



Analysis of the experimentation of an entrepreneurial accompaniment kit based on a facilitator profile for the appropriation entrepreneurial competencies: The case of Marrakech-Safi Regional Investment Center

DAOUDI Loubna, ZAHRANE Tarik

(PhD in Management Sciences), Cadi Ayyad University, Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences, Marrakech
(HDR Professor), Cadi Ayyad University, National School of Business and Management, Marrakech t.zahrane@uca.ma

Abstract: This article examines the relationship between two essential dimensions: that of the companion, embodying a facilitator profile, and that of entrepreneurial competencies. The aim is to understand the extent to which a companion who adopts a facilitator's profile succeeds in involving project holders, in order to promote the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies. With this in mind, it seems essential to use a methodological approach that diachronically combines qualitative and quantitative approaches. To this end, our sample is made up of project holders who have benefited from accompaniment under the BOOST LAB scheme, initiated by the Marrakech-Safi Regional Investment Center. Data collection was based, on the one hand, on an interview guide for companions, and on the other hand, on a questionnaire administered to project holders at two distinct points in time (T0 and T1). The qualitative analysis was based on a double reading, horizontal and vertical, while the quantitative analysis was carried out using SPSS software. The results of our study confirm that the facilitator's profile contributes significantly to the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies. More precisely, it is the project holders with a calculated commitment who seem to benefit most from this accompaniment.

Keywords : Companion facilitator : entrepreneurial competencies : commitment : project holder.

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1 Introduction

According to data from the High Commission for Planning in 2019, very small enterprises represent approximately 64% of the entrepreneurial fabric in Morocco, highlighting their predominant role in the national economy. Nevertheless, despite their economic weight, these structures face numerous structural challenges (Levratto, 2009). Among the main obstacles encountered are limited access to financing, weak competencies particularly in managerial and operational areas as well as internal organization often characterized by a lack of efficiency (Levratto, 2009).

In this context, entrepreneurial support emerges as a strategic tool for strengthening the capacities of very small enterprises and self-employed entrepreneurs (Amine and Falhaoui, 2014). By offering tailored solutions such as access to financing, the development of technical and managerial competencies, and support in management, several actors from both the public and private sectors actively contribute to the consolidation of this ecosystem (Sedjari and al., 2025). In this regard, ANAPEC, the Regional Investment Centers, and financial institutions play a central role in supporting the development of these structures (HCP, 2019).



In this perspective, numerous studies in the field of entrepreneurship highlight the crucial role of support in the process of acquiring and consolidating entrepreneurial competencies, particularly among entrepreneurs in the creation phase, such as project holders (Messeghem and al., 2013).

In this context, this article seeks to examine the relationship between the companion, as a key actor in the support structure, and the appropriation of competencies by project holders. Thus, the central question of this study is as follows: to what extent does a companion adopting a facilitative approach succeed in involving project holders to promote the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies?

To address this issue, a sequential methodology was adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in a sequential manner. Qualitative data were collected through interviews conducted with decision-makers and companions at the Regional Investment Center of Marrakech-Safi, in order to deepen the understanding of the companion's profile characteristics. Subsequently, a questionnaire was administered to the project holders being followed at two distinct points in time (T0 and T1), with the aim of evaluating their level of involvement and the evolution of their competencies.

To structure the presentation of this research, the remainder of the article is organized as follows: Section 1 provides a review of the relevant literature and formulates the hypotheses based on theoretical and empirical insights. Section 2 outlines the materials and methods used, detailing the research design, data collection procedures, and analytical strategies. Section 3 presents the main results obtained from the empirical analysis. Finally, Section 4 discusses these results in light of the research objectives and existing literature, highlighting key implications and potential avenues for future research.

2 Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1 Role of the facilitator in entrepreneurial accompaniment: conceptual foundations and theoretical contribution

The concept of entrepreneurial accompaniment emerged in France around thirty years ago to support business creation (Messeghem and al., 2013), while in the United States it dates back to the 1950s, aiming to address vulnerabilities of young enterprises (Messeghem, 2021). Its evolution can be divided into three phases: emergence (1950–1980), professionalization (1980–2000), and acceleration (since 2000). Two main approaches are identified: a pre-creation phase focused on idea generation and business model development, followed by a post-creation phase centered on operational implementation and business planning (Fayolle and Messeghem, 2011).

Since the early 2000s, accompaniment has become more professionalized, emphasizing the relationship between the companion and the entrepreneur (Sedjari and al., 2025), with success often depending on well-targeted support (Barès and Muller, 2007). A renewed approach has emerged with the facilitator role, gradually replacing the “repairer” model (Schmitt and al., 2004). The facilitator helps entrepreneurs make sense of their actions and identify opportunities, emphasizing observation and action as key levers for innovation.

The facilitator-companion encourages questioning, critical reflection, and concrete action in a validated context (Schmitt and al., 2004; Schmitt and al., 2016). Unlike traditional approaches, the focus is on exploring the entrepreneur's representations, mobilizing their resources, and structuring the project using tools like the Business Plan. The acquisition of entrepreneurial competencies is interactive and evolving, grounded in autonomy, observation, and confrontation with reality (Schmitt and Husson, 2014; Sammut, 2003; Paul, 2004; Chabaud and al., 2010).

In summary, the facilitator is distinguished by the ability to stimulate critical thinking and autonomous action. Through attentive observation and strategic questioning, they help entrepreneurs construct meaning, mobilize latent competencies, and adapt decisions to challenges. The Business Plan thus becomes a tool for structuring learning and progressively adjusting the entrepreneurial trajectory (Verstraete and al., 2011; Schmitt and Husson, 2014).

2.2 Theoretical framework and conceptualization of entrepreneurial competencies

The concept of competence has gradually emerged in the fields of management and education as a central concept for understanding individual and collective effectiveness (Omrane and al., 2011). According to Le Boterf (2010), competence is a know-how recognized in a given context, combining internal resources (knowledge, skills, interpersonal abilities) and external resources (networks, tools, environment). It is not limited to a simple

accumulation of knowledge, but involves the ability to mobilize these resources effectively to achieve a specific goal.

Entrepreneurial accompaniment appears as a key lever to promote the acquisition and development of entrepreneurial competencies (Paul, 2004). According to Sammut (2003) and Paul (2004), accompaniment should not be reduced to a transfer of knowledge, but should follow a logic of co-constructing competencies. The role of the facilitator is then to assist the project holder in identifying their needs, stimulate critical thinking, and encourage learning through action and experimentation (Sammut, 2003; Paul, 2004).

The facilitator's accompaniment role, described by Schmitt and Husson (2014), clearly illustrates this evolution: it is not about providing ready-made solutions, but about creating favorable conditions for the project holder to develop their own competencies (Schmitt and Husson, 2014). Observation, strategic questioning, and valuing trial-and-error processes then become key methods (Schmitt, 2017). In this perspective, support acts as an empowerment process that strengthens the entrepreneur's autonomy, adaptability, and capacity for innovation (Schmitt, 2017).

The facilitator accompaniment model also highlights the role of intuition in the entrepreneurial decision-making process (Schmitt and Husson, 2014). According to Loué and Baronet (2015), intuition plays a central role in entrepreneurial decisions, especially in an uncertain environment (Loué and Baronet, 2015). This intuitive process is actually a blend of competencies acquired through experiences and the ability to process information quickly and effectively. The facilitator must therefore help the project holder refine this intuition, make it more conscious and rational, in order to make more informed decisions that are better suited to new opportunities (Schmitt and Husson, 2014).

In summary, entrepreneurial competencies are multiple, complex, and constantly evolving (Omrane and al., 2011). They require an integrated approach that combines knowledge, know-how, emotional and transversal competencies, and the ability to adapt (Man and al., 2002). Entrepreneurial accompaniment plays a central role in this process, acting as a catalyst for the development of these competencies (Toutain and Fayolle, 2008). Facilitator companions are essential in encouraging the project holders to learn through action, challenge themselves, and continuously adjust their strategy to meet market challenges (Chabaud and al., 2010) ; (Verstraete and al., 2011).

2.3 Model and research hypotheses

This research focuses on the relationship between the facilitator, the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies, and the involvement of project holders. Drawing on the work of Schmitt and Husson (2014) on facilitator accompaniment, Man and al. (2002) on the appropriation of competencies, and Allen and Meyer (1996) on involvement, we have developed a model explaining how these three elements interact .

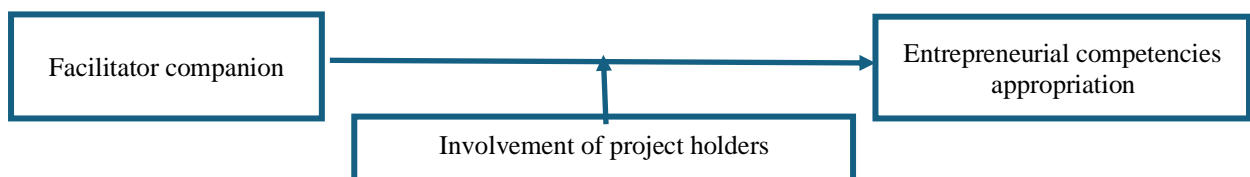


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the research

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025)

The proposed research model articulates the relationship between the facilitator companion, the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies, and the involvement of the project holder. It is based on two main dimensions: the role of the facilitator, which stimulates critical thinking and encourages the entrepreneur to develop their own solutions (Schmitt and al., 2016), and the appropriation of competencies, involving both personal and professional transformation (Man and al. 2002). The involvement of the project holder plays a key moderating role and can take three forms: calculative, normative, and affective (Allen and Meyer, 1996). As noted by Fort and al. (2016), this degree of involvement conditions the effectiveness of the accompaniment. Moreover, Zahrane (2019), shows that involvement may take different forms depending on the organizational context and the type of stakeholders involved.

By mobilizing these theoretical contributions, we formulate the following research hypotheses:

H1: The facilitator companion positively impacts the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies by the supported project holders.

H2: Calculated involvement significantly impacts the relationship between the facilitator companion and the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies by the supported project holders.

3 Material and method

3.1 Participants and procedure

Our study was carried out in two complementary phases: a qualitative exploratory phase and a quantitative confirmatory phase. The first focused on stakeholders involved in the BOOST LAB support process decision-makers and companions from the Regional Investment Center, Emerging Business Factory (EBF), and ENACTUS selected for their expertise and direct involvement, in line with qualitative sampling principles of replication and saturation. This phase provided an in-depth understanding of facilitator profiles and their role in the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies. The second phase, based on a survey of 151 project holders divided into four groups and benefiting from the same facilitators, aimed to empirically test the theoretical relationships of our model. A pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted with non-sample project holders to refine the tool and ensure its validity and reliability, thereby reinforcing the robustness of the results.

3.2 Data collection and analysis tools

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with companions and decision-makers to examine facilitation approaches, tools, training methods, project holder profiles, and expected outcomes, with discourse analysis conducted both horizontally and vertically to identify emerging themes. In parallel, quantitative data were gathered via a two-wave questionnaire covering project holders' background, experience, aspirations, involvement, and entrepreneurial competencies, measured on 7-point Likert scales. Using SPSS, we applied paired samples t-tests to assess changes before and after accompaniment, PCA to verify construct validity, and Cronbach's alpha to ensure reliability. Hypothesis H1, on the impact of accompaniment on competencies appropriation, was tested with t-tests, while Hypothesis H2, on the moderating role of involvement, was examined using ordinal logistic regression, controlling for sociodemographic variables. This mixed-method design ensured methodological rigor and robust validation of the research hypotheses.

4 Results

4.1 Qualitative results: profile of the companion in the Regional Investment Center of Marrakech-Safi

To better understand the role of the facilitator companion in the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies, a qualitative analysis was carried out within the Regional Investment Center of Marrakech-Safi through interviews with companions and decision-makers. This exploratory phase identified the typologies of project holders, the stages of the accompaniment process, the characteristics of integrated training, and the specific features of the companion. By combining horizontal and vertical discourse analysis, the study highlighted structural and relational dynamics essential to understanding involvement and competencies appropriation within the support scheme.

4.1.1 Typologies of the supported individuals in the regional investment center

The analysis of the 175 individuals supported by the Regional Investment Center of Marrakech-Safi shows a clear predominance of project holders (over 90% in all groups), confirming the strategic priority given to business creation and early-stage entrepreneurial initiatives. While Groups 1 and 2 also include a small proportion of active entrepreneurs, and Groups 1 and 4 count business successors, these minority profiles contribute to enriching the ecosystem by fostering experience sharing and complementarity. Overall, this distribution highlights a strong orientation toward supporting new project holders while selectively integrating more experienced profiles to encourage exchange and collective learning.

4.1.2 Stages and processes of accompaniment at the regional investment center

The Regional Investment Center of Marrakech-Safi plays a central role in the entrepreneurial ecosystem through the BOOST LAB program, structured in two phases. Phase A focuses on validating project ideas, starting with

reception and information sessions to orient project holders, followed by qualification to assess feasibility and training needs, and ending with selection based on innovation, viability, and regional impact. Only the most promising projects move forward to the next stage.

Phase B delivers structured accompaniment combining group training, personalized assistance, and networking. Group workshops cover entrepreneurship basics, market analysis, and financial planning, while individual support addresses project-specific challenges. Networking activities connect entrepreneurs with mentors, investors, and partners. The practical component includes thematic sessions Speed Banking, Business Model, and Business Plan equipping project holders with refined business models, financial forecasts, and access to funding opportunities. By the end of the program, participants leave with a realistic action plan, strengthened competencies, and a solid network, underscoring the catalytic role of the Regional Investment Center in fostering regional economic development.

4.1.3 Characteristics of the profile of the companion at the Regional Investment Center

Table 1: Profile of the companion at the Regional Investment Center of Marrakech-Safi

Characteristics (Schmitt & Husson, 2014)	Facilitating companion at CRI Marrakech-Safi
Business creation	Supports diverse profiles (project holders, entrepreneurs, successors).
Objective	Helps build meaning and align project with values and vision.
Approach modality	Encourages problematization and critical thinking.
Observation/action	Links observation of context to concrete actions.
Temporality	Connects present and future in a dynamic, adaptive way.
Business plan	Seen as one tool among others in a holistic approach.
Success	Defined by coherence between project, values, and skills.
Symbolic element	Focuses on identifying and enhancing opportunities.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025)

The analysis of the facilitator companion's role at the Regional Investment Center of Marrakech-Safi, inspired by Schmitt and Husson (2014), shows how theoretical principles of accompaniment are translated into practice through an inclusive and reflective approach. The companion's mission goes beyond business creation, embracing diverse profiles of project holders while fostering the construction of meaning by aligning projects with personal values and aspirations. Their method emphasizes problematization, critical thinking, and the recursive interaction between present actions and future goals, enabling project holders to adapt and strengthen their competencies. Support is dynamic and context-driven, linking observation to concrete actions, while also encouraging strategic partnerships that enhance access to resources and opportunities. Overall, this model combines technical tools, strategic reflection, and human dynamics to provide sustainable, tailored support that responds to the realities of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

4.2 Quantitative results

4.2.1 Operationalization of variables and assessment of scale validity and reliability

Before testing the research hypotheses, we assessed the validity and reliability of the measurement scales for project holders' involvement and the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies. Items were selected from established studies based on conceptual relevance and prior empirical validation. Construct validity was examined using Principal Component Analysis (PCA), preceded by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index and Bartlett's test of sphericity to ensure data suitability. Reliability was assessed via Cronbach's Alpha to measure internal consistency. These preliminary analyses ensured the methodological robustness of the study and the validity of the subsequent hypothesis testing results.

Table 2: Validity of the measurement items for calculated involvement and the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies

		Results of the test for the involvement variable	Results of the test for the entrepreneurial competencies appropriation variable
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin for measuring sampling adequacy		,824	,786
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Khi-square approx	1101,065	208,134
	Ddl	15	3
	Signification	,000	,000

Source: Developed by the authors

The data were suitable for principal component analysis, with KMO indices of 0.824 for involvement and 0.786 for entrepreneurial competencies appropriation, both above the 0.7 threshold. Bartlett's tests were highly significant for both variables, confirming sufficient correlations between items and validating the use of factor analysis to assess construct validity.

Table 3: Reliability of the measurement items for calculated involvement and the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies

	Results of the test for the involvement variable	Results of the test for the entrepreneurial competencies appropriation variable
Cronbach's Alpha	,957	,845
Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	,957	,844
Number of items	6	3

Source: Developed by the authors

The measurement scales show strong reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.957 for involvement and 0.845 for entrepreneurial competencies appropriation, indicating excellent and good internal consistency, respectively

4.2.2 Statistical analysis of the relationship between the facilitator companion and the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies

For the analysis of the relationship between the facilitator companion and entrepreneurial competencies appropriation, data from 151 project holders who completed a two-phase questionnaire (before and after support) were used. Mean score comparisons were employed to assess the evolution of competencies, with results presented in the following table.

Table 4: Results of the statistical test regarding the impact of the facilitator companion on the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies

Pair	Item description	Mean	N	Standard deviation	Standard error of the mean
Pair 1	Identifying and exploiting opportunities related to the market and technology both within and outside my field of activity (before)	2.7483	151	0.43541	0.03543
	Identifying and exploiting opportunities related to the market and technology both within and outside my field of activity (after)	5.8874	151	0.92046	0.07491
Pair 2	Staying informed about economic, social, geopolitical, and environmental developments in sectors relevant to the project (before)	2.7483	151	0.43541	0.03543
	Staying informed about economic, social, geopolitical, and environmental developments in sectors relevant to the project (after)	5.7417	151	0.88290	0.07185
Pair 3	Identifying opportunities that could lead the project to internationalization (before)	2.7483	151	0.43541	0.03543
	Identifying opportunities that could lead the project to internationalization (after)	5.9536	151	0.99558	0.08102

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025)

The results show a significant improvement in project holders' entrepreneurial competencies following the facilitator's intervention at the Regional Investment Center of Marrakech-Safi. Average scores increased markedly across three key dimensions: opportunity identification and exploitation (from 2.75 to 5.89), strategic monitoring of sectoral developments (from 2.75 to 5.74), and internationalization potential (from 2.75 to 5.95). These findings indicate that the accompaniment process substantially enhances project holders' ability to identify opportunities, integrate contextual dynamics, and consider global expansion prospects.

4.2.3 Results and analysis on the impact of calculated involvement on the relationship between the facilitator and the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies

This study examined the moderating role of project holders' involvement in the relationship between facilitator-led accompaniment and the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies. Using logistic regression in SPSS, we tested whether higher involvement strengthens the facilitator's impact on competency acquisition. The analysis provides empirical insights into the conditions under which accompaniment is most effective, highlighting the significance of individual engagement in maximizing the benefits of support.

Tableau 5: Model Fit Quality

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-square	df	Sig.
Only constant	520,968			
Final	,000	520,968	45	,000

Source: SPSS (2025)

The goodness-of-fit results indicate that incorporating the moderating variable "involvement" significantly improves the model explaining the relationship between the facilitator companion and entrepreneurial competencies appropriation. The likelihood ratio test ($\chi^2 = 520.968$, $df = 45$, $p < 0.001$) shows that the full model is highly significant compared to the baseline, and this is further supported by the Pearson Chi-square and deviance indices, confirming the enhanced explanatory power of the model.

Tableau 6: Pearson Chi-square and Deviance

	Chi-square	df	Sig.
Pearson	117,056	1139	1,000
Deviance	112,390	1139	1,000

Source: SPSS (2025)

The tested model explains the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies based on the facilitator companion while considering the moderating effect of project holders' involvement. Goodness-of-fit results (Pearson Chi-square = 117.056, $df = 1139$, $p = 1.000$; Deviance = 112.390, $df = 1139$, $p = 1.000$) indicate an excellent fit to the data. These findings confirm that involvement significantly moderates the relationship, showing that the facilitator's effectiveness in fostering competency appropriation is enhanced when project holders are actively engaged.

5 Discussion of results

The empirical results confirm both hypotheses and align with the literature on entrepreneurial accompaniment. Hypothesis H1 is validated: the facilitator companion positively impacts the appropriation of entrepreneurial competencies, as project holders develop skills through reflective, problematization-based support, gaining autonomy and progressively appropriating knowledge, consistent with Schmitt and Husson (2014) and Cusso (2006). Hypothesis H2 is also confirmed: the calculated involvement of project holders significantly moderates this relationship, enhancing the effectiveness of accompaniment by enabling participants to fully engage in activities and capitalize on opportunities, supporting findings by Fort and al. (2016). Overall, the study highlights that the facilitator's profile combined with active involvement creates optimal conditions for developing entrepreneurial competencies.

6 Conclusion: contributions, limits and perspectives

This study highlights the crucial role of the facilitator companion within the Regional Investment Center BOOST LAB, emphasizing active listening, networking, problem-framing, and mobilization of local resources. The exhaustive survey of 167 project holders strengthens the internal validity and robustness of the findings. Results show that the facilitator's effectiveness in promoting entrepreneurial competencies is significantly amplified by the active involvement of project holders, which manifests through engagement, exploration, and action. While the findings are context-specific to the Marrakech-Safi region, they confirm that professionalizing the facilitator role and fostering project holder involvement are key levers for successful entrepreneurial accompaniment. Limitations include restricted generalizability and the need for more granular longitudinal data to fully capture the dynamics of competency appropriation.

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