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Fostering Creativity & Innovation in Emerging Institutions: The Role of University Business Incubators -University of Algiers 3 Business Incubator Case-

Benaoun Mouna, Faculty of Information and Communication - University of Algiers 3
benaoun.mouna@univ-alger3

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Abstract:

Our research paper aims to shed light on university business incubators, with a particular focus on the Business Incubator at the University of Algiers 3 as a case study. It explores the role of incubators in fostering creativity and innovation within startups, examining the intricate relationship between innovation and entrepreneurship. Additionally, our study highlights the strategy implemented by the University of Algiers "3" Business Incubator to enhance the feasibility and technical viability of innovative projects through various support mechanisms.

Among these mechanisms, the incubator evaluates the feasibility and market relevance of student projects within the Algerian economic landscape. Furthermore, it connects students with approved projects to research centers that assist in refining their ideas. The incubator also facilitates networking between startups and investors by organizing dedicated events.

Keywords: Emerging Institutions, Creativity, Innovation, Business Incubators, University of Algiers "3".

Résumé:

L'étude vise à mettre en lumière les incubateurs d'entreprises universitaires, en se concentrant L'incubateur d'Alger 3 en tant qu'étude de cas. Il explore le rôle des incubateurs dans la promotion de la créativité et de l'innovation au sein des startups, en examinant la relation complexe entre l'innovation et l'entrepreneuriat. De plus, notre étude met en évidence la stratégie mise en œuvre par l'incubateur d'entreprises de l'Université d'Alger 3 pour améliorer la faisabilité et la viabilité technique des projets innovants grâce à divers mécanismes de soutien.

Parmi eux, l'incubateur évalue la faisabilité et la pertinence commerciale des projets étudiants dans le paysage économique algérien. De plus, il met en relation les étudiants ayant des projets approuvés avec des centres de recherche qui aident à affiner leurs idées. L'incubateur facilite également les rencontres startups-investisseurs en organisant des événements dédiés.

Mots-clés : Institutions émergentes, Créativité, Innovation, Incubateurs d'entreprises, Université d'Alger 3."

1. INTRODUCTION

Most countries around the world have recognized the pivotal role played by emerging institutions, which serve as the cornerstone of any dynamic economy by meeting the needs of individuals and communities, thereby enhancing living standards. Moreover, these institutions contribute to counteracting economic recessions by activating developmental activities, increasing economic growth, and boosting the gross domestic product. They are considered vital elements of economic diversification and the creation of a competitive environment. This recognition has prompted major economies to focus on these institutions as effective tools for promoting both economic and social development.

Creativity and innovation are regarded as the most potent sources of competitive advantage for emerging institutions. Consequently, they have been closely associated with business incubators in general-and university incubators in particular-since these centers foster the nurturing of entrepreneurial talent and the transformation of innovative ideas into tangible projects. This connection led us to pose the following primary research question:

To what extent do university business incubators contribute to stimulating creativity and innovation within Algerian emerging institutions?

Sub-Questions:

1. What is the definition of emerging institutions, what are their characteristics, and what mechanisms exist for supporting such institutions in Algeria?
2. How is creativity defined, and what are its key stages and characteristics?
3. How is innovation defined, what is its significance, and what is the relationship between creativity, innovation, and emerging institutions?
4. What is the definition of business incubators, what are their main roles, and what are the primary types?
5. What strategies does the University of Algiers "3" incubator employ to encourage emerging institutions to pursue creativity and innovation?

Importance of the Study:

- To deepen the understanding of university business incubators by using the University of Algiers "3" incubator as a case study.
- To elucidate the range of support that university incubators can provide to students across various dimensions.
- To underscore the critical role of creativity and innovation in the success and sustainability of emerging institutions.

Objectives of the Study:

- To identify and assess the support mechanisms used for evaluating innovative ideas, thereby facilitating the accreditation of an institution as innovative.
- To analyze the interrelationship between creativity, innovation, and emerging institutions.
- To explore the strategies adopted by business incubators to foster the development of emerging institutions based on creative and innovative ideas.

Methodology:

The study employs a descriptive-analytical approach, which is well-suited for explaining the fundamental concepts underlying the research. This methodology enables a detailed examination of the strategies implemented by the University of Algiers "3" incubator to encourage and support creativity and innovation within emerging institutions.

1. Emerging Institutions: Concept, Characteristics, and Support Mechanisms in Algeria

1.1 Definition of an Emerging Institution:

Emerging institutions are characterized as nascent projects with high growth potential. They differ from traditional enterprises due to their inherent creativity, as well as being a product of the intersection between economic fabric, rigorous discipline, and a culture of risk-taking. In English usage, the term “startup” is defined as a small venture that is just beginning, where “start” signifies the notion of launching and “up” denotes the concept of rapid growth; this term began to be used after World War II (Al-Moumen, Karamia, and Achour, 2020 p 48)[1]. According to Patrick Fridenson, the status of being an emerging institution is not determined by size, age, or sector. Rather, four key questions must be addressed:

- Does it have the potential for rapid growth?
- Does it utilize modern technology?
- Is it certain that the market is new, making risk assessment challenging?
- Does it require substantial funding?

Accordingly, an emerging institution can be defined as an enterprise that seeks to market and introduce a new product or an innovative service aimed at a large market, irrespective of the company’s size or industry sector. These institutions are also characterized by uncertainty and high risk in exchange for the possibility of achieving strong and rapid growth, with the potential for substantial profits in the event of success.[2]

1.2 Characteristics of Emerging Institutions:

- **Innovation and Creativity:** Emerging institutions rely on novel and innovative ideas, whether in the products or services they offer, or in their business models. They aim to provide innovative solutions to existing problems or to fulfill new market needs, with the objective of enhancing overall economic efficiency and increasing value for customers or producers.[3]
- **Rapid Growth:** They strive for rapid and sustainable growth through market expansion and increased market share, with rapid growth being a key metric of their success.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** These institutions are noted for their flexibility and ability to quickly adapt to rapid market changes.
- **High Risk:** Due to their innovative nature and inherent uncertainty, emerging institutions involve high levels of risk.
- **Reliance on Technology:** They employ technology to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and reach customers more quickly.
- **Pursuit of Funding:** Emerging institutions require significant financial investment to support their rapid growth and to develop their products and services.

- **Customer Focus:** They strive to build strong customer relationships and earn customer loyalty.

1.3 Emerging Institutions in Algeria:

Algeria has shown considerable interest in the small and medium enterprise sector through the implementation of successive reform and development programs, along with the establishment of various mechanisms designed to promote entrepreneurship. This includes the creation of a dedicated Ministry for Small and Medium Enterprises and multiple support entities such as advisory bodies, support agencies, and loan guarantee funds.[4]

One notable initiative is the "Up-Start" Fund for the Support and Development of the Economic Ecosystem for Emerging Institutions, established under Law No. 19-14 dated December 11, 2019, which is included in the 2020 Finance Law in Article 131. This fund is tasked with incubating emerging institutions and providing them with financial support, particularly for feasibility studies, prototype development, training, and promotion, provided that they have obtained the "Emerging Institution" label[5]. The fund is the result of a collaboration between the Ministry of Knowledge Economy and Emerging Enterprises and six government banks with equal stakes in the fund, namely:

- The Algerian Popular Bank (CPA)
- The National Algerian Bank (BNA)
- The Algerian External Bank (BEA)
- The National Fund for Savings and Pensions (CNEP)
- The Agricultural and Rural Development Bank (BADR)
- The Local Bank for Local Development (BDL).[6]

Among the newly introduced support mechanisms is the National Agency for the Support and Development of Entrepreneurship (NESDA). This agency provides support to project holders for establishing and expanding small enterprises producing goods and services. NESDA facilitates access to comprehensive economic, technical, legislative, and regulatory information related to entrepreneurial activities. It also works to strengthen relationships with partners and relevant stakeholders (e.g., banks, tax authorities, and the social security fund), offers training through entrepreneurship development centers, and ensures continuous follow-up and support for projects.[7]

Additionally, various fiscal incentives have been introduced. For example, the Complementary Finance Law of 2020, in Article 33 (amending Article 69 of Law 14-19 dated December 11, 2019, and incorporated into the 2020 Finance Law), exempts emerging companies from professional activity fees, gross income tax, and corporate tax for three years from the commencement of their operations. These companies are also exempt from value-added tax on equipment purchased for implementing their investment projects.[8]

In recent years, numerous sectors have engaged in supporting the public authorities' initiative to back emerging institutions. This includes the higher education sector, which has activated the role of universities in promoting an entrepreneurial orientation among students and guiding them to establish emerging projects, eventually leading to the adoption of university business incubators to support this trend. Since 2020, organizations that support and mentor emerging projects in Algeria, including university business incubators, have been eligible to

obtain the "Incubator" label, also known as "Label Incubateur".[9]

II. The Concepts of Creativity and Innovation, and the Characteristics of Creativity

2.1 Concept of Creativity

Creativity is defined as the initiative undertaken by an individual to break away from conventional thought patterns and adopt a novel mode of thinking. It is a process that yields an unprecedented, exceptional, and unconventional product or work—one that extends the known boundaries within a particular field—and may be manifested individually or collectively. In essence, creativity is a cognitive ability that drives an individual to pursue and discover new ideas. Furthermore, creativity can be characterized as a blend of personal skills and traits which, when nurtured within a supportive environment, contribute to the production of original and beneficial outcomes that align with the creator's aspirations and fulfill the intended value and purpose.[10]

2.2 Stages of Creativity

Creativity unfolds through a series of fundamental stages, including:

- **Preparation:** This stage begins when an individual becomes aware of a problem, drawing upon their acquired knowledge, scientific background, and experience in the field. This awareness allows for the formation of a foundational basis from which new ideas may emerge.
- **Incubation:** At this stage, the individual gains a comprehensive understanding of the problem without yet detecting any immediate solutions.
- **Illumination:** This stage is characterized by unconscious thought processes wherein the mind transforms its focus, often during moments of rest (such as waking) or while engaged in routine activities, eventually leading to a sudden, unexpected insight.
- **Verification:** In this final stage, the creator tests the validity of the innovative idea through experimentation, making adjustments or modifications to refine the innovation.[11]

2.3 Characteristics of Creativity

- **Inclusive of Discovery, Invention, and Innovation:** Creativity inherently encompasses these dimensions, serving as a bridge connecting various phenomena.
- **A Tool for Association:** In the absence of creativity, there is no mechanism to connect disparate ideas or elements.
- **Manifestation in Products and Services:** Creativity may be reflected in new products and services, novel methods of delivering a product or service, or innovative approaches in marketing and managing organizational relationships[12].
- **Multiplicity of Solutions:** Creative thinking relies on the capacity to generate multiple solutions to a given problem.
- **Multiple Perspectives:** It involves the ability to view issues from various angles, discerning contradictions and environmental gaps.
- **Transferability and Applicability:** Creative ideas can be transferred, applied, and further developed, leading to the discovery and articulation of new relationships.[13]

III. The Concept of Innovation, Its Importance, and the Relationship between Creativity, Innovation, and Emerging Institutions

3.1 Concept of Innovation

Innovation is a broad term often used interchangeably with creativity by many researchers, with distinctions between the two being more a matter of expression than of fundamental difference. Innovation represents a component of the creative process characterized by complexity and is translated into an economic concept within business organizations, often exemplified by the development of a new marketing mix. Essentially, innovation is the practical application of a sound idea in the market, reflecting a new perspective and a correct understanding of all market variables[14].

3.2 Importance of Innovation

- **Development and Continuous Improvement of Products:** In today's dynamic business environment, products and services are developed at an unprecedented pace. Organizations increasingly implement continuous improvement programs to enhance existing offerings and innovate new ones.
- **Cost Reduction and Quality Enhancement:** Relying on innovation helps lower production costs-through reduced material consumption, faster service delivery, or more precise processes-which in turn improves product or service quality and enhances an organization's competitiveness.
- **Creation of New Markets:** The introduction of high-quality, competitive products and services compels organizations to explore new markets to distribute their outputs. Being the first to offer such innovations may allow an organization to temporarily monopolize a segment of the market.
- **Improvement of Organizational Performance:** Innovation enhances administrative functions and improves decision-making quality in resolving various technical, financial, and marketing challenges.
- **Creation of Diverse Employment Opportunities:** The positive impact of innovation on individuals' skill sets fosters the establishment of new enterprises and the launch of new production lines or services, thereby generating job opportunities that require specific skills and continuous development.[15]

3.3 Relationship between Creativity, Innovation, and Emerging Institutions

The previously defined concepts reveal the significant overlap between creativity and innovation. Many studies have used the terms interchangeably, while others view creativity as the precursor to innovation. Creativity involves generating novel and unconventional ideas, whereas innovation focuses on the practical application of those ideas through various methods and approaches. In this sense, innovation is seen as a complementary process to creativity.[16]

Moreover, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship are interrelated concepts that mutually reinforce one another. Each contributes to enhancing organizational performance and delivering added value-critical elements for achieving a competitive edge. The generation of creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial ideas has become a strategic imperative that drives improved organizational outcomes, just as quality, cost, and flexibility are essential dimensions of strategic performance. This dynamic fosters continuous renewal across products, services, and even marketing and promotional strategies by introducing modern techniques that resonate with target audiences. Ultimately, when creative and entrepreneurial ideas materialize as innovations,

emerging institutions are better positioned to present themselves effectively to customers, strengthening their market position and continuously capturing market share through impressive and novel products and services.

IV. The Concept of Business Incubators, Their Roles, and Types

4.1 Concept of Business Incubators

Business incubators are mechanisms designed to create and develop innovative and creative projects while expanding and nurturing existing enterprises. They assist innovators and entrepreneurs in transforming their unique ideas into marketable projects, products, or services. Moreover, incubators provide both financial and technical support as well as guidance and advisory services, and they offer facilitation for their members. This comprehensive support increases the likelihood of success for emerging ventures by guiding and nurturing them through their early stages.

4.2 Roles of Business Incubators

Business incubators perform a range of functions and tasks, including:

- Providing consulting services during feasibility studies, and assisting with the selection of raw materials, machinery and equipment, and work methods.
- Offering financial support as well as managerial and marketing consultancy.
- Connecting the incubated enterprise with various governmental and non-governmental entities.
- Delivering administrative and technical training for the enterprise's staff either through the incubator itself or via specialized bodies.
- Supplying well-equipped spaces and facilities for project establishment.
- Offering specialized financing programs for new ventures through venture capital firms, governmental financing programs, or networks of business professionals.
- Continuously monitoring and evaluating new projects in collaboration with external advisors.
- Technological incubators are distinguished by their affiliation with academic institutions, universities, and research centers that support the projects they host.[17]
- Some incubators even provide equipment and devices specific to the enterprise's activity.

4.3 Types of Business Incubators Based on the Services They Provide

Business incubators can be classified according to several criteria, including:

1. **Objective:** For-profit versus non-profit incubators.
2. **Specialization:** Specialized incubators may focus on manufacturing, technology and research, niche technologies, specialized service sectors, office-based ventures, specific objectives, or offer integrated services across multiple fields.
3. **Sponsorship:** Incubators affiliated with government bodies, the private sector, large institutions, or universities and research centers.
4. **Scope:** International business incubators versus regional ones.[18]

Strategies of the University of Algiers "3" Incubator for Fostering Creativity and Innovation in Emerging Institutions

The University of Algiers "3" Incubator was established in 2021 and received the official

business incubator label in 2022. In March 2024, a new digital platform, "Business Seed" (Buzurat al-A'mal), was launched.[19] This platform is designed for students who wish to benefit from services such as team selection, recruitment of team members for their ventures, exchange of ideas, experiences, and expertise, as well as negotiation with the incubator's economic partners. In addition, it offers training in areas such as business model development, digital marketing, funding mechanisms for emerging enterprises, and prototyping.

The incubator targets students from the third year of a bachelor's program onward, across all disciplines. Interested students can apply via the incubator's website. Initially, projects are selected through presentation before evaluation committees, which are granted discretionary authority to assess the level of innovation in each project. Only projects that demonstrate creative and innovative ideas are chosen.

Following the selection process, the successful students undergo at least two days of training focused on design thinking-a methodology aimed at refining the creative ideas inherent in their projects, fostering brainstorming sessions, and producing and testing prototypes. These steps are intended to crystallize and polish creative ideas into practical and feasible plans. Additionally, a dedicated session on the Business Model Canvas (BMC) is provided, which is also attended by faculty advisors supervising the students' projects.

Key Partnerships *(Strategic partnerships: The key partners you need to achieve your goals)* • **Suppliers** • **Distributors** • **Service providers** **What resources do you get from your partners?**	**Key Activities** **Competitive advantage** **Primary Operations:** What are the essential activities conducted to deliver value to customers? (Examples include product development, marketing, & customer service.) **Competitive Advantage:** Identification & utilization of	**Value proptition** **Value Offered:** A detailed description of the benefits & value delivered to customers. -What specific need is being met? -Which problem does the offering	**Customer Relationships** **Organization of Customer Engagement:** A description of how customer interactions & collaborations are structured. **Customer Retention Strategies:** How to maintain & enhance customer loyalty over time. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Methods employed to gather & analyze	**Customer Segments** **Target Customers:** Youth, families, and companies. **Needs Assessment:** What are their specific requirements & expectations? **Demographic Characteristics:** What demographic attributes define these customer groups?

	core competencies that differentiate the business from competitors.	solve? -Through which product or service is this achieved?	customer opinions.	
	Key Resources **Types of Resources:** **Physical Resources:** Tangible assets required for operations. **Human Resources:** Skilled personnel and teams. **Intellectual Resources:** Proprietary knowledge, patents, & brand reputation. **Distinctive Resources:** Which resources provide a competitive edge over others?		**channels** **Distribution & Communication:** The selection of appropriate channels through which the business reaches its customers effectively.	

(Cost Structure)	**(Revenue Streams)**
Identification: A detailed overview of the costs associated with key resources & activities. **Cost Management:** Analysis of how these costs impact overall business sustainability & competitiveness.	**Income Generation Methods:** How does the business generate revenue? Examples include direct sales, subscriptions, advertising, etc. **Pricing Models:** A description of the pricing strategies and models utilized.

Source: Mohamed El Amine Akoush, Lecture delivered as part of a training course organized by the University of Algiers "3" Business Incubator on the Business Model Canvas for the Faculty of Media & Communication Sciences, December 02, 2024

According to the officials at the University of Algiers "3" Incubator, in the initial phase a student must present a fully developed and clearly articulated creative idea. The selection committee's role is to enhance the student's creative concept by discussing it and providing additional suggestions for project development. In addition to the innovative aspect, there is an emphasis on the practicality and technical feasibility of the idea; it is essential to verify that the idea is realistic and can be implemented in practice, especially from a technical standpoint. From an economic feasibility perspective, the idea must also have a high probability of generating revenue .

After the projects have been reviewed and approved, the project holder is connected with the Center for Technology and Innovation Support (CATI) affiliated with the university, as well as with the Algerian National Institute for Industrial Property (INAPI) or the National Office for Copyright and Related Rights, depending on the nature of the project or the aspect that needs protection. These two institutions are the sole authorities responsible for deciding whether to grant protection.[20]

Furthermore, the incubator supports project holders by linking them with competent supervisors in the field. In some cases, additional professors specializing in certain areas may be involved; however, the responsibility for preparing the business plan remains with the student. The incubator also seeks to benefit from experienced project holders by encouraging them to raise awareness, motivate, or train other students. Consequently, these experienced project holders become assistants within the incubator, offering guidance to their peers with projects.

As part of its support for student entrepreneurs, the University of Algiers "3" has signed a partnership agreement with the Center for Scientific and Technical Media Research to support project holders. This agreement is designed to help students access technologies and platforms that enable them to further develop their ideas, in addition to providing technological and technical support to promote digital transformation. The center has been tasked with developing prototypes for applications and electronic platforms, as the high cost of prototypes can often hinder students from translating their creative ideas into reality. Thus, the incubator has devised a

solution to support creative and innovative ideas.

In line with its strategy to promote innovative projects, the incubator provides a co-working space that includes offices, meeting rooms, and other shared facilities. It also offers administrative support services such as reception and office management, and grants access to available resources including conference rooms, computers, and a business café.

Project holders are additionally offered access to workshops and training programs. The incubator organizes workshops and training sessions on topics related to business, such as establishing a company, business management, and marketing products or services. Moreover, the University of Algiers "3" Incubator supports events that bring together emerging institutions and investors. For example, it participated in the National University Scientific Clubs Competition for the Best Project to Establish an Emerging Institution, organized in coordination with the General Directorate for Scientific Research and Technological Development under the theme "Innovative Projects… Invested Institutions," held from February 19 to 22, 2023, with the participation of 50 scientific clubs[21]. The incubator has also partnered in events such as the Innovative Project Competition organized by the national emerging institution "Manara," on the incubator's premises.[22]

Additionally, the incubator maintains a liaison office ("Blue") which contributes to connecting project holders with economic or social partners, thereby enabling them to access certain priorities during the project development phase.[23]

The University of Algiers "3" Incubator also focuses on training student entrepreneurs in the legal and technical aspects of establishing enterprises. Among its key partners are the National Agency for the Support and Development of Entrepreneurship and representatives from the National Trade Register, who emphasize the importance of adhering to legal requirements and their pivotal role in project development. This support is part of the broader technical and advisory assistance provided to foster the creation of emerging institutions.

As a result of this strategy, six emerging institutions have been established within the university, with expectations for this number to rise to 32 by the end of 2025. This growth reflects the university's commitment to investing in scientific research, innovation, and entrepreneurship through greater engagement with its economic and social environment.[24]

3. CONCLUSION

University business incubators play a crucial role in harnessing and channeling the innovations and capabilities of aspiring entrepreneurs. They facilitate technology transfer and knowledge sharing with new enterprises led by creative young talents who require various forms of support. In Algeria, and specifically at the University of Algiers "3" Incubator, significant efforts are being made to establish emerging institutions that meet market requirements and adhere to required standards. Nonetheless, challenges remain, notably the scarcity of truly creative ideas that can be practically implemented. Even when such ideas exist, the number of projects that are accepted and awarded the emerging institution label-and subsequently receive funding-is relatively low compared to the total number of student applicants.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Enhance Selection Processes:

Implement more rigorous and systematic selection criteria to identify projects with strong creative potential and technical feasibility. This includes establishing standardized evaluation metrics to assess the innovation, market potential, and sustainability of proposed ideas.

4.2. Strengthen Industry-Academia Partnerships:

Foster deeper collaborations between the incubator, industry players, government agencies, and research institutions. These partnerships can provide invaluable mentorship, technical expertise, and access to funding, ultimately increasing the likelihood of successful project implementation.

4.3. Expand Training and Mentorship Programs:

Develop comprehensive training modules and mentorship programs that cover not only technical and managerial skills but also legal, financial, and market-oriented aspects. Regular workshops, seminars, and one-on-one mentoring sessions can enhance students' entrepreneurial competencies and prepare them for real-world challenges.

4.4. Invest in Technological Infrastructure:

Continue to upgrade digital platforms and other technological resources to support project development. Facilitating access to state-of-the-art prototyping tools, collaborative software, and market analysis systems will help bridge the gap between conceptual ideas and practical applications.

4.5. Implement Continuous Feedback and Evaluation Mechanisms:

Establish robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track project progress and measure outcomes. Regular feedback from advisors, peers, and industry experts should be integrated into the development process to ensure that emerging projects remain aligned with market demands and are continually refined for optimal performance.

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