

Moderating and/or Mediating Effects on Dual-Type Training and Entrepreneurial Intention of Apprentices in Benin

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Abstract

The dual-type training program for certain trades, particularly tailoring and hair-dressing in Benin, aims to reduce the unemployment rate in these sectors. This study is based on a series of observations regarding some trainees who secretly hope for employment in the professional environment and others who are still unemployed without making any attempt at self-employment. **Its objective is to evaluate the effect of dual-type entrepreneurial training on the professional career choice of apprentices.** Using an explanatory equation of the entrepreneurial intention of apprentices based on the theoretical model of Ajzen, the results first showed that only the variables “dual-type training” and “perceived social norms” significantly determine the entrepreneurial intention of apprentices in training. These refined results further revealed the existence of a moderating effect of social norms on training. Consequently, as an implication for economic policy, it is recommended that the Government of Benin intensifies or deepens theoretical entrepreneurship training and reinforces it illustratively through practice and simulation (social norms) in identified centers for this purpose.

Keywords

Entrepreneurial Training, Professional Integration, Unemployment

1. Introduction

Employment (occupation) is the cornerstone of economic growth and development (World Bank, 2013). Indeed, aside from its crucial importance for individual well-being, it is also essential for the achievement of many general societal objectives: poverty reduction, productivity growth, social cohesion, etc. In this regard,

Barlet & d'Aiglepiere (2016) argue that youth employment is a public service mission and the responsibility of States. However, current trends in youth employment in Benin do not present promising figures, with the unemployment rate steadily increasing. For instance, in 2022, INStAD (2022) reported that 72% of the workforce is underemployed, with 61% of those being in the laboring class. For an informed observer, an increase in this number is expected in the coming years due to the rapid growth of the active population. In this unflattering context for a developing economy, graduates from the artisanal sector, whose contribution to GDP ranks second after agriculture, are often overlooked. Indeed, the artisanal sector has significant employment potential: 25% of the active population, 13% of GDP (INStAD, 2022), and a wide variety of trades: 175 trades, 40 professions, and 8 professional branches according to the classification of artisanal trades by the West African Monetary Union (WAEMU). Therefore, entrepreneurship emerges as a means that could help reverse this trend, even if the path is fraught with difficulties (VOA Afrique, 2021).

This observation led the Government of Benin to include in its Action Program, PAG 2016-2021, Pillar 2, Strategic Axis 4, the following action: “support, train, and professionalize artisans.” This desire to make the artisanal sector one of the levers of national economic development has materialized through the adoption and strengthening of “dual-type apprenticeship training,” which is sanctioned by a diploma, the CQM (Certificate of Qualification in Trades), in accordance with Decree 2022-389 of July 13, 2022, which regulates the certification of vocational training through apprenticeships in the Republic of Benin. Organized by the Chamber of Trades and Crafts of Benin (CMA-Benin), with the technical support of the Directorate of Exams and Competitions (DEC) of the Ministry of Secondary, Technical, and Vocational Education (MESTFP), the CQM is an examination that marks the end of apprenticeship training with master artisans.

Currently, the training program concerns only the trades of “tailoring” and “hairdressing” and takes place in two different locations: the artisan’s workshop (AA) and a vocational training center (CFP). It is referred to as dual-type training and is primarily intended for out-of-school youth. Indeed, beyond acquiring knowledge and skills, which the government seeks for these learners, this apprenticeship model aims to ensure that they take charge of their professional integration through a self-employment process by the end of their training. As one might expect, the activities conducted by master artisans can influence the behavior and future of their apprentices. Identifying with someone who has succeeded and serves as a role model can inspire an individual to achieve similar, or even greater, accomplishments. By identifying with successful entrepreneurial models who run their own businesses, apprentices who have undergone workplace training may be inspired and motivated to create their own business and manage it successfully (Charaf-Eddine & Nait Haddou, 2020). Consequently, this dual-type training program aims, among other things, to encourage and create an entrepreneurial dynamic among future certified apprentices equipped with the necessary skills for

self-employment. This strategy (training for self-employment) is thus seen as a credible alternative likely to prevent unemployment at the end of the apprenticeship. However, despite these realities, some still harbor hidden hopes of finding employment, particularly with their former masters or affiliated centers. Therefore, the question arises as to why many “graduated” apprentices remain attached to employment, especially in the professional environment. What factors, then, determine the self-employment of these young trainees? Among these factors, is the “training” variable not determinant, at best, by acting as a moderator and/or mediator of another factor in this process?

To address these concerns, **this paper is titled “Moderating and/or mediating effects on dual-type training and entrepreneurial intention of apprentices in Benin”**. The desired objective is to evaluate the effect of dual-type entrepreneurial training on the professional career choice of apprentices. The interest of this research is to serve not only as support for the professional integration strategy of dual-type training learners, but also as a basis for decision-making within the framework of the development of the actors of the trade body. Indeed, identifying the factors that determine the entrepreneurial intention of apprentices in training can help in the establishment of workshops aimed at guaranteeing prosperity and stability in these professions. This being said, **this paper is organized as follows**. The first section describes the theoretical framework that serves as the basis for the issue of entrepreneurial intention. The following section reviews studies and research conducted in this field to provide an overview of the current state of knowledge on the subject. Finally, another section discusses the methodological approach leading to the results submitted for interpretation.

2. Theoretical Framework

Entrepreneurship can thus be considered a genuine tool for economic and social development, given its crucial role in wealth creation and the fight against unemployment. Through this role, apprenticeship or training facilitates the professional integration of active individuals by promoting the creation of businesses. Several authors agree that business creation corresponds to an intentional process (Krueger et al., 2000; Tounès, 2006; Fayolle, 2000; Kolvereid & Isaksen, 2006). These authors view entrepreneurial intention as a precursor to entrepreneurial action. According to Krueger & Carsrud (1993), entrepreneurial intention plays a central role in the entrepreneurial process as it forms a foundational element of support for new businesses. Harbi & Mansour (2008) argue that intention helps predict behavior and is therefore indispensable for explaining the process leading to the creation of a business. From a processual perspective, entrepreneurial intention represents a critical step in the business creation process (Harbi & Mansour, 2008). It allows for predicting the act of entrepreneurship, which is likely to be realized. Entrepreneurial intention has been formalized by several authors who have developed various theories on the subject. However, most theoretical studies

on entrepreneurial intention relate to Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) and Shapero & Sokol (1982)'s Entrepreneurial Event Model (Krueger et al., 2000; Emin, 2003; Boissin et al., 2005; Fayolle, 2000; Fayolle et al., 2006; Kolvereid & Isaksen, 2006; Souitaris et al., 2007). "These two works provide a similar explanation of an individual's entrepreneurial intention, offering a coherent, simple, and robust framework for achieving a better understanding of the business creation process" (Krueger et al., 2000).

Indeed, Ajzen (1991)'s theory posits that an individual's intention is determined by three elements: their attitude toward the behavior in question, their perception of social norms, and the control they believe they have over the situation. The first element expresses the degree of favorable or unfavorable evaluation the individual makes of the behavior they aspire to. It strongly depends on the expected probable outcomes of the envisaged behavior. This attitude corresponds to the concept of desirability from Shapero & Sokol (1982). The second element, subjective or social norms, refers to the perception that penetrates the individual in reference to the social pressures exerted by their closest circle (parents, family, friends) regarding what they intend to undertake. These norms depend both on the approved or disapproved actions expected from the individual's circle and on the importance the individual attaches to this opinion. The more these actions (social norms) are approved, the higher the individual's intention to engage in the behavior should be. These are also related to the concept of desirability in Shapero & Sokol (1982)'s model. For Shapero & Sokol (1982), perceptions of desirability characterize the degree of attractiveness an individual perceives for a given behavior. These perceptions of desirability are shaped by the individuals' value system (culture, family, colleagues or a mentor, and individual factors such as characteristics, knowledge, skills, or abilities). Finally, perceived behavioral control involves considering the levels of knowledge and control an individual has over their own abilities, as well as the resources and opportunities necessary to realize the desired behavior. This variable is of crucial importance, as it can provide greater accuracy in predicting future behavior. Perceptions of behavioral control are akin to Shapero & Sokol (1982)'s concept of feasibility. According to Shapero & Sokol (1982), perceptions of feasibility are characterized by self-assessment through a questionnaire. Financial resources play a vital role in an individual's ability to accomplish a task. The authors further argue that these resources may come from the family or close acquaintances. To be an entrepreneur, one must first perceive the act of creation as credible, which implies that the entrepreneur must possess both desirability and feasibility. In summary, the behavior required to choose an entrepreneurial career can be explained by attitudes, personal characteristics, and the family and social environment.

The "desirability" variable of the entrepreneurial act in Shapero & Sokol (1982)'s model encompasses Ajzen (1991)'s first two variables, namely personal attitude and subjective norms, as both influence the desire to act (Ndoreraho, 2015). The "perceived feasibility" variable is closely aligned with Ajzen (1991)'s perceived

behavioral control concept (Ndoreraho, 2015).

The variable “perceived feasibility” is closely related to perceived behavioral control in Ajzen (1991)’s theory (Ndoreraho, 2015). Following these authors, several theoretical and empirical studies concerning these models have emerged over the past five decades, attempting to test their relevance and robustness.

3. Training and Entrepreneurial Intention

Research on “training and entrepreneurial intention” has experienced significant growth over the past two decades, spanning from theoretical foundations to empirical studies. Most of these works have focused on the academic environment. Very few studies have been conducted on the world of artisanal trades. Indeed, the results obtained from these studies vary according to the nature of the theoretical model, the specification of the entrepreneurial intention function, and the estimation methods used.

For several authors (Saporta & Verstraete, 2000; Barès et al., 2011; Koubaa & Eddine, 2012; Brunel et al., 2014), entrepreneurial training significantly contributes to fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among learners.

Wang (2010) supports this assertion, stating that students who have taken entrepreneurship courses have a higher entrepreneurial intention than those who have never participated in entrepreneurship training modules. Indeed, training helps boost the confidence of young students in entrepreneurship and develops their skills, stimulating and enhancing their abilities (Rasmussen & Sorheim, 2006).

In Côte d’Ivoire, Benié (2012) showed that students who did not receive any entrepreneurship education during their studies displayed a lower intention to start a business despite their strong motivation towards entrepreneurship. Walter & Block (2016) confirm this result by demonstrating that students who receive entrepreneurial training have higher entrepreneurial intentions. However, for Filion (1997), the entrepreneurial intention of university students decreases rather than increases as they progress through their studies.

Without limiting the scope to university students, some authors argue that training is not the only factor influencing entrepreneurial intention. Variables such as the perception of economic factors (income), self-efficacy, attitude, aptitude, etc., are linked to the choice of an entrepreneurial career. Other factors may also influence occupational choice. Indeed, when a learner is confident in their own abilities, it can determine their decision to undertake an activity. Dimov (2010) finds that entrepreneurial self-efficacy is of paramount importance, as it helps to understand the factors that stimulate and create the intention in entrepreneurs to start a business or launch an entrepreneurial activity. Bandura (1982, 1993) observes that the greater an individual’s sense of self-efficacy, the higher the objectives they set for themselves and the stronger their commitment to achieving those goals. Moreover, Bandura (2006) states that studies on self-efficacy reveal that this feeling is at the root of many behaviors in various fields. Along the same

lines, it has been demonstrated that the level of self-efficacy perceived by an individual is positively correlated with their intention to undertake and also with their entrepreneurial behavior.

Other authors, such as Ider & Djenane (2018), show that an individual's occupational choice can be determined by several factors: economic, but also sociocultural, psychological, and others, such as institutions, age, gender, human capital, etc. It can be primarily explained by personal will, which in turn depends on contextual factors (Vesalainen & Pihkala, 1999). For the ILO (2015), income generated by employment is a fundamental factor in Africa, as in other regions of the globe. According to Barlet & d'Aiglepierre (2016), the type of remunerative activities an individual engages in has a strong impact on crucial aspects such as identity, status, self-confidence, and well-being. Authors like Potter (2008), Jemli (2018), and Bamba et al. (2020) find that education and training programs alone cannot sufficiently promote the development of entrepreneurial aptitudes and skills.

Furthermore, some authors have reached the conclusion that "entrepreneurial training has no significant influence on the entrepreneurial spirit of learners". According to these authors, entrepreneurship training programs, although contributing to the awakening of learners, do not have a significant effect on the transition to action for the creation of businesses by learners (Arlotto et al., 2012; Jemli, 2018; Tchokponhoué, 2023).

The mixed results of these studies (regarding the influence of entrepreneurship training on the entrepreneurial intention of learners) inspire an examination of the case of Beninese apprentices currently undergoing dual-type training.

4. Methodological Approach

The methodological approach used to carry out this research is based on a survey conducted among artisan apprentices undergoing dual-type training. To recap, dual-type training is a model that takes place in two different locations: a training center and a workshop. The apprentices split their training time between the center and the workshop where they are typically registered as apprentices. Currently, in Benin, this training program does not yet cover all artisanal professions. While waiting for the program to be extended to other artisanal professions, the trades of tailoring and hairdressing are currently the only ones involved, with the main objective being to see the apprentices establish themselves after obtaining their CQM diploma. Thus, beyond technical and professional lessons, special courses related to entrepreneurship are also given to apprentices to prepare them for managing their future workshops.

To successfully conduct this research, we collected data through a survey based on a questionnaire sent to the apprentices. **This questionnaire was first tested on a small group of 20 individuals to ensure their relevance. Following this test, our objective was to collect 50 responses per category (tailor, seamstress, hairdresser, hairdresser). It should be noted that 63 tailors, 57 seamstresses,**

58 hairdressers and 61 hairdressers received the questionnaire, representing a response rate of 83.68%. They were selected randomly across the national territory, where they have a total number of 1083 apprentices, i.e. a sampling rate of around 19%. This random selection method for apprentices constituting the study sample was adopted due to its ease of implementation and because it is the most commonly used technique in similar circumstances (Tchokponhoué, 2023).

Moreover, in this study, we adopted Ajzen & Fishbein (1980)'s measurement scale to assess the entrepreneurial intention of apprentices, particularly because it remains the most widely used tool for evaluating the entrepreneurial intentions of young people (Boudabbous, 2011; Maâlej, 2013). This process involves adopting three items:

- 1) The probability that you will start your own business is very high.
- 2) The probability that you will pursue a career as an employee is very high.
- 3) If you had to choose between starting your own business and being an employee, you would definitely prefer to create your own business.

The 5-point Likert Scale (Likert, 1932) was used for this assessment, ranging from "I do not agree" (code 1) to "I completely agree" (code 5).

In light of the works of several authors (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993; Fayolle et al., 2006; Klapper & Léger-Jarniou, 2006; Tounès, 2006) and those cited in the literature review above, we identified, besides the "training" factor, other explanatory factors of "entrepreneurial intention", such as the apprentice's attitude toward behavior, their perception of social norms, and their perception of control over the situation.

Based on the works of Maâlej (2013), Bédoué & Robert (2021), and Tounès (2006), ten items were used to measure these three main determinants of entrepreneurial intention. Two items were used to measure attitudes associated with the relevant behavior (attractiveness), and four items were used to measure the perception of social norms (surroundings or society) and perceived behavioral control (ability).

The adopted model is inspired by Aïvazian (1978)'s works on linear modeling of the apprentice's entrepreneurial intention (IEA) in relation to its explanatory factors, which yields:

$$IE = (X_i, \varepsilon_i) \quad (1)$$

where, IE represents the entrepreneurial intention of apprentice i , X_i represents the explanatory factors of entrepreneurial intention (initial entrepreneurial training during dual-type training, attitude associated with behavior, perception of social norms, and perceived control), and ε_i represents random error terms assumed to have a Gaussian distribution with a mean of 0 and constant standard deviation (Mises, 1936).

The multiple regression derived from this can be expressed as follows:

$$IE_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FD_i + \beta_2 AC_i + \beta_3 NS_i + \beta_4 CP_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

Since the moderating and/or mediating effect on training must be highlighted,

equation (2) is extended as follows:

$$IE_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FD_i + \beta_2 AC_i + \beta_3 NS_i + \beta_4 CP_i + \beta_5 FD * AC_i + \beta_6 FD * CP_i + \beta_7 FD * NS_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (3)$$

where, $FD * AC$, $FD * CP$ and $FD * NS$ respective products of the independent variables FD and AC , FD and CP , FD and NS , represent the nonlinear interaction effects.

The estimation is conducted using the ordinary least squares method, with multicollinearity tested using variance inflation factors (VIF) and tolerances for individual variables to yield the results in **Table 1**.

Estimation Results and Comments

Table 1 below summarizes the results of the estimation of equation (3).

Table 1. Estimation of the equation for the entrepreneurial intention of apprentices.

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
Constant	-6.03	20.8319	6.467	0.0041***
FD	2.32	1.4607	-0.521	0.0060***
AC	1.06	1.8657	0.368	0.7155
NS	0.71	4.0790	0.200	0.0271**
CP	-1.12	0.0530	1.675	0.1371
FD*AC	-2.01	0.2126	-9.479	0.8004
FD*CP	0.87	1.2718	-2.501	0.2771
FD*NS	3.54	0.4674	-1.428	0.0229**

A close observation of **Table 2** allows us to see that the fit parameters of the equation are globally satisfactory, with a fairly high explanatory power, as indicated by: Adjusted $R^2 = 0.8904$ (close to 1); Prob (F-statistic) = 0.000000; and DW = 2.37 (not far from 2).

Table 2. Robustness check of the estimation of the equation in **Table 1**.

Statistics	Value
R-squared (R^2)	0.9352
Adjusted R^2	0.8904
F-statistic	23.18
Prob (F-statistic)	0.00000
DW	2.37

*Significant at 10%; **Significant at 5%; ***Significant at 1%; **Source:** The author.

Additionally in **Table 1**, two of the four variables significantly and positively explain the entrepreneurial intention of apprentices at the 5% threshold. These are the “dual-type training” (FD) and “social norms” (NS). The factors “attitude toward behavior” (AC) and “perceived control” (CP) do not determine the entrepreneurial intention of the apprentices. Indeed, while the variable AC aligns with theoretical predictions, it is not significant. This is not the case for the CP variable, whose effect on entrepreneurial intention is negative and not significant.

These results suggest that the entrepreneurial intention of apprentices following dual-type training is determined by the variables: “dual-type training” (FD) and “social norms” (NS). However, the analysis of the results in **Table 1** should not be limited to this initial observation. It should not stop “so early”. The analysis deserves to be refined to examine the potential effects of the interaction between training and each of the other variables on the entrepreneurial intention of the apprentices.

This “scientific curiosity” exercise allows us to better predict the entrepreneurial intention of apprentices. We find that of the combined effects of the “dual-type training” variable with the other variables, namely “attitude toward behavior” (AC), “perceived control” (CP), and “social norms” (NS), only the latter is significant, with a positive sign. Furthermore, in addition to being significant, this effect is positive, showing that not only are the variables “dual-type training” (FD) and “social norms” (NS) positive and significant, but their combined effect is also significant, with a coefficient higher than those of the said variables (FD and NS).

We can easily conclude that dual-type training contributes favorably to the entrepreneurial intention of apprentice tailors and hairdressers, just as social norms do, which, in dual-type training, have a moderating effect.

Several lessons can be drawn from these results. First, we can say that the “dual-type training” program currently underway in Benin favors the self-employment of apprentices. In addition to this training, “social norms” also contribute to the decision of apprentice tailors and hairdressers to establish themselves after their apprenticeship. Moreover, the combination of these two factors further promotes this type of professional integration. Therefore, strengthening this type of training (dual-type) and encouraging (or motivating) the social environment, especially the master artisans regarding apprentices, is advisable for reducing the unemployment rate in the tailoring and hairdressing trades.

Indeed, as we can understand, this study is an attempt to evaluate the dual-type training implemented by the Beninese government in the tailoring and hairdressing trades. It sheds light on the fact that this type of apprenticeship is beneficial to the world of artisans, which hopes to see its unemployment rate decrease. It also overlaps with the works of [Saporta & Verstraete \(2000\)](#), [Barès et al. \(2011\)](#), [Koubaa & Eddine \(2012\)](#), and [Brunel et al. \(2014\)](#), whose results partially align with those obtained here. However, its results diverge from those obtained by [Arlotto et al. \(2012\)](#), [Jemli \(2018\)](#), and [Tchokponhoué \(2023\)](#), which suggest that training does not have a significant effect on the entrepreneurial intention of learners.

5. Conclusion

By implementing the dual-type training program for certain trades in Benin, the Government aims, among other things, to reduce the unemployment rate. To recap, this training, leading to the Certificate of Qualification in Trades (CQM), takes place in two different locations: the artisanal business (master's workshop) and the vocational training center, whether public or private. In this center, entrepreneurship notions are also taught to enable the apprentices, once "graduated", to establish themselves as independent entrepreneurs.

Our study was conducted following several observations made about some CQM-certified apprentices who harbor hidden hopes of finding employment in the professional environment, while others are still unemployed without any attempt at self-employment.

Thus, through a literature review, we developed a theoretical model explaining the relationship between the entrepreneurial intention of apprentices and certain relevant variables. When tested against the facts, the results first showed that only the variables of training and perceived social norms significantly determine the entrepreneurial intention of apprentices in training. These results, when refined, further revealed the existence of a moderating effect of social norms on training. In this regard, as an implication for economic policy, it is recommended that the Beninese government enhance or deepen theoretical entrepreneurship training and reinforce it illustratively through the adherence of society and, above all, through practice and simulation (social norms) in identified centers.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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