INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATIVE STUDIES
ISSN: 2820-7157
www.ijsrisjournal.com

April 2026 Volume 5 Number 2 24-32

Received Date: February 22, 2026 Accepted Date: March 14, 2026 Published Date: April 02, 2026

FOSTER OR INSPIRE

When teaching becomes a driving force for student entrepreneurship

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Abstract

In an increasingly changing socio-economic context, Morocco is facing high unemployment, particularly among graduates, highlighting a mismatch between education and the needs of the labour market. Indeed, the disconnect between the skills acquired at university and the demands of the professional market underscores the need for more appropriate training (Benamar et al., 2016). In this context, student entrepreneurship is emerging as a promising alternative for employability. Promoting university initiatives to stimulate entrepreneurial intent among students could serve as a lever for improving career prospects.

This interaction between universities and entrepreneurship goes beyond the simple notions of business creation. Universities have gradually evolved to become key players in promoting entrepreneurial spirit, thereby fostering encounters between universities and entrepreneurs. It is therefore essential to understand the institutional role of universities in promoting a culture of entrepreneurship among their students. Similarly, the involvement of teachers through the use of innovative teaching methods can have a positive effect on students' entrepreneurial intentions.

In this study, we will attempt to examine the perceptions of students at Cadi Ayyad University (UCA) regarding the impact of university initiatives on the development of entrepreneurial intentions among students, particularly the role of teachers and the effectiveness of the teaching methods used.

Keywords: University, Entrepreneurship, Student, Entrepreneurial intention, Teacher, Teaching methods used.

Introduction

As key institutions of higher education, the traditional role of universities is undergoing profound changes. Higher education institutions are facing a range of challenges that are impacting their missions and pedagogical approach. This evolution is driven by factors such as the need to improve student employability in order to tackle unemployment, prompting universities to adapt their programmes to meet the skills sought by employers and to adapt to a dynamic and unpredictable economic environment.

Today's universities recognise the importance of preparing students for successful integration into the labour market. Teaching methods focused on developing professional skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and collaboration are essential (Yorke, 2006; Little et al., 2010).

Furthermore, student entrepreneurship appears to be an attractive alternative for increasing the employability of young graduates and tackling unemployment. Promoting this entrepreneurial culture among students within universities depends on several internal and external factors that interact dynamically with each other and create an environment conducive to innovation and creativity.

The interaction between universities and entrepreneurship has been influenced by changing socio-economic contexts. Historically focused on teaching and research, universities have evolved to become key players in supporting innovation and entrepreneurship. Recent initiatives, such as the integration of soft skills into university curricula, focus on the development of essential cross-disciplinary skills and promote innovation and creativity (Kour et al., 2023).

The purpose of this article is to study the perceptions of students at Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakesh (UCA) regarding the influence of teachers and teaching methods on their intention to become entrepreneurs. The idea is to understand how teachers can have a positive or negative impact on students and their intention to become entrepreneurs, which is perceived as an alternative to employability.

Research question and central issue:

In the Moroccan context, university initiatives aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship among students face several challenges and limitations, such as the inadequacy of educational programmes to meet market needs, the lack of adequate resources and the poor supervision of students in their entrepreneurial journey. These limitations hinder the development of an entrepreneurial culture among students.

In this context, Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakesh stands out for its notable efforts to encourage entrepreneurial engagement, making it a relevant case study. Indeed, the implementation of university initiatives and partnerships with economic actors could provide more concrete opportunities for students. According to Holden et al. (2010), despite considerable efforts to increase the number of students launching start-ups, little impact is observable.

In this perspective, the central question that arises is: To what extent do the initiatives of Cadi Ayyad University influence students' entrepreneurial intentions? By addressing this question, it will be possible to assess the impact of university initiatives on the entrepreneurial aspirations of its students, which could be an important driver for employment and innovation in Morocco, as suggested by previous research (Holden et al., 2010) and (Hart et al., 2012).

To carry out this work, we have chosen a positivist epistemological position, a deductive mode of reasoning and a quantitative approach, based on a 47-question questionnaire distributed to students from 15 institutions affiliated with Cadi Ayyad University.

In this article, we will first present the framework for interaction between Moroccan universities and entrepreneurship, as well as the roles of teachers, teaching practices and entrepreneurship programmes on entrepreneurial intent. We will then present in detail the methodological approach adopted and the results obtained.

1. Universities and the promotion of entrepreneurship

1.1 Framework for interaction between Moroccan universities and entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship, as a complex and dynamic phenomenon, requires an in-depth study of its theoretical and conceptual foundations. Historically, the concept has evolved to adapt to economic and societal changes. The literature on this subject reveals a diversity of theories that study the different definitions and typologies of entrepreneurs through their behavioural and motivational characteristics.

Among the main definitions of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur are those of Joseph Schumpeter (1934), who defines the entrepreneur as the agent of economic change, creating new productive combinations that disrupt the equilibrium. Similarly, for Frank Knight (1921) and Peter Drucker (1985), entrepreneurship consists of taking risks, whereby the entrepreneur is a person who is willing to put their career and financial security on the line to implement an idea, investing their time and capital in a risky venture.

At the same time, changes in university missions reflect a fundamental shift in the role of universities within society. Initially focused on teaching and research, universities are gradually becoming key players in economic and social development, incorporating entrepreneurial approaches into their missions. Indeed, university initiatives and entrepreneurship-oriented training programmes are being set up to strengthen students' entrepreneurial skills in this area.

Institutions such as the International University of Rabat (UIR) and Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P) have emerged as key players in this field, offering a favourable ecosystem for student entrepreneurs. FabLabs and coworking spaces also play an important role, enabling students to develop their practical skills and bring their ideas to life through innovative projects.

FabLabs (Fabrication Laboratories) are open digital fabrication workshops that give a wide audience access to

rapid prototyping technologies such as 3D printers, laser cutters and digital milling machines (Gershenfeld, 2005).

These initiatives are reinforced by institutional university policies and strategic partnerships, notably with the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Skills (ANAPEC). However, the university entrepreneurial framework still faces challenges related to awareness, limited access to financial resources and the need for specific training that integrates the realities of the local market.

1.2 Influence of teachers and teaching practices on students' entrepreneurial intentions

In the current context, it is essential to understand how the role of teachers and researchers is evolving in order to develop an entrepreneurial culture within higher education institutions. By incorporating innovative teaching methods, teachers must not only impart knowledge, but also inspire students to develop their entrepreneurial skills. As Fayolle (2007) points out, entrepreneurship education must be based on practical experience and interaction with the professional world. Researchers, for their part, play an important role by conducting studies that shed light on the dynamics of entrepreneurship and by contributing to the development of relevant academic programmes in line with market trends.

The creation of a strong entrepreneurial culture within higher education institutions also relies heavily on the commitment of teachers. Indeed, as highlighted by Rae (2007), approaches based on experiential learning promote a practical understanding of entrepreneurial concepts. Teachers must also adopt digital tools, such as learning management systems, which reduce cognitive overload for students and facilitate the development of sophisticated cognitive patterns essential to entrepreneurial thinking.

The development of an entrepreneurial mindset in students also relies heavily on the support provided by teachers. This mentoring is essential for creating an environment where innovation and creativity can interact with each other. By guiding students through real-world projects, teachers promote the development of practical skills, ranging from critical thinking to project management. This approach is in line with the ideas put forward by Fayolle (2007), who emphasises the importance of practical experience in entrepreneurial learning.

Furthermore, teaching methods that stimulate entrepreneurship, such as project-based learning and case studies, allow students to experience real-life situations, helping them to apply entrepreneurial theories in practical contexts. Furthermore, university activities that focus on putting skills into practice have a more significant impact than traditional courses. By fostering an environment where students can experiment and learn actively, higher education institutions can not only cultivate entrepreneurial skills, but also encourage a culture of innovation and risk-taking (Atmani E et al, 2023).

Furthermore, in the context of monitoring and evaluation, it is important to adopt appropriate assessment methods to measure the effectiveness of the teaching methods used and their impact. Formative assessment, for example, allows for continuous monitoring of student progress while providing constructive feedback. According to research by Nabi et al. (2017) on the impact of entrepreneurial education, assessment tools such as project presentations and the development of minimum viable products (MVPs) not only promote student engagement, but also stimulate their initiative and creativity.

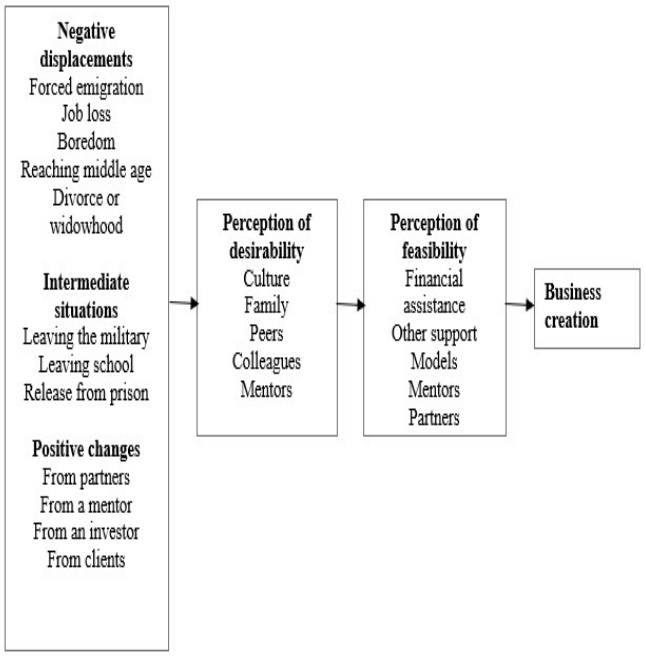
2. Entrepreneurial intention and methodological approach

2.1 Entrepreneurial intention

Entrepreneurship is often seen as a dynamic process in which individuals' intentions play a part in the creation of new businesses. Krueger and Carsrud (1993) point out that entrepreneurial intention can be defined as the motivation to start a business, resulting from a complex mix of personal and contextual factors.

There are several theories that address entrepreneurial intention, including the entrepreneurial event formation theory initiated by Shapero and Sokol (1982). This theory attempts to describe the mechanisms of perception and interpretation of individuals in relation to their environment through psychological, social and individual factors.

Figure 1: Diagram of the entrepreneurial event formation theory



Source: Adapted from Shapero and Sokol (1982)

This theory is based on the following elements:

- ✓ "Negative transitions," which generally refer to job loss.
- ✓ "Intermediate situations," which refer to leaving school, the army, or prison.
- ✓ "Negative displacements," which refer to the influence of partners, mentors, investors, or clients.

By emphasising the notion of entrepreneurial intention and incorporating contextual factors, this theory enriches our understanding of the underlying motivations that drive an individual to move from idea to action. It highlights the important role of personal perceptions and socio-economic influences in the decision to become an entrepreneur. Furthermore, the foundations of this theory can be applied to entrepreneurial training programmes, reinforcing the relevance of this model in an ever-changing economic context.

2.2 Context and methodological approach

Cadi Ayyad University (UCA) has 15 academic institutions, including 9 in Marrakech, 3 in Safi, one EST in Essaouira and 2 in Kelaa des Sraghna. It covers the Marrakech-Safi region.

Cadi Ayyad University stands out not only for its history and academic positioning, but also for its commitment to entrepreneurship. By integrating dedicated policies and strategies, UCA has developed a multitude of initiatives that foster entrepreneurial spirit among its students, such as incubators, innovative competitions, and the organisation of specific training courses in entrepreneurship. These actions are supported by strong partnerships with economic and institutional actors, which strengthens the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Furthermore, when examining existing initiatives that promote entrepreneurial spirit, it is important to evaluate not only the initiatives themselves but also their impact on students in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement, while offering practical recommendations.

Thus, our central research question is as follows: to what extent do Cadi Ayyad University's initiatives to promote an entrepreneurial culture among students, particularly through the role of teachers and the effectiveness of the teaching methods used, influence their intention to become entrepreneurs?

2.2.1 Survey hypotheses

Below are the main hypotheses we are seeking to explore in this study:

Hypothesis 1: Teachers' involvement in promoting entrepreneurship has a positive effect on students' intention to become entrepreneurs.

Hypothesis 2: Students' perception of teachers' entrepreneurial support is a significant predictor of their intention to become entrepreneurs.

Hypothesis 3: The use of innovative teaching methods, such as project-based learning and simulations, improves students' perception of their ability to become entrepreneurs.

In other words, the variables that can explain entrepreneurial intent are presented in the following table:

Table 1: Definition of variables

Variable	Definitions
Dependent	✓ Intention to start a business
Independent	✓ Role of teachers in encouraging entrepreneurship ✓ Entrepreneurship programmes and teaching methodologies used

Source: Prepared by the author

2.2.2 Survey strategy

To understand the factors behind the entrepreneurial intentions of students at Cadi Ayyad University (UCA), we conducted an exploratory survey and developed a questionnaire.

As part of this study, participating students were asked to answer a 47-question questionnaire structured as follows:

- ✓ Previous professional experience related to entrepreneurship
- ✓ Role of the university in promoting entrepreneurial spirit and intention
- ✓ Entrepreneurial intention among students according to the Theory of Planned Behaviour
- ✓ Government initiatives and perception of the status of entrepreneurs
- ✓ Comments and suggestions
- ✓ General information

In this article, we have selected only 10 items, namely:

- The role of teachers in encouraging entrepreneurship, with 5 items;

- Entrepreneurship programmes and teaching methodologies used, with 5 items;

This questionnaire is a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from (1) "None", (2) "Low", (3) "Medium", (4) "High" to (5) "Very high".

This questionnaire was administered online and in person only to students at Cadi Ayyad University (UCA). We received 420 usable responses.

The table below shows the distribution of participants by institution:

Table 2: Distribution of participants by institution

Institution	No. cited	Freq.
National School of Commerce and Management	92	21.9
Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences	68	16.2
Faculty of Science and Technology Gueliz	48	11.4
Faculty of Science Semlalia	44	10.5
SAFI Multidisciplinary Faculty	40	9.5
Faculty of Arts and Humanities	32	7.6
Essaouira Higher School of Technology	32	7.6
National School of Applied Sciences, Safi	24	5.7
National School of Applied Sciences of Marrakech	24	5.7%
Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy	16	3.8
TOTAL CIT.	420	100

Source: Prepared by the author based on the database collected

3. Results and discussion

The following tables present the main results obtained:

Table 3: Role of teachers in encouraging entrepreneurship

	ITEMS	Quality of representation	Factor contributions	α without item
Role of teachers in encouraging entrepreneurship	My teachers encourage creativity and innovation in their lessons	0.577	0.76	0.914
	My teachers share professional experiences related to entrepreneurship	0.72	0.848	0.893
	My teachers encourage discussion and group projects	0.758	0.87	0.886
	My teachers encourage students to think about entrepreneurial projects.	0.842	0.917	0.873
	My teachers offer advice or support to students who wish to develop a business idea.	0.801	0.895	0.877
α of the scale	**Eigenvalue of the principal component**	**KMO**	**Bartlett's test**	**Explained variance (%)**
0.909	3.697	0.836	< 0.05	73.94

Source: Prepared by the author based on the database collected

The reliability analysis for the scale measuring the role of teachers in encouraging entrepreneurship shows a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.909, indicating excellent internal consistency of the items.

The results reveal a significant impact of teachers on students' entrepreneurial perception:

- ✓ More than 57% of students consider that their teachers encourage creativity and innovation in their courses.
- ✓ 72% of students emphasise that their teachers share their experiences related to entrepreneurship, thereby reinforcing young people's interest in starting a business.
- ✓ 84% of students indicate that their teachers encourage them to think about entrepreneurial projects through case studies, simulations and group projects.
- ✓ 80% of respondents acknowledge that their teachers offer support to students wishing to develop a business idea, whether through advice, book recommendations or introductions to players in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

These results suggest that students have a consistent perception of the role of their teachers in encouraging entrepreneurship.

Table 4: Entrepreneurship programmes and teaching methodologies used

	ITEMS	Quality of representation	Factor contributions	α without item
Entrepreneurship programmes and teaching methodologies used	The training programmes inspired me and reinforced my intention to become an entrepreneur	0.517	0.719	0.86
	The courses incorporate interactive teaching methods that promote entrepreneurial initiative.	0.871	0.933	0.733
	Teaching methods have helped develop autonomy and innovation skills	0.82	0.905	0.759
	Specific tools (simulation, brainstorming, design thinking) are taught.	0.568	0.754	0.852
α of the scale	**Eigenvalue of the principal component**	**KMO**	**Bartlett's test**	**Explained variance (%)**
0.846	2.775	0.711	< 0.05	69.38

Source: Prepared by the author based on the database collected

The scale measuring the impact of entrepreneurship programmes and teaching methodologies used has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.846, indicating good internal consistency of the items.

The results show that entrepreneurship training programmes and teaching methods have a direct and significant impact on students' entrepreneurial intentions.

This survey highlights the positive impact of Cadi Ayyad University's teaching initiatives on students' entrepreneurial intentions. The training programmes inspire 68% of students, and 87% believe that interactive methods strengthen their interest in entrepreneurship. In addition, 82% say they have developed their autonomy and ability to innovate thanks to the teaching approaches used. However, only 56% recognise that practical tools (brainstorming, simulation, business model) boost their confidence, suggesting a need for improvement in their integration. In summary, the results confirm the effectiveness of interactive methods while highlighting the need for more personalised support.

Table 5: Summary of models

Model	R	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared	Standard error of the estimate	Durbin-Watson
8	.732[h]	.537	.528	.68736518	1,853
i. Dependent variable: Students' intention to start a business					

Source: Prepared by the author based on the database collected

The final model has an adjusted coefficient of determination (adjusted R^2) of 0.528, which means that 52.8% of the variance in entrepreneurial intention is explained by the selected variables.

The Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.853, confirming the absence of autocorrelation in the residuals and the validity of the model in terms of independence of observations.

Table 6: ANOVA model

Model		Sum of squares	ddl	Mean square	F	Sig.
8	Regression	224.814	8	28,102	59,478	.000[i]
	Student	194,186	411	,472		
	Total	419,000	419			
a. Dependent variable: Students' intention to start a business						

Source: Prepared by the author based on the database collected

The ANOVA of the final model gives an F value of 59.478, $p < 0.001$, indicating that the overall model is highly significant and that the explanatory variables selected do indeed contribute to explaining entrepreneurial intention.

Table 7: Significant variables and impact on entrepreneurial intention

Coefficients[a]										
Model		Non-standardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% confidence interval for B		Collinearity statistics	
		B	Standard error	Beta			Lower bound	Upper bound	Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)	-,326	.130		-2.514	.012	-,581	-,071		
	Role of teachers in encouraging entrepreneurship	.223	.046	.223	4.836	.000	,132	,313	,531	1,883
	Entrepreneurship programmes and teaching methodologies used	,081	,039	,081	2,085	.038	,005	,158	,742	1,347
a. Dependent variable: Students' intention to start a business										

Source: Prepared by the author based on the database collected

Based on the results in the table below, we can draw the following conclusions:

- **The role of teachers in encouraging entrepreneurship (β = 0.223, p < 0.001):** Although teachers play a key role in raising awareness of entrepreneurship, their direct impact on the intention to start a business is moderate. This suggests that their influence could be strengthened through more interactive and practical approaches.
- **Entrepreneurship programmes and teaching methodologies used (β = 0.081, p = 0.038):** Students exposed to entrepreneurial teaching methods have a slightly higher intention to start a business. However, this effect remains relatively weak, indicating that these courses must be combined with practical opportunities to be truly effective.

Discussion and conclusion

The results of this study confirm the importance of the role of teachers and innovative teaching approaches in strengthening the entrepreneurial intention of students at Cadi Ayyad University. The statistical analyses carried out broadly validate the research hypotheses and highlight several key findings.

Regarding Hypothesis 1, which states that teachers' involvement in promoting entrepreneurship has a positive effect on entrepreneurial intention, the results support this assertion. Indeed, 84% of students report that their teachers encourage them to think about entrepreneurial projects, and 80% feel that they receive concrete support from them. However, regression analysis shows that this variable, although significant ($\beta = 0.223$, $p < 0.001$), has a moderate effect. This suggests that teachers' commitment is recognised, but that its direct impact on the decision to become an entrepreneur could be strengthened by more practical and individualised involvement.

Hypothesis 2, which states that the perception of entrepreneurial support from teachers is a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intention, is clearly validated by the data. The high rate of positive responses confirms that the perception of a supportive educational environment plays a decisive role in the development of entrepreneurial intention.

Hypothesis 3, which assumes that the use of innovative teaching methods improves the perception of entrepreneurial ability, is also confirmed. 87% of students say that interactive methods spark their interest in entrepreneurship, and 82% believe that they have promoted their autonomy and ability to innovate. However, only 56% consider that specific tools (brainstorming, simulation, business model canvas) have boosted their confidence. Although the variable is significant ($\beta = 0.081$, $p = 0.038$), its effect remains weak, suggesting that the effectiveness of these tools could be increased through better contextualisation and more sustained pedagogical support.

In conclusion, the results show that teacher involvement, the perceived quality of entrepreneurial support, and the use of innovative teaching methods significantly influence students' entrepreneurial intentions. To reinforce this impact, it would be wise to expand experiential approaches, diversify practical tools, and promote concrete networking with the local entrepreneurial ecosystem through a number of measures to be implemented:

- **Supplement academic teaching** with immersive experiences and personalised support.

- **Encourage teachers to get involved in practical initiatives.**
  Training courses should be more immersive and based on case studies, real projects and interactions with entrepreneurs.

- **Promote entrepreneurship from the start of studies.**
  It is important to integrate entrepreneurship as a legitimate career option, even for master's and doctoral students.

Finally, although there are many factors that explain students' entrepreneurial intentions, in this study we have attempted to shed light on the decisive role of teachers and their teaching methods in developing these intentions. The results of this survey show that there are links between students' entrepreneurial intentions and teachers' commitment to encouraging creativity and innovation.

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