seed funds or business angels), legal advice, operational know-how and access to new markets (Aeroundt 2004).

The term “business incubator” is perceived differently depending on the nature and type of incubation. According to UK Business Incubation (UKBI, 2012), it is a combination of business development processes, infrastructure and people on a large scale to cultivate small start-up businesses during their initial phase. Furthermore, it is also described as an economic tool whose primary objective is to help create new businesses in a country.

Incubators or business support schemes have recently become generally responsible for providing basic physical space, shared facilities and office services, while offering various support services. They also provide coaching and mentoring assistance in developing the business and marketing plan, building team management, channelling financial support and accessing a wide range of specialist managers and managers.

The main objective of a business support organisation or scheme is to produce successful projects that will leave it financially viable and self-sustaining within a reasonable time frame. Thus, a good incubator has a sufficient number of young new businesses with growth potential, a high turnover rate, a high survival rate of graduates who continue to do business outside the breeding grounds. Recently, entrepreneurial studies have focused more on entrepreneurial support (Touhami & Mouhtat 2023).

## **2. Evolution of entrepreneurial support**

Business incubators have proliferated since their emergence over 50 years ago, evolving to include a range of incubation practices that provide critical value to businesses. Khalil and Olafsen (2010) defined business incubation as “the process of supporting the development and scaling of early-stage, growth-oriented businesses.”

According to the authors, the process provides entrepreneurs with a supportive environment for the start-up phase, helps reduce the costs associated with starting a business, increases the entrepreneur's confidence, and helps connect them to the resources and networks needed to scale their business. In other words, business incubation accelerates business growth, saves time and money, and generates social and economic benefits than would otherwise be the case.

The number of business incubators is growing rapidly, from 200 in the early 1980s to over 3,000 worldwide today.

Entrepreneurial support is a practice that emerged in the 1960s but developed in the 1980s in the wake of restructuring plans at a time when entrepreneurial support experienced a complex demand where many stakeholders involved incubators, nurseries, consular chambers, accountants, advisors, etc.

Supporting entrepreneurs remains a factor that influences the success of companies by allowing the project owner to benefit from several tangible and intangible facilitations and supports.

In fact, the era of prescriptive strategies is over. Entrepreneurs and all companies are under constant pressure from the market, from their competitors. They are forced to significantly reduce time to market, establish partnerships and integrate their products and services into existing value chains. This is why networks have become so important. They help entrepreneurs reduce time to market, and offer tenants preferential access to customers, suppliers, technology partners and potential investors.

To enable the entrepreneur to carry out these tasks, it is obvious that he must have the necessary skills so that he can put the necessary strategies into action.

### **3. Structures of entrepreneurial support**

The Anglo-Saxon and European literatures do not have the same names for the types of support structures for the creation and development of businesses. In fact, we have seen the emergence of so many different forms of support for entrepreneurship and even more names for them that there has been a significant degree of confusion regarding the terms incubator and accelerator and their delimitation and relationship with related concepts (Hausberg & Korreck 2020).

The Anglo-Saxon system only recognizes the business incubator as a support structure for the creation and development of businesses, while the European system, particularly the Francophone one, introduces other forms and types of business support structures. This is due to the evolution of the incubator industry, the bifurcation of its development paths and the experimentation of new incubator models, the fact that no universal definition has crystallized,

and that practitioners and academics often use similar concepts synonymously (Hausberg & Korreck 2020).

Entrepreneurship support structures are inspired by the rhythms of the nature of incubators to experiment with the project in gestation and learn to undertake, carrying out incubators allows collaboration and the maturation of the company of young entrepreneurs, incubators to support growth and ensure development (Ribeiro 2014).

### **3.1 Incubators : for innovative projects (start-ups)**

The concept of business incubation has undergone considerable evolution and division into several similar institutions and approaches (Mian et al. 2016). After the establishment of the first private incubator in New York in 1959 (Lewis 2001) and the first public incubator in Philadelphia in 1964 (Campbell and Allen 1987), business incubation slowly developed during the 1960s and 1970s (Hackett and Dilts 2004).

So far, incubators have become an integral part of the modern entrepreneurial ecosystem, supporting the growth of projects based on a wide range of measures. (Peters et al., 2004) point out that as incubation is increasingly used as a tool to promote entrepreneurship and start-ups, leading to new policy incentives, the content of the concept is becoming increasingly polysemic (Aernoudt, 2004).

In the French-speaking system, an incubator is above all a physical space for early stage startups (up to three years after registration), which have a legal life but do not yet have any income. According to Léger-Jarniou (2005), the support offered by incubators is not adapted to all types of profiles and entrepreneurial projects. Startups will benefit from synergies by bringing together several industry players within the incubator. They will have access to training allowing them to better understand the commercial, legal and strategic issues of the project. In addition, the incubator connects the entrepreneur to a network of experts. A real incubator is therefore not just an office space with a shared secretariat and a common fax. Because, in addition to hosting, an incubator must offer services such as practical management, access to financing (mainly via links with seed funds or business angels), legal advice, operational know-how and access to new markets (Aernoundt 2004).

Indeed, there are public, private and specialized incubators in each sector, often linked to leading schools or even companies (for intra-entrepreneurial projects).

### **3.2 Business nurseries : for recently created systems**

The business incubator provides a physical space as well as safes for companies less than three months old. It is not limited to startups and can accommodate entrepreneurs from all backgrounds. It is about building a network and overcoming the often annoying isolation of the young entrepreneur.

Some incubators in France are called "European Business and Innovation Centers" (CEEI), indicating that they have a mission of general interest. The business incubator is creative in order to contribute to an original development is also the target.

### **3.3 Accelerators**

The accelerator is mainly intended for startups that maintain the tone and seek to raise funds to help them evolve and develop quickly. While it can also offer physical accommodation and a roster of services, this framework stands out for its strong mentoring and especially the involvement of investors, particularly business angels, who are more willing to invest in accelerated startups.

As a result, the business accelerator helps startups obtain seed capital (equity guarantee of expenses incurred before the creation of a company, similar to exploration and development, feasibility studies, study requests and patents).

### **3.4 Technopoles**

A technopole is an open framework for collaboration between academics, industrialists and civic itineraries materialized in a peri-urban region of variable size ranging from a small domain of wisdom to a complete cyber domain, according to Burnier and Lacroix (1997).

According to Redis (2006), the technopole's task is to grease the growth of demand as well as the collaboration and networking of actors in the region (sometimes including the operation of an incubator or nursery).

### **3.5 Clusters**

(Bakkali et al., 2010) describe a cluster as a network of geographically close and interdependent companies and institutions linked by common trades, technologies and know-how. Clusters, according to Berthinier-Poncet (2012), have the particularity of depending on an independent governance system. They grease the creation and survival of new companies in their home and their assiduity (Delgado, Porter and Stern, 2010). Cluster actors, according to Hussler and Hamza-Sfaxi (2012), must develop strategies for acquiring and exchanging information by



establishing a network of collaborations. Cluster members must establish a network of formal connections to incorporate formative strategies to transport and exchange information.

### **3.6 Training and guidance centers**

Training and coaching centers offer training to entrepreneurs, focusing on the early stages of business creation or, more rarely, on platoon operation.

Support associations are a growing field of support for business start-ups. It is about focusing on the entrepreneur's psyche, helping them focus and adopt a positive mindset in order to achieve their dream.

### **3.7 Consulting and advisory firms**

Consulting firms are structures that offer a useful professional service that helps companies dissect and solve practical problems in different areas of their work.

Although advisors mainly help beginning entrepreneurs, they also work with active and growing companies. In other words, they help companies throughout the entrepreneurial growth cycle.

Comfort companies (or consulting) focus on processes that focus on relieving torture. The advisor must work with the entrepreneur to help him manage, acclimatize and develop his project in order to reduce torture.

Therefore, the service of these companies serves to meet a specific request using the expertise of a professional. An advisor has specialized knowledge and a good knowledge of the process or situation that interests the entrepreneur.

It should be added that there is a difference between the consultant and the advisor, an advisor can be the owner of the establishment that provides consulting services, in terms of tax operation, mortal funds, account, etc. The consultant can be the one who gives advice in fragile situations. This term of advice is more used internally in a company, such as customer advice in a bank. The advisor seeks the freedom of being his own employer, while the consultant can be a platoon player.

### **3.8 Business angels**

Business angels are rather actors than structures that seek to invest in innovative companies with implicitly individuals who invest their assets. Business Angels are many private actors able to meet the needs of support for the launch of startups. They are active investors eager to get involved with entrepreneurs, driven by the desire to help young entrepreneurs grow or

embark on entrepreneurial adventures. They have experience as entrepreneurs or older managers (Certhoux & Redis 2016).

## **Conclusion**

As part of supporting the entrepreneur and the project leader, the entrepreneurial support strategy appeared to be a promoter of support aimed at carrying out monitoring from the onset throughout the entrepreneurial process.

Consequently, we note that the names and designations of these systems vary, but the ultimate ones, for their part, participate in a common ideal to promote the spirit of entrepreneurship and to support entrepreneurs.

The names vary depending on the type of owner and their project, as well as in which phase they aim for support and each structure is suitable according to practices for a specific beneficiary. The contributions of this paper can be reflected by the classification of structures appropriate and adequate for each entrepreneur to facilitate the path towards entrepreneurial support, and this can constitute a managerial contribution for entrepreneurs and project leaders to briefly determine the precise type of support for their project.

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