

Entrepreneurs learning determinants

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Abstract— Recently, the research devoted to the study of competencies has grown considerably, particularly in management sciences. However, in the field of entrepreneurship, the research about the acquisition and development process of entrepreneurial competencies has developed in recent years. Based on some theoretical researches and a qualitative study we aimed to analyse the entrepreneurial learning process and to answer the following question: How do entrepreneurs learn and develop their entrepreneurial competencies during the entrepreneurial process?

Our study, therefore, aims to explain some areas affecting the conceptualization of entrepreneurial competencies, as part of a process approach. Specifically, it focuses on the identification of the competencies required by the entrepreneur during his business creation process.

Keywords— Entrepreneur, Entrepreneurial Competencies, Entrepreneurial Process, Entrepreneurial Learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship as a leading economic and social phenomenon plays a major role in the growth and development of the world economies. Presumably, its future is even greater than its past.

The entrepreneurial process is crucial concept in entrepreneurship, it is not a simple managerial process used to solve corporate problems, it's the way in which an entrepreneur must find, evaluate, and develop an opportunity by overcoming the forces that resist the creation of a new entity.

Therefore the importance of entrepreneurial competency has grown during the past few decades due to the strategic role played by the human factor, particularly the entrepreneur of a business enterprise. The entrepreneur is the principal actor of the entrepreneurial process and the entrepreneurial competencies are his tools.

The ultimate goal of most literature reviews interested in entrepreneurial competency is focused on the way it can be acquired and developed in order to affect the ability to perform the entrepreneurial job of new value creation.

However, our research discusses and analyses the entrepreneurial learning process.

The choice of this topic has many motifs. First of all, many entrepreneurial activities failed because of the lack of required skills. Then, maybe some entrepreneurial competencies can be taught through education or training but they can't be measured or operationalized without real practice. So the best

way to learn in entrepreneurship is through real experience, it's one of the elements that we want to prove through this research. Another reason why did we choose this topic is because of our developed entrepreneurial intention.

In this research we will try to identify all the factors that have an impact on the way the entrepreneurs acquire their competencies. we will try to find answers for our main and elementary questions.

The main question of this research is:

- **How do entrepreneurs learn and develop their competencies?**

II. THE CONCEPTS OF COMPETENCY AND ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCY

The concept of competency:

Competency is composed of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics which underlie effective, successful, observable and measurable job performance.

The concept of entrepreneurial competency:

Combining the two words: "entrepreneurship" and "competency" gave a very important term which it is: "entrepreneurial competencies"

Man et al. (2002) defined the entrepreneurial competencies as: "the characteristic that reflects the total ability of the entrepreneur to perform a job role successfully".

A. The entrepreneurial competency typologies:

- Cognitive Competencies

Cognitive competencies are answers for the questions: what? Why Individuals know?

For Deist and Winterton (2005), the cognitive competencies are conceptual or theoretical knowledge;

In learning, two elements are directly related to cognitive competencies, the verbal information and intellectual skills.

Cognitive competences can be acquired through formal learning environment as it can be gained informally by experience.

- Functional Competences

These competencies are directly related to the different entrepreneurial practices that the entrepreneurs has to master.

The functional competencies are the 'know-how' knowledge, or with other terms the way in which an entrepreneur has to follow to well perform in an entrepreneurial situation.

These kind of competencies can be gained through transferring it in different entrepreneurial entry situations like innovation, intrapreneurial initiatives, or new firms creation.

- **Behavioural Competencies**

These competencies are answers for the question how to behave in certain entrepreneurial situation?

However, behavioural competencies contain two kinds of competencies: social competences and meta-competences.

The first kind has relation with the way the entrepreneur functions in a society

The Meta-competences are conceptual skills of learning and reflecting.

Gagne suggest that these competencies describe the entrepreneurs' behaviour in the moment of learning, memorizing and reflecting.

According to him, acquiring these competencies requires a lot of practice and direct experience.

B. Entrepreneurial competencies and entrepreneurial process.

The entrepreneurial phenomenon can be represented as a process of a dynamic learning in which the entrepreneur develop a range of entrepreneurial skills.

This summary analysis suggests that the entrepreneur should have specific competencies in each stage of the entrepreneurial process,

Before talking about these competencies there is a necessity to talk about the entrepreneurial intention or the motivation and the need of achievement, according to the works of Shapero and Sokol (1982) there is two types of factors that can develop the entrepreneurship intention within individuals: A positive factors like the desire of being rich or the adventures spirit, and there are other factors that are negative like the employment and the non-satisfaction in personal or professional life.

a) Stage one:

-The first stage in the entrepreneurial process is the identification and evaluation of the entrepreneurial opportunity. The entrepreneur have to be provided with "early entrepreneurial competencies that give him the ability to perceive the opportunities in his environment. This ability is called **perceptual skills**.

The next function of entrepreneur is to research, collect, organize, analyse and use information in order to identify the success factors of his entrepreneurial project. These competencies are **information skills**.

What makes the entrepreneur mission more available is social capital. It facilitate the access to information. It is also considered as an entrepreneurial competency and it's called the **network skills**.

a) Stage two:

Once the business idea is explored, the entrepreneur starts a feasibility study through the business plan redaction. the entrepreneur must have skills in **methodology and conduct**.

Bruyat adds that during this phase of engagement, the ambiguities, paradoxes and tensions are greatest. This obliges the entrepreneur to have sufficient energy to conceal the difficulties and solve problems that can disrupt the creation of

his company. This kind of competencies are **solving problems skills**

c) Stages three :

-After engaging in the entrepreneurial project, the entrepreneur should make evidence of efficiency and effectiveness of his project progress. He must ensure the survival and often the development of his business.

At this stage, the **social skills** of entrepreneur significantly contribute to the maintenance and development of the established business.

Furthermore, entrepreneur systematically acquires **generic skills** adopted as reflexes, technical skills of realization and finally cognitive skills consolidation, which are built and enriched by learning.

III. THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING

As the Entrepreneurial competencies are not like other kind of competencies, its acquisition process is also different in nature,

A. Definition and nature of entrepreneurial learning

Entrepreneurial learning is an emerging concept in entrepreneurship and organizational learning literature.

According to Boyd and Apps Learning is the act or process by which behavioural change, knowledge, skills, and attitudes are acquired.

For Minniti.M and W.Bygrave: entrepreneurship is a learning process in itself.

Cope describes five main entrepreneurial learning areas: "Learning about oneself, learning about the business, learning about the environment and entrepreneurial networks, learning about small business management, and learning about the nature and management of relationships".

The study of entrepreneurial learning process presupposes therefore the investigation of the distinctive way in which entrepreneurs accumulate knowledge before the entrepreneurs' involvement in the entrepreneurial process and during the new venture creation process.

B. The inventory of learning styles

The inventory of learning styles was identified by reference to the learning modes that individuals could focus as knowledge acquisition mode trough experiment.

a) The divergent learning style:

For individuals who have prefer to acquire experience through sensations (concrete experience) and transformation of experience through action (active experimentation).

b) The assimilative learning style:

It qualifies individuals who prefer abstract conceptualization of the observed phenomena. These individuals are not attracted to the contact with other individuals and are passionate about ideas and abstract concepts.

c) The convergent learning style:

It corresponds to individuals who prefer learn through experimentation with abstract concepts. Individuals with this style of learning are better in the search for possible uses of ideas and theories. They have the ability to solve problems and make decisions. These individuals prefer technical tasks and solving problems rather than social and interpersonal

interactions. In formal, these individuals prefer testing new ideas, simulation and practical application.

d) **The accommodative learning style:**

It identifies individuals who prefer understanding the phenomena through concrete experiences and learn by active experimentation and repetition of experiences. These individuals like planning and getting involved in new experiences and challenges.

To solve problems, these individuals rely more on people to have information on their own technical analysis. Their main force lies in "the way they do things, establish plans and their ability to get involved in new experiences "(Kolb, 1984).

**C. Entrepreneurial learning and entrepreneurial process:
The knowledge Acquisition before engaging in the entrepreneurial process:**

Ravasi and Turati (2005) are interested in the influence of prior knowledge on the entrepreneurial learning process. They suggest that the level of knowledge held by the entrepreneur before his engagement in entrepreneurial activity determines his ability to acquire new knowledge. With other words they think that a more individual has knowledge, the more he has the ability to acquire other (and therefore learn) more easily.

Politis (2005) offers an application of the experiential learning theory to analyse the process of transforming experiences to entrepreneurial knowledge. It identifies three types of professional experiences that can be transformed into useful knowledge for the identification and exploitation of the opportunity: the Prior entrepreneurial experience, managerial experience and an experience in the sector concerned.

The entrepreneurial experience is recognized to enable knowledge acquisition tactic and to facilitate decision-making in a context of uncertainty and pressure while the managerial experience facilitates the access to information that can be used to recognize the opportunity. Managerial experience allows also the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills such as negotiation skills, the ability of decision making, organization, communication, etc.

Finally, experience in the chosen sector allows to reduce uncertainties related to the project, the market and technology.

- **The knowledge acquisition during the entrepreneurial process**

Corbett (2005) suggests that each step of entrepreneurial process requires a different mode of learning and different experiential learning styles. By reference to that Corbett proposes the concept of the Learning asymmetry.

Corbett (2005) associates a different learning style for each step of the entrepreneurial process in reference to the type of the required action.

During the evaluation stage (first stage of the opportunity exploitation process) Corbett believes that individuals who perform better are those characterized by a strong imagination, an ability to understand situations and a capacity to interact with others. This characteristics corresponds to individuals favouring the divergent learning mode. That is to say, those who have a preference for concrete experience and reflective observation as a mode of transformation.

During the development phase, Corbett believes that Doers are the most appropriate to succeed the project potential test. These individuals have a preference for the accommodative learning mode, they acquire experience through the reality apprehension and transform it through active experimentation. One hypothesis that may arise from the contribution of Corbett is to consider that the entrepreneurial group composed of individuals with complementary learning styles (or an entrepreneur who has gathered around of him a group of collaborators or consultants with additional learning styles) would perform better than the entrepreneur who realize all stages of the entrepreneurial process in 'solitary'.

IV. Research Methodology

The entrepreneurial learning process research is practically non-existent, more over Theories on what and how entrepreneurs learn are still being developed and tested.

The purpose of this research is to explore the learning and development challenges experienced by entrepreneurs in the entrepreneurial process.

Through interviews, we allowed participants to recollect their experiences, describe them, and provide meaning to them. However, interviews conducted were semi-structured, face-to-face interviews.

Entrepreneurs were asked a series of specific questions dealing with their learning and development process through the various stages of the entrepreneurial process. The main research questions were:

1. When and what entrepreneurs need to learn?
2. What are the most significant learning opportunities and development challenges that entrepreneurs face in the entrepreneurial process?
3. What are the most valuable learning tools for entrepreneurs?
4. What are the most influential factors that impact the entrepreneurial learning process?
5. What advice do entrepreneurs give to their fellow about their entrepreneurial learning process?

In order to answer these questions and others related to them, we interviewed six entrepreneurs, each having their specific personal and professional characteristics in order to obtain a fair view of the general entrepreneurial learning process and to identify the situational factors that can affect it.

V. Results analysis.

This section contains the answers that we collected from interviewing six entrepreneurs. We divided our question into three areas.

The first and the second area have as an objective to define the participants' characteristics and to describe their entrepreneurial projects. Whereas the third one had for objective understanding the entrepreneurial learning process.

- **Results presentation:**

1.1.1. Entrepreneurs' background:

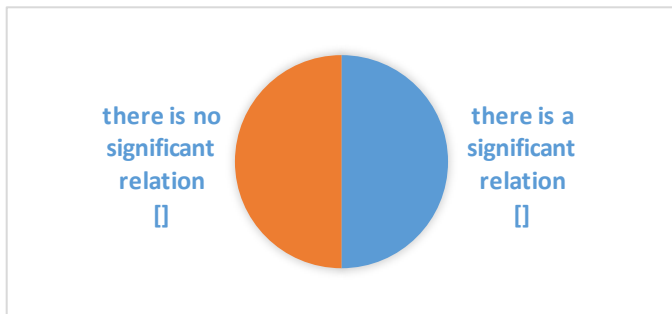
Question one: Can you describe your educational background briefly?

- Is there any significant relation between your education background and your entrepreneurial field?

Table N°1: the education background of the participants.

The entrepreneur	The education background	The activity field	The relation between education and entrepreneurship
Ibrahim	"a master degree in Electrical engineering"	Manufacturing	"There is no relationship"
Lamine	"I hold an engineering degree in information systems from the national institution of informatics beside of a Master degree from the University of Paris in IS Management".	Communication	"I am working in the same field"
Mohammed	"I stopped my education at the high school."	Importation and distribution	"No there isn't a relation between them"
Yesmine	"I am preparing a Master thesis in marketing".	Events organization	"Sure, we can't promote events that we organize without marketing"
Fatima	"I followed my undergraduate studies in human resources management made"	Human resources consultation	"It's clear that my educational background is the basis of my job"
Ahmed	"I had an engineer degree in physics"	Library business	"No, there is no logical relation between them."

Figure N°1: the relation between educational background of the participants and their entrepreneurial field.



When analyzing the answers that we got, we noticed that the educational background can impact the decision of becoming or not an entrepreneur and the choice of the entrepreneurial field, but it's not the case of all the entrepreneurs because according to the results that we got only 50% of the participants had a significant relation between their educational background and their entrepreneurial field.

Whereas from the other 50% we identified two cases where there is no relation between the entrepreneurial field and the educational background of entrepreneurs.

- An entrepreneur may have not a university degree.
- An entrepreneur may have a university degree but in the same time he works in a different field of his educational one.

However, when the entrepreneur engage in the same field of his education he gets more chance to perform better but it's not a condition for companies' creation in general.

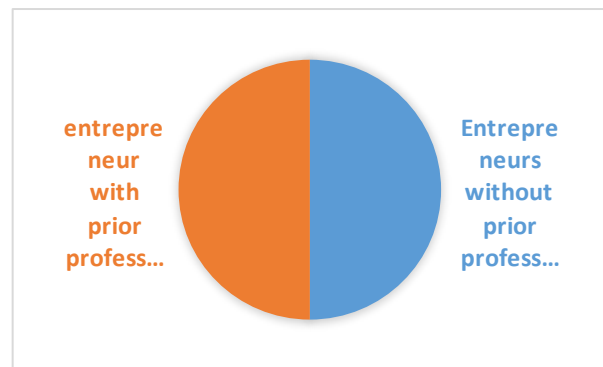
Question two: Do you have any prior professional experiences?

- If yes, is there any significant relation between your previous jobs and your entrepreneurial field?

Table N°2: Relation between prior experience and the entrepreneurial project of the research participants

The entrepreneur	Prior experiences	Relation between prior experience and the entrepreneurial project
Ibrahim	"No, if we don't take in consideration the training programs that I passed when was a student I don't have any other professional experiences or jobs!"	
Lamine	"Yes, I have 7 years' experience prior of the creation of my business but always in the same field of my studies"	He also added that his experiences helped him to acquire many useful competencies. He mentioned that these competencies are: project management, planning, organization and implementation of business processes.
Mohammed	"If you mean by saying professional experiences other jobs, no,"	
Yesmine	No, it's my first experience.	
Fatima	Well, beside of being entrepreneur I am coach.	Coaching helped me to acquire more knowledge and experience about failure in my activity as an entrepreneur.
Ahmed	I worked before as a teacher of physics in a high school for 5 years.	Being a teacher for while helped me to perceive the market opportunity which was the first motivation for me to create my own company.

Figure N°2: the prior professional experiences of the



research participants

50% of the research participants had no prior experience while the other 50% percent had experienced other jobs before engaging in their entrepreneurial process.

When comparing the answers that we gathered we identified three different cases:

- An entrepreneur may not have a prior professional experience.

- An entrepreneur may have a prior experience but in a different field of his entrepreneurial field.
- An entrepreneur may have a prior professional experience in the same field of his business.

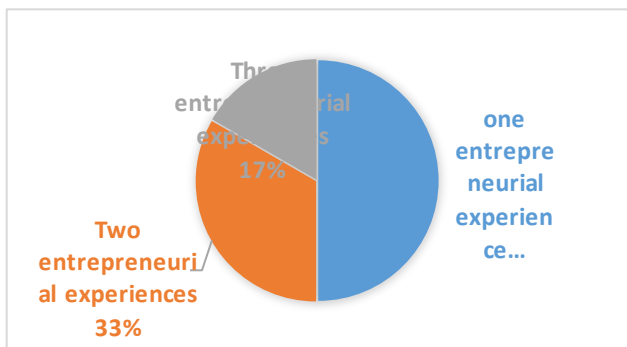
When analyzing the description of the relation between the prior experiences of some participants and their entrepreneurial field we noticed that almost the participants talked about acquiring useful competencies.

Question three: Is this your first entrepreneurial experience? If not, did you succeed in your previous experiences?

Table N°3: the previous entrepreneurial experiences of the research participants.

entrepreneur	Number of the entrepreneurial experience	The previous experiences
Ibrahim	First time	-----
Lamine	Second time	“The first experiment was a failure from the economic side, but I think it was a success for my entrepreneurial learning process”
Mohammed	Second time	“No it’s not my first time, and the first one represent a failure for me. But , this failure motivates me more to make the right decisions in my actual project in order to avoid a second failure”
Yesmine	First time	-----
Imane	First time	-----
Ahmed	Third time	I didn’t succeed in the first one, while I did for the second. I know you want to ask me why did I leave it if it was successful, I’ll say then what is more important than entry strategies in entrepreneurship is the exit strategies”

Figure N°3: the number of prior-entrepreneurial experiences of our participants



50% of the research participants do not have any prior entrepreneurial experiences

Whereas 33% lived another before their actual one. Then, the latest 17% are practically in their third experience.

When analyzing the answers of the entrepreneurs that had other prior entrepreneurial experiences we identified two cases:

- Those that succeed in their first entrepreneurial experience.
- Those who field in their previous experiences.

In the two cases entrepreneurs learned a lot of things from their prior experiences, but those that failed before when talking about what they learned from that, they concentrate more on how to rationalize their decisions and how to avoid falling in the same mistakes that they made in their previous experiences.

1.1.2. The entrepreneurial experience:

Question four: What motivate you to start your business?

Our purpose in this question was to identify the factors that impacted the decision of undertaking within the entrepreneurs that we interviewed.

In exploring the data collected for this question, some primary themes emerged.

These primary themes are:

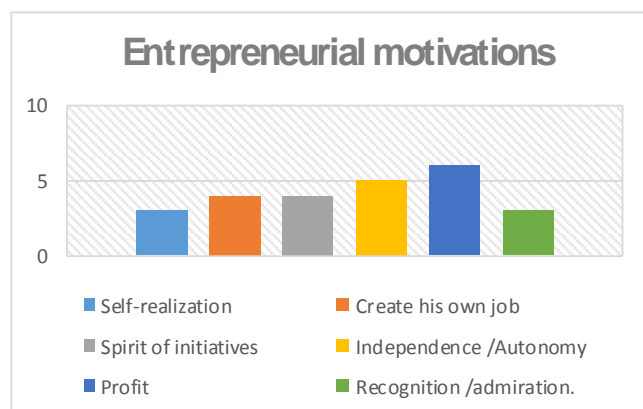
Self-realization, Property, Spirit of initiatives, Risk, Independence /Autonomy, profit, recognition /admiration.

Table N°4: entrepreneurial motivations according to the research participants.

Primary theme	Explanation	Frequency
Self-realization,	Through success in facing the entrepreneurial challenges and finding solutions. The accomplishment can also realized through making managerial decisions, which is not possible by being employed. Entrepreneurship also operates full creative potential, it implements the entrepreneurs’ ideas and his own strategies which gives him an immense satisfaction and a high self-esteem.	4/6
Create his own job	This is the case for people who have lost their jobs and are struggling to find one, or those who have completed their studies and find it difficult to enter the labour market. Entrepreneurship is a solution that can take charge of entrepreneurs’ future. Generally those who start a business for this reason have no other choices.	4/6
Spirit of initiatives	The creation of a company may be motivated by the discovery of a great opportunity, an idea of a product or service that does not yet exist on the market.	3/6
Independence /Autonomy	With all the benefits that it brings in terms of freedom, as the ability to define the activities to do and which to delegate to other people, define the company goals. Becoming your own boss can be interpreted in terms of work to realize his own dream (or project) and not the dream of someone else. This objective involved in feeding the desire for autonomy and independence of the individual.	5/6
Profit	This reason is related to the financial aspect, in effect some entrepreneurs are motivated with the objective to increase revenues, and it is to say to earn more than what is earned by being employed, for those who were before embarking on entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs undertake for this reason to improve their living standards.	6/6
Recognition	Being admired by his family, his friends.	3/6

/admiration.	In short, it's the kind of people who like showing them selves like heroes. They measure their success through the feedback they get from the people around of them.	
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Figure N°4: the entrepreneurial motivations.



From analysing the previous figure we notice that the first entrepreneurial motivation according to all our participants is money,

- **Ahmed:** “I think what led me start my business is the same as all the entrepreneurs, I mean making profits”

Then the next motivation is being independent or with other words being free in making decisions.

- **Lamine:** “The need to implement ideas, to create value and to be independent”.

After that came self-employment and initiation

- **Ibrahim:** “first of all there was no other solution, I live in a small city, where it is so hard to find a job, and then being in partnership with someone who had experience in the domain was an opportunity that I had to take”

- **Yesmine:** “I always was more comfortable being self-employed.”

Finally came the: self-realization and recognition.

- **Mohammed:** “Two major things, the first one is in my personality because I have almost all the entrepreneurial qualities, I am opportunist, communicative and visionary. Then the second reason is money.”

Question Five: Can you describe briefly the way you built your business?

After analyzing the participant’s answers about this question, we can say that all of them followed practically the two general stages of entrepreneurial process (discovery and exploitation stages).

But they differ in the details, in the discovery, each entrepreneur had identified his opportunity market in a special way.

Same thing for the exploitation stage, we mean the start-up and the development phase of the studied cases were different and depended on the project nature, the entrepreneur background and some environmental factors.

- **Ibrahim:** “Actually, a friend of mine who had an expertise in the sector proposed to me to be his partner in realizing his idea. So made a deal and we started the company together till when he decided to quit the country. In that time I had to run the company alone but more independently so I decided to adopt another activity in order to develop our market”

- **Lamine:** “Like all the companies, I started by finding the best idea through studying the market then I implemented the idea through gathering all the required resources, I am talking about financial resources, personal, material, Then next step was the marketing activities, I mean selling the service.”

- **Mohammed:** “This business started from a little shop in the market where I used to be retailer , then because of a friend of mine I decided to go larger than that, I became a whole seller, after three years I got the opportunity to import shoes from china in partnership with three others persons in the same sector as mine.”

1.1.3. The entrepreneurial learning:

Question six:What are the most significant learning opportunities and development challenges that you faced in your entrepreneurial process?

When reviewing the collected data, some primary themes where identified.

Table N°5: the entrepreneurial challenges

The entrepreneurial challenge	frequency
Financials	5/6
Managing human resources	4/6
Time management	5/6
Delegating tasks	4/6
Marketing strategy	3/6
Business growth	4/6
Product/Service Development	5/6

Figure N°5: the entrepreneurial challenges



Entrepreneurial challenge 01: Financials.

Five of the six participants discussed learning challenges that involved financial decision making. These challenges include understanding the cost of starting and running a business,

obtaining financing to pay for these costs, and the need to manage cash flow.

Entrepreneurial challenge 02: managing human resources.

Four of the six participants talked about hiring and managing human resources as an entrepreneurial learning challenge. It evolves: hiring people, team building, performance management and dealing with conflicts

Entrepreneurial challenge 03: Time management

Four of the six participants suggest that time management is one of the most difficult problems that face entrepreneurs.

- **Yesmine:** “Time is like money, it doesn’t grow on trees, of course, so you have to be smart about how you’re spending it”.

Entrepreneurial challenge 04: Delegating tasks

Four of the six participants identified the need for entrepreneurs to be willing to do any and every task when they start their business. However, they also stressed that as their organization grows, they have to stop trying to do everything and start delegating.

- **Ahmed:** “You know you need to delegate or outsource tasks, but it seems every time you do something gets messed up and you have to redo it anyway”.

Entrepreneurial challenge 05: Marketing strategy

Three of the six participants discussed issues dealing with this challenge. They talked about the promotion and sales problems that entrepreneurs could face.

- **Yesmine:** “Sometimes you don’t know the best way to market your services: print, online, mobile, advertising, etc.”

Entrepreneurial challenge 06: Business growth

Four of the six participants expressed the challenge of managing growth.

If entrepreneurs are successful in launching their organization, they can quickly move on to the next phase, Growth. If they are not careful, many of the behaviors that allow entrepreneurs to be successful in the Start-up phase will then become a hindrance.

Entrepreneurial challenge 07: Product/Service Development

Five of the six participants emphasized the reality of putting a lot of hard work into developing products or services.

It concludes developing the production process for the manufacturing case and the delivering process in the case of services.

Finally, many other learning opportunities and entrepreneurial challenges has been identified.

- **Lamine:** “The first challenge was to convince partners (customers, employees, suppliers) to join our project. This teaches us to be clear in our explanations and to emphasize the human aspect and the needs of others before our own”.

- **Mohammed:** “The first challenge when we talk about importation is the Algerian regulation, then the second opportunity is the diversity of the culture of the companies whom we work, I am talking about negotiation. Financial problems are also a big challenge especially when we were new in the sector, I am talking about finding the finance and managing costs.”

Question seven: According to you, what are the required competencies to succeed the entrepreneurial process?

Where reviewing the collected data about this question, we identified four principle entrepreneurial competency areas that the participants required to succeed in their entrepreneurial process.

Table N°6: the entrepreneurial competencies

The competencies Area	Contents
Marketing competencies	Identify and analyze business opportunities, explore the potential market, determine target markets for the project, designing products and services based on customer expectations, Analysis of competition.
Financial competencies	-Calculate and evaluate costs, the cost price and margin. -identify short and medium term financing needs plan and manage cash. -Read and interpret accounting data, balance sheet and income statement -use financial statements to make decisions positive relationships with financial and fiscal institutions -Manage the fiscal, wage and social insurance.
Organization competencies	-define and implement administrative procedures and approaches -identify, predict and manage the hardware resources -infrastructure management -manage and negotiate contracts and prices -Consulting services: to call on experts for advice -Managing Intellectual Property,-manage legal issues
Personal qualities	- analyze problems, identify possible solutions and organize their implementation - understand and use effective decision making techniques - argue and negotiate to reach agreements whether express orally and in writing, by mobilizing other adequate communication - have the capacity to implement, managing time and stress - have the capacity to adapt in different situations - Demonstrate independence and self-confidence , -Delegate and assist others in achieving its objectives

One of the interesting issues that emerged from the data collected from interviewing the participants is that the required competencies for their success at the beginning of their venture might hinder their future success.

The majority of the participants felt that they had to “wear many hats” at start-up and had to perform any and all tasks.

However, once their organization started to grow, they had to pull back and delegate certain tasks.

Question eight:How do you recognize the need for learning in your entrepreneurial experience?

Before entrepreneurs acquire any competency, they must first recognize the need to learn. Results from this study indicate that participants recognized such a need through different motivational factors.

1 - When it’s necessary to adapt with an environmental change.

- **Yesmine:** “personally, all what I try to do is to adapt with changes around of me specially technology development”.

2 - When entrepreneurs face new challenges or entrepreneurial problems that they have to solve.

- **Ibrahim:** "Each time I face a new problem or a challenge I recognize that I need to learn more!"

3- When Entrepreneurs are no longer satisfied with their present situation and want to move the organization along.

- **Mohammed:** "When I want to take my company to the next level, I recognize that I have to learn more."

4- Entrepreneurs use the fear of failure. They are constantly afraid that a bad decision will lead to their organizations' failure.

5- When entrepreneurs can't provide to their customers what they want.

6- They ask for advice and listen to others.

- **Lamine:** "The advices of my partners and the learning events in which I participate"

7- Entrepreneurs compare themselves and their organization with their competitors.

Question nine:What are the most valuable learning tools that you used to develop your entrepreneurial competencies?

When asking this question we identify many learning tools that we can divide into four categories: **Network of People; current experiences; Formal and informal education; Prior experience.**

- **Network of People:**

All the participants declared that they learned and still learning many things and entrepreneurial competencies from their personal and professional network,

When they ask for advice or a consultation they use this contact to learn more in order to solve their problems and challenges.

- **Lamine:** "The biggest tools for me have been consulting with friends that I trust."

- **Current experiences.**

In expressing this learning tool, all the six participants talked about the continuity of learning that they live in their actual experiences, they said that direct experience and facing the daily entrepreneurial challenges are the most important leaning tool that may help them in developing their entrepreneurial competencies.

- **Yesmine:** "Direct experience and asking for advice"

- **Formal and informal education.**

Most of the interviews talked about the education and training programs as an entrepreneurial learning tool, some of them are working in the same failed of their educational background, others had participate in professional training programs.

- **Prior experience.**

A valuable learning tool many entrepreneurs utilized is their prior experience.

- **Ahmed:** "Making errors is a good teacher"

Question Ten: What advice do entrepreneurs give to their fellow about their entrepreneurial learning process?

Participants offered some pieces of advice to fellow entrepreneurs that we can summarize as follows:

1. **Just do it!** : In entrepreneurship the risk is some thin that you can't avoid, so when you have an entrepreneurial idea don't lose your time in overanalyzing all its dimensions but

try to make it easy, don't be afraid of making a bad decision that might lead you to failure.

Because in entrepreneurship even failure is a learning opportunity.

- "If you have a business idea, just go on and make it real because even if it will not succeed it give you a good lesson."

2. Listen and observe as much as you can: Making other people participate in your entrepreneurial process can make it easy for you to succeed especially if those people have the required competencies that you may not master, it's why some times undertaking in team is better than alone.

Especially because observing your partner team doing his work gives you the ability to acquire his competencies quickly. We are not talking just about partners because even family or friends can help you in developing you entrepreneurial skills and knowledge.

3. Planning and execution: A good plan can help entrepreneurs to identify the required competencies for success even before engaging in their entrepreneurial processes, execution also is a good teacher because it gives the entrepreneur the chance to test his competencies and their efficacy in real time.

4. Diversify: Entrepreneurs has to diversify their offered services and products because it the only way to continue growing their business improving their entrepreneurial competencies.

- "Don't waste time at trying the same thing and waiting for better because if you want better you have to learn a new way.

5. Learn from errors and mistakes:

Making mistakes is human characteristic, all the participants said that they made many mistakes when they were in the start-up phase of their entrepreneurial projects.

However, it is not the mistakes that lead to failure of an organization, but failing to learn from those mistakes.

6. Self-efficacy:

Entrepreneurs must know how to set goals and work to realize them, they have to be self-motivated if they want to guarantee a self-efficacy in their projects.

1.2. Research Synthesis:

Entrepreneurship nowadays is a hot topic that researchers as well as practitioners are interested about; in our study we were interested on the way entrepreneurs learn and develop their competencies, in this aim we made a qualitative research through interviewing six entrepreneurs coming from different business fields.

The questions that we asked our participants about were divided into three axes:

Entrepreneurs background, entrepreneurial projects and entrepreneurial learning process.

After collecting and analyzing the data we made some interpretations and results that we can resume in the next findings.

Finding one: When asking our participants about the educational background in order to identify the relation that it has with their business field and how that can influence their learning process, we find that the educational background had a positive influence on the entrepreneurial performance when

both studies and business fields are the same but we cannot consider this result as a condition to realize entrepreneurial success specially because half of the number of entrepreneurs that we interviewed stated that there was no relation between their studies and entrepreneurial fields but in the same time all of them are in the growth phase we mean they are realizing success. Then, education facilitates the learning process through preparing the entrepreneur to confirm the theoretical knowledge that he had through direct experience and then made it easy to acquire new competencies.

Finding two: The second and the third questions that we asked our participants were meant to identify the relationship between their prior experiences and their business field and how do this relation affect their entrepreneurial learning process.

After reviewing the results we noted that: Professional experiences are beneficial for entrepreneurial learning, it helps entrepreneur to succeed in his entrepreneurial process through giving him the chance to acquire many useful competencies but when talking about entrepreneurial experiences we identified two cases: When the entrepreneurial experience represent a success and when it represent failure. From analyzing the data gathered in this question we can say that entrepreneurs learn from failure what they don't learn from success. So, both success and failure are learning opportunities in entrepreneurship.

Finding three: When we asked our participants about their entrepreneurial motivations, we noticed that their motivations can be divided into: Self-realization, creating his own job, Taking initiatives, Independence /Autonomy, Profit, Recognition /admiration.

Finding four: When talking about the entrepreneurial process, we discovered that it depends on the entrepreneur himself but also on all the environmental factors around of his project. We can divide it generally into two practical stages: discovery and exploitation phases.

Finding five: The entrepreneurial challenges are multiple, from the moment the entrepreneur decides to start a business he will face different challenges that we consider in our research as learning opportunities.

From the answers gathered in our research we noticed that the most important challenges according to our participants are: Financials, Managing human resources, Time management, Delegating tasks, Marketing strategy, Business growth, Product/Service Development.

Finding six: Entrepreneurial competencies are developed through direct experience, each time the entrepreneur faces a new challenge he discovers that there is a new competency he has to acquire, this acquisition can be made according to our research participants through different ways: Network of People; current experiences; Formal and informal education; Prior experience.

According to our participants' answers, the entrepreneurial competencies can be classified on four competencies areas: Marketing competencies, financial competencies, Organization competencies and Personal qualities.

Conclusion

This research expects to enrich the learning theory in the entrepreneurship literature and expand awareness of learning in entrepreneurs.

The objective of this research was to explore the triggers, processes and consequences of the entrepreneurial learning process.

Then the entrepreneurial learning process is the way in which entrepreneurs acquire and develop their competencies during their entrepreneurial process.

Through this research we reached some fundamental results that we can summarize as:

- The entrepreneurial process is a dynamic process that contains two fundamental stages: discovery and exploitation.
- Each phase of the entrepreneurial process requires a set of competencies to be performed.
- The entrepreneurial competencies are numerous and diverse, their importance depends on the nature of the entrepreneurial project but also to the characteristics of the entrepreneurs.
- There is a significant relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and the entrepreneurial performance.
- The entrepreneurial learning process is an experiential process, in which entrepreneurs acquire the required knowledge and skills through experience.
- The educational background of entrepreneurs may impact positively their entrepreneurial learning process through giving them some antecedents that facilitate the acquisition of the entrepreneurial competencies.
- Many entrepreneurs had no university degree but they succeed in their entrepreneurial process, that is to say the high study is not a condition for success in entrepreneurship.
- Entrepreneurs can learn a lot from their previous jobs, especially if they are in the same field of their entrepreneurial field.
- Many entrepreneurs have no previous jobs, which means that entrepreneurs are not obliged have prior jobs before engaging in his entrepreneurial learning process.
- Entrepreneurs may have prior entrepreneurial experiences in which he may succeed or not but what is sure is that they are benefic for his entrepreneurial learning process.
- Entrepreneurs may learn from failure more then what they learn from success.
- The entrepreneurial learning can be motivated through two ways: The fear of failure, the desire of growth.
- Entrepreneurs face many challenges in their daily life, these challenges are considered as learning opportunities because they create within the entrepreneur the need for learning that motivate him to acquire more entrepreneurial competencies (skills, knowledge, attitudes)
- The need for learning is vital within entrepreneurs, because growing a business means growing its material resources but also mental and spiritual resources, we mean knowledge and behaviors.
- The entrepreneurial learning tools are multiple, through this research we identified some of them: Network of People; current experiences; Formal and informal education; Prior experience.

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