



International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science

e-ISSN: 2544-9435

Scholarly Publisher
RS Global Sp. z O.O.
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ARTICLE TITLE

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ARTICLE INFO

Fateh Djebli, Wahid Draouet, Said Mansour. (2025) An Overview of University, Training, and Career Qualifications: A Focus on The Significance and Contributions to The Job Market and Entrepreneurship in Algeria. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 1(45). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.1(45).2025.3195

DOI

[https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.1\(45\).2025.3195](https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.1(45).2025.3195)

RECEIVED

05 December 2024

ACCEPTED

07 February 2025

PUBLISHED

10 February 2025

LICENSE



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AN OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSITY, TRAINING, AND CAREER QUALIFICATIONS: A FOCUS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE JOB MARKET AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ALGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The professional future and employment prospects are the main worries for young academics, including those based in Algeria. While young people are engaged in their university education, they are also actively seeking ways to enhance their skills and talents. One of the most critical contemporary issues and problems faced by young academics is the need to acquire professional qualifications and prepare for entry into the job market and entrepreneurship. Algerian universities are dedicated to customizing their training programs in order to cater to the demands of the job market. Due to the state's focus on entrepreneurship and the successful endeavors of many young individuals in self-employment, they actively promote creativity and personal growth, particularly in light of the opportunities presented by the digital era. Our article examines how Algerian university training programs contribute to preparing young Algerian students for the job market and entrepreneurship.

KEYWORDS

Training Programs, Professional Qualifications, Young Academics, Job Market, Entrepreneurship

CITATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

The concern over career prospects and successful integration into the job market is shared among many young university graduates. Algeria is currently grappling with a severe issue, which is unfortunately common in many countries, and it arises from the significant imbalance between the number of annual graduates and the limited capacity of the economy.

The foremost hurdle that recent university graduates encounter is the difficulty in finding a job opportunity after their long-term academic pursuit, which is exacerbated by the exponential demographic growth and pervasive unemployment rates across nations. In Algeria, specifically, there has been a significant increase in the number of graduates, which has resulted in a shortage of public positions and a mismatch with the job market demands.

The joint efforts of systems, universities, and labor market surveillance tools and mechanisms are focused on finding effective solutions to combat high unemployment rates among recent graduates. They are doing this by revising programs and improving academic results, as well as creating training programs that are tailored to meet the demands of the job market. By participating in this program, young academics will have the opportunity to enhance their professional qualifications, acquire the necessary skills and credentials, and increase their chances of securing employment in either the public or private labor market.

With the challenge at hand, Algerian universities are putting in considerable effort to adapt their training programs, aiming to better prepare recent graduates for the job market and enhance their chances of employability. The encouragement of entrepreneurship and the facilitation of small and medium-sized enterprise creation are becoming more and more prevalent. As the burden on the public and private employment sectors increased, the role of the university underwent a significant change. The emergence of entrepreneurial orientation can be attributed to its aim of inspiring and motivating young people to embark on their own ventures, whether they be projects or small/micro businesses. Consequently, the university implemented the establishment of entrepreneurship houses to bridge the gap between university youth and the social and economic world. Moreover, let's delve into the truth of higher education and how it aligns with the expectations of the job market. How do universities contribute to the dissemination of the culture of entrepreneurship?

The main objective of this article is to evaluate the impact of Algerian university training programs on the professional growth and qualification of young academics. Specifically, it seeks to analyze their potential in terms of job market prospects and entrepreneurial opportunities.

2. BACKGROUND

In the context of Algeria, one notable characteristic is the presence of high unemployment rates, especially among young individuals who have recently graduated. High unemployment rates and declining economic growth characterized Algeria during the 1990s and early 2000s, as the country grappled with an economic recession. According to Benhabib (2017), one of the factors contributing to this was the implementation of the structural adjustment program (SAP) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The implementation of the SAP resulted in a detrimental effect on the economy, causing significant job losses and a noticeable decrease in overall economic growth. Since the 2000s, the Algerian government has been actively implementing macroeconomic recovery plans in order to mitigate the effects of SAP.

State funding is going to be cut off due to the declining trade and the debt crisis. The consequences of this situation include speculation, deindustrialization, increased poverty rates, and job losses, particularly among individuals who have completed their university education. The attention has now shifted towards small businesses and the private sector, leading to a transformation in the way labor market regulations are being handled. (Ferroukhi, 2009)

The main focus of these plans was to create jobs and stimulate economic growth. In order to maximize job creation and sustain the declining unemployment rates that started in the 2000s, a new development plan is currently being implemented from 2015. The involvement of training institutions and universities is crucial in order to facilitate the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as part of these initiatives. (Boukedjane, 2022).

Algeria's training and labor market situation is characterized by a notable disparity between the skills acquired through university training and the specific demands of the labor market.

As far as entrepreneurship is concerned, there has been a significant surge in the interest specifically focused on youth entrepreneurship. The importance of understanding the desired supply and demand conditions for entrepreneurship is growing on a global scale, as highlighted by Thomas and Mueller (2000).

The state in Algeria has recognized the direct link between entrepreneurship and job creation, prompting them to take proactive measures. In their study on entrepreneurial intention, Nafa et al. (2018) found the results to be interesting in various ways. To begin with, it is important to note that Algerian students exhibit higher levels of entrepreneurial intention compared to students from other Western countries. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the economic situation faced by university students often pushes them to explore entrepreneurial opportunities in order to support themselves financially and make ends meet. Secondly, starting a business allows them to tap into their full potential and capitalize on their unique skills and abilities. Another factor that may contribute to these notable differences is the various incentives implemented by the Algerian government to encourage and support business start-ups within this particular demographic. (Nafa et al., 2018, p 29).

The objective of programs designed to foster the creation of startups in universities is to shift from a model where the State is the sole entrepreneur *to* one where students themselves become the entrepreneurs. This shift represents a significant and noteworthy dynamic that merits close monitoring and evaluation.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

The main objective of vocational training is to enhance the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of individuals in various professional domains. Moreover, the intention is to develop professional behaviors that directly correlate with increased efficiency within the worker's employing organization (Zayed, 2003, p196).

3.2 THE JOB MARKET

The labor market functions as a system where employers actively search for individuals who possess the necessary strengths and skills that align with their respective positions. The primary objective of this concept is to provide clarity on how labor interacts and competes in the market. This interaction is influenced by the balance of supply and demand in various labor sectors, as well as the broader economic factors that impact the overall economy (Beers, 2022).

3.3 ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The concept of entrepreneurship encompasses the action of initiating a fresh venture that brings about additional economic worth, skillfully utilizing available resources to provide a unique and groundbreaking product, or engaging in a novel economic endeavor that embraces creativity and entails a certain level of risk.

In the economic system, entrepreneurs are responsible for multiple essential tasks, as outlined by Bekaddour (2021, p03), which include taking risks, driving innovation, seizing opportunities, and effectively managing limited resources.

3.4 TRAINING PROGRAMS

According to Aggouni (2021, p67), the "training offer/programme" is the term used to describe the academic, scientific, and pedagogical content of initial higher education at universities and schools. When it comes to training programs, there is a systematic approach that includes pedagogical activities, methods, and strategies, with the involvement of qualified teachers and trainers. Comprising a collection of course activities, the program and course are integral to the academic curriculum, serving to achieve objectives within specific timeframes (diploma) (Merad, and Fentazi, 2020, p260-261).

3.5 UNEMPLOYMENT

Our understanding of the term "unemployment" is based on the definition proposed by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO suggests that there are three key criteria that determine whether someone can be classified as unemployed. In order to meet the requirements, individuals must fulfill the criteria of being jobless, actively searching for employment, and currently accessible for work. The first and second criteria are universally accepted and not the subject of any controversy.

However, the third point is subject to debate. In order to meet the third criterion, individuals are required to perform designated actions referred to as "search" within a specified reference period. It is worth noting that the duration of the reference period directly influences the unemployment rate, with longer periods resulting in higher rates of unemployment (Tunali, I. and Özkan-Değirmenci, 2017).

Among the various ways to measure unemployment, the unemployment rate stands out as the most frequently employed one. The calculation of the unemployment rate involves dividing the number of individuals who are unemployed by the total number of people in the labor force. In accordance with the 2015 report from the U.S., Bureau of Labor Statistics.

4 METHODOLOGY

Our article presents preliminary results that were obtained by conducting a literature review of public policies and analyzing statistical data on graduate employment and entrepreneurship in Algeria, using a methodology and procedures that were carefully implemented.

In our capacity as researchers affiliated with the university, we have diligently observed and meticulously documented the complex matter surrounding the training and employment prospects for young

graduates. Utilizing primary data collection methods and conducting extensive statistical analysis, the article uncovers and analyzes the changes that have occurred in student enrollment, faculty demographics, and the overall number of universities in Algeria.

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The key points that are highlighted to significant prospects are underscored by the results and scores that we have generated. The results of the study emphasize the importance of reevaluating the architecture of training courses. This can be achieved by placing more emphasis on the development of cross-disciplinary skills, implementing sandwich courses, and promoting increased collaboration between the university and the socio-economic ecosystem in its vicinity.

It is important to recognize that higher education in Algeria has undergone substantial quantitative expansion since gaining independence, witnessing a remarkable surge in the number of students, institutes, and universities. According to the APS (2021), there has been a significant increase in the number of students, which has risen from 1,317 in 1962 to nearly 1,600,000 in the academic year of 2021/2022. Furthermore, the teaching staff has undergone enhancements, including the addition of new instructors and the implementation of a student-to-teacher ratio of 25:1 (Mimouni, 2022, p. 784).

The market requirements do not align with the training profiles of individuals, and this mismatch has been noted as significant. There are certain fields where the percentage of unemployed graduates surpasses 30%. Moreover, students are currently facing a deficiency in research and career guidance programs, as the majority of university courses maintain a general and unprofessionalized approach.

Despite the significance of the relationship between university and business in Algeria, as highlighted by GODIH and LAZREG in their study, there is minimal interaction with the socio-economic world (Godih and Lazreg, 2020, p231). This lack of interaction continues to be a major problem for the country's development, as stated by Meridja (2023, p127).

The reason behind the high unemployment rate among higher education graduates in Algeria is a combination of factors, including the low absorption capacity of the Algerian economy and the graduates' insufficient skills that do not meet the demands of the job market. As can be seen in the following table, the number of applicants greatly surpasses the number of available positions.

Table 1. Candidates vs. open positions for English teaching contracts at primary level (2022/2023)

<i>Wilaya/Municipality</i>	<i>Number of open positions</i>	<i>Number of applicants</i>
<i>Batna</i>	170	3700
<i>Khenchela</i>	62	1265
<i>Constantine</i>	133	2657
<i>Biskra</i>	32	936
<i>El Oued</i>	21	256
<i>Tébessa</i>	21	362

Source: Algerian education departments

If you refer to the document titled "Table n°01," you will discover an extensive compilation of individuals who have expressed their interest in being hired on a contractual basis for the purpose of teaching English at the primary level. Once this list is completed, it is then cross-referenced with the number of positions that will be open for the upcoming 2022/2023 season.

When looking at the table provided above, it becomes evident that there is a significant disparity between the number of applicants and the available positions for primary school English teachers for the upcoming 2022/2023 season. This is despite the recruitment policy being contractual. The presence of these confirmations highlights the ongoing disparity between the increasing number of higher education graduates and their lack of preparedness for the job market in Algeria.

According to Adda Boudjelal and Bouzidi (2019), the causes that have been identified for these issues include inadequate planning policies as well as training that is too theoretical and not connected enough to the realities experienced in the field.

In his study, Guendouz (2014) suggests that the Algerian university should focus on addressing the issue of adapting training programs to meet the demands of the job market. The goal is to establish a stronger link between higher education and the availability of employment opportunities. In contrast to developed countries,

Algeria confronts a substantial gap between the skills gained from university education and the economic demands it must meet. The low world ranking of Algerian universities highlights the presence of a gap that needs to be addressed. The crucial aspect is to align educational programs with the requirements of the job market and promote entrepreneurial abilities in students.

When discussing the influence of Algerian higher education on the proliferation of an entrepreneurial culture, it is essential to underscore the recent implementation of "entrepreneurship houses" and specialized programs within universities.

The Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Algeria has recently initiated the establishment of 84 entrepreneurship centers within universities throughout the nation. The aim of these houses is to inspire entrepreneurship among students at the university level, and they do so by introducing the concept of student entrepreneur and granting a diploma to those who qualify.

The clear evidence of the positive impact made by these initiatives can be seen in the increase in ANSEJ/ANADE registrations and the rate of business start-ups by graduates. The role played by this approach is incredibly crucial as it serves to promote and foster student entrepreneurship, effectively bridging the gap that exists between university education and the ever-evolving demands of the job market.

In Algeria, the government actively promotes entrepreneurship and innovation by implementing several initiatives. These include motivating students to think creatively, setting up dedicated centers and incubators for entrepreneurs, offering financial assistance, ensuring the safeguarding of intellectual property and patents, and updating public procurement procedures to keep pace with modern practices.

Given the current situation, it is imperative to reevaluate the framework of higher education in Algeria. This can be achieved by placing greater importance on the acquisition of transferable skills, broadening the accessibility of sandwich courses and internships, and establishing stronger links between universities and the business sector.

In order to meet the socio-economic needs of the nation, it is worth considering the promotion of student entrepreneurship as a means to enhance the employability of recent graduates.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The primary emphasis of this article is placed on the essential function that Algerian universities serve in empowering students for their prospective occupations and facilitating their smooth entry into the workforce. Training programs are undergoing a gradual shift, focusing more on equipping individuals with the necessary skills for specific professions that offer job opportunities.

The statistics on job seekers compared to available positions, as well as the unemployment rates among university graduates, serve as evidence for the existence of a noticeable disparity between outcomes and market demand in Algeria. However, it is important to recognize that more steps need to be taken in order to ensure that university education is fully in line with the social and economic realities and demands of the country.

There is growing recognition of the potential for student entrepreneurship as an opportunity worth exploring. In an effort to combat high unemployment rates, the Algerian university is focusing on fostering entrepreneurship among young academics, highlighting the fact that their role extends beyond simply awarding degrees for the purpose of employment.

Additionally, in order to cultivate the entrepreneurial mindset, we can create entrepreneurship houses where students can reside and integrate entrepreneurship classes seamlessly into the curriculum.

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