

Professional Integration of University Graduates in Algeria: A Sociological Approach to Understanding Unemployment

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Introduction

The centralised and directed development model produced four significant phenomena in Algeria between 1970 and 1985. First, it produced a noticeable decline in unemployment through the creation of one million new jobs in the public sector. Second, it produced the remarkable development of the wage labour system, which reached 75% of the economically active population. Third, it produced the emergence and expansion of the middle classes as a result of sustained economic growth and free education in Algeria. Fourth, it resulted in the implementation of a comprehensive employment policy in the public sector. However, although this policy succeeded in eliminating unemployment, it was criticised for not being based on efficiency and rationality. The two main reasons given for these were (1) state prioritisation of social functions at the expense of economic functions, as the ideology of economic efficiency and effectiveness was not a priority for the state; and (2) the predominance of the logic of employment and productivity was not on the agenda of political leaders at the time.

All these factors have harmed the Algerian economy negatively. One of the most important of these negative results was the forced resort by political leaders to institutional and economic reforms and liberal policies after 1990 due to the sudden drop in oil prices in 1986. Consequently, the implementation of these forced liberal economic reforms led to a clear breakdown of the wage labour system and its selectivity; the spread of parallel and informal work; a shift in the national economy towards the dominance of the service and commercial sectors and the attendant decline of the industrial and agricultural sectors; the dominance of new forms of atypical employment contracts such as fixed-term contracts (CDI) and informal work, especially professional and geographical mobility of unskilled labour in particular; the expansion of the family-based private service and commercial sector (90% with fewer than 10 employees); the widening gap and disparity between the education system and the new skills required in the labour market; and rising unemployment, which reached 30% of the economically active population in 2000 as a result of mass layoffs in public institutions (45,000 workers).

However, following the recovery in oil prices and the subsequent large-scale development programmes and projects after 2000, the labour market in Algeria witnessed a significant decline in unemployment, fluctuating between 9.8% in 2013 and 8.3% in 2023. Three main factors contributed significantly to the continuous decline in unemployment since 2000. The first was the implementation of development programmes and major projects such as airports, the East/West motorway, the Million Homes programme, the capital's metro and tramways due to the huge rise in oil prices and the

participation of foreign oil companies in pumping this resource. The second was the significant financial assistance and facilities provided to farmers. The last was the diversification and multiplicity of agencies in Algeria supporting youth employment, such as the National Employment Agency (ANEM), the National Youth Employment Agency (ANSEJ), the National Unemployment Fund (CNAC) and the National Microcredit Management Agency (ANGEM).

Objective of the study

This study has five objectives. The first is to assess the effectiveness of these public agencies and families in the process of professional integration and, consequently, in reducing unemployment. The second is to determine the weight of the various social actors, namely university graduates (the target subjects of the study) and the state (as well as its agencies for assisting the professional integration of young people). The third is to explore the family as another actor and contributor to the success or failure of professional and social integration. In relation to this objective, we ask: What is the role of social background, type of degree, and gender in shaping types of socio-professional integration and specific career paths? Can the results of the specific strategies of the three actors reveal a pattern or typology for university graduates entering the labour market and structuring their professional and social lives? The fourth objective is to identify the career path possibilities for the group surveyed four years after graduation, based on an analysis of the following stages: the pre-graduation stage, graduation and the start of the job search, and the stages of alternation between employment and unemployment during the proposed time period. The fifth is to analyse the group's professional situation four years after graduation. Does the absence or vagueness of future professional and social projects accelerate or hinder the process of professional integration? How can we explain or understand the uncertainty surrounding the absence of a life and career plan at the end of university studies? These questions are essential for us to build a path to professional and social integration.

Understanding this process is influenced by three fundamental factors in achieving professional integration, namely: "the type of degree and educational path" in the university system, the "social background" of university graduates and "individual initiative and level of ambition".

Sociological characteristics of university graduates

The questionnaire was distributed at the level of the housing unit. A total of 840 housing units were covered by the survey. The city of Oran where the survey was distributed is divided into 12 administrative districts, with 184 housing units included in the survey. The main criterion for determining the participation of a housing unit was whether the young person had obtained a university degree between 2009 and 2015.

University graduation periods

Table 10.1. *Distribution of university degree holders by province*

Graduation period	Census	Percentage
Certificate holders before 2012	384	45.6
Certificate holders after 2012	457	54.3
TOTAL	841	100%

University graduates live in heterogeneous housing units across the five administrative districts. In terms of educational attainment, the survey highlights the significant gap between them and their children. Only 21.3% of parents have a university degree, while the majority of this group have an educational level ranging from intermediate to secondary (42.21%). The field survey revealed that 506 university graduates were employed at the time of the field survey (i.e. 60.17%), while 335 university graduates were looking for work (i.e. 39.83%).

Age and professional status

Table 10.2. *Age of university degree holders by professional status and age*

Professional status	21 to 25 years	26 to 30 years	Over 31	Total
Certificate holder in employment	28.1%	58.9%	13%	100%
Certificate holder in an unemployed position	55.5%	40.0%	4.5%	100%
Total	39%	51.4%	9.6%	100%

We can conclude from Table 10.2 that more than 70% of university graduates over the age of 26 are employed, while university graduates under the age of 25 are the most vulnerable to unemployment.

Gender and professional status

In the surveyed group, female university graduates represent the majority, accounting for 59.9% of the sample of 841 respondents, while male university graduates account for only 40.1%. This numerical superiority is however not reflected in the labour market. Of the 335 university graduates seeking employment, 211 are women and only 124 are men.

The unemployment rate among female university graduates is higher than that of their male counterparts, and the inequality in the type of employment obtained exacerbates social differentiation between the sexes, despite their high numbers, as is clear from Table 10.3.

Table 10.3. *Employment status by gender %*

University graduates by type	Permanent employment %	Temporary employment %	Self-employed or employee %	Job seekers %	Total %
Male	16.9	31.5	14.8	36.8	100 (337)
Female	15.1	38.3	4.8	41.9	100 (504)
Total	15.8	35.6	8.8	39.8	100 (841)

As for specialisations, we find that university graduates in social sciences, humanities, law and economics are the most vulnerable to unemployment, accounting for 69% of the sample studied. While the remaining disciplines of a technical nature (medical sciences, paramedical sciences and engineering sciences) shared the remaining percentage.

The distribution of degree holders according to their university majors reveals the selective nature of the labour market in its treatment of higher education degrees. While the employability of medical science degrees is high (we did not record a single case of job seekers in the fields of medicine, pharmacy and dentistry). This employability clearly declines among holders of degrees in the humanities, social sciences and languages (we will discuss this in detail when presenting the results).

The survey also reveals unemployment among university graduates in engineering (72/152 engineers), which means that the prestigious degrees are facing the issue of low employability. The state of entrepreneurial activity invested in by university degree holders represents an exceptional path in professional integration, with 55/841 scientific degree holders.

Professional mobility of university graduates in employment

Table 10.4. *Career mobility of university graduates in employment*

	First job	Second job	Third job	Fourth job
Graduates in employment	411 (81.2%)	140 (27.6%)	38 (7.5%)	6 (1.9%)

Table 10.4 shows that upward career mobility diminishes over time, as does career stability in the sense of career stagnation.

University degree holders face the challenges of the selective local job market in Oran

The selectivity of the labour market and its specific logic are reflected in the distribution of precarious professional situations, which are almost stable and exclude others from entering the job market for varying periods of time. The elements of this selective logic can be seen in “university degrees”, “the employment sector”, “gender” and “the social origin of university degree holders”.

University graduates in professional activity (public and private sectors)

University degree holders are distributed almost equally between the public and private sectors. Statistical data confirm that the public sector (55.6%) does not monopolise the employment of this category, while the private sector employs (44.4%) of those in active employment. This convergence in the rates of professional integration of university degree holders hides differences that can be summarised in at least two types: the public sector provides employment opportunities in the form of 'salaried' positions for 63.47% of university graduates, while the private sector provides employment opportunities in the same form for only 36.53%. If we also examine the distribution of the salaried category (permanent/non-permanent employees) between the public and private sectors, we find clear inequalities between them.

The type of employment associated with the type of employment relationship reveals that the public sector provides permanent employment opportunities for more than one-third of its employees, while the private sector provides permanent employment opportunities for university graduates for only one-fifth of the graduate category.¹

Table 10.5. Distribution of university graduates in salaried employment by sector of activity

Total	Public sector	Private Sector	Type of employee
100%	76.16% 37.50%	23.84% 20.40%	Permanent employees
100%	57.70% 62.50%	42.30% 79.60%	Temporary employees
100%	63.47%	36.54%	TOTAL

University degree specialisation and professional integration:

In terms of specialisations, approximately 70% of respondents who are professionally active hold degrees in social sciences, economics, law, arts and languages while those with degrees in technical fields (medical sciences and engineering) account for only 18.20%. The percentage of university graduates with degrees in paramedical sciences, classified as vocational training.

¹ The proposed ratio for university degree holders in professional activity in the public and private sectors also includes a percentage of those in entrepreneurial professional activity or in cases of freelance professional activity or employment, while the proposed ratios in Table 10.5 represent only the distribution of university degree holders in the public and private sectors working under the permanent/non-permanent salary system (permanent/non-permanent).

Table 10.6. *Distribution of the research sample according to university degree specialisation*

Total	Engineering	Arts and Languages	Law and Economics	Paramedical Sciences	Medical Sciences	Social Sciences	Specialisation
841 100%	152 18.06%	131 15.58%	247 29.37%	87 10.35%	22 2.62%	202 24.02%	Census

The service sector appears to be the only and most important sector that provides a significant number of professional integration opportunities for university graduates. University graduates classified as permanently employed are mainly found in the service sector (84.7%). While their presence is almost negligible in agriculture (0.8%) and construction and public works (1.5%) and amounts to 13% in industry. In this regard, we should not hide the fact that the service sector, despite attracting many university graduates, only provides 30.28% of permanent paid employment opportunities, while most graduates are in unstable professional situations in terms of employment contracts.

Regarding specialisations, we find differences in the rates of permanent employment, but what is noticeable at first glance is the high employment rate among holders of degrees in medical sciences (general practitioners, pharmacists, dental surgeons) and lower among university graduates in the social sciences and humanities. These differences in the employability of the two types of degrees also reflect differences in selection systems, not only when entering the labour market, but also in the selection systems used by centralised guidance services after obtaining the baccalaureate.

Situation of university graduates in permanent employment by field of study

Table 10.7. *Percentage of university graduates in permanent paid employment*

Engineering degrees	Languages and literature	Law and economics	Paramedical sciences	Medical sciences	Social sciences	Specialty
30%	29.27%	23.18%	30.44%	77.28%	15.20%	Percentage

Table 10.7 shows the extent of selectivity in the labour market, particularly among the noble disciplines and social sciences.

University graduates in permanent paid employment by gender and specialisation

Table 10.8. University graduates in permanent paid employment by gender and specialisation

Engineering	Arts and languages	Legal and economic sciences	Paramedical sciences	Medical sciences	Social sciences	Specialisation
27.09%	22.73%	22.23%	<u>41.67%</u>	<u>88.89%</u>	<u>18%</u>	Males in permanent employment
<u>34.38%</u>	<u>31.67%</u>	23.75%	26.47%	69.23%	12.17%	Females in permanent employment

Professional integration through temporary employment contracts seems to be closely linked to university degrees in the humanities and social sciences, which are experiencing an increase in student numbers compared to other university courses. This confirms the argument that university programmes with low student selection rates are those with high labour market selectivity and high rates of professional precariousness due to non-permanent paid employment contracts.

The rates of job insecurity among university graduates are similar in the social sciences and in languages and literature. Approximately two-thirds of graduates in these two fields are employed on temporary contracts.

It appears that professional integration through non-permanent employment contracts is the most common form of employment offered by the labour market to university graduates.

University graduates facing unemployment and barriers to professional integration:

Sociological characteristics of university graduates and the unemployed

Many specialists agree that it is difficult to precisely define the concept of unemployment and draw boundaries around it. In other words, it is impossible to distinguish between two contradictory situations, namely active and inactive, for several reasons, the most important of which are as follows:

- The absence of accurate tools for measuring unemployment that are valid in terms of place and time. This is agreed upon by specialists, especially when they include the phenomenon of unemployment within the economically active population.
- The unemployed are considered to be deprived of work, but people without work are not unemployed. This is where the difficulty lies in determining the status and position of the unemployed, given the ambiguity of their situation: they are not working, but at the same time they are considered to be economically active.
- The difficulty of identifying and classifying unemployed groups who are not currently looking for work.

The statistical surveys conducted periodically by the National Statistics Office in Algeria provide us with important data about unemployment and employment for economically active people in general and Algerian university graduates in particular. For example, unemployment rates ranged from 30% in 2000 to 9.5% in 2023, as shown in Table 10.9. The main reasons for these fluctuations can be attributed to several factors, chief among them global oil prices, demographics, the nature of the education system, and official employment policy.

On the other hand, unemployment primarily affects young people, with approximately 1 million young people aged 14-24, or about 3.1 million, and in second place are girls, with more than 2 million, or twice the number of males for the same year. In third place are university students.

Table 10.9. *Unemployment trends between 1997 and 2023 (in thousands and %)*

1997	2000	2004	2007	2010	2014	2017	2023
2049	2430	1670	1374	1076	1151	12277	1225
26.4%	29.7%	17.7%	13.8%	10%	9.8%	12%	9.3%

Source: ONS

For example, in 2014, the number of unemployed university graduates reached 262,000, of whom 89,000 were young men, representing 34% of the total, and 173,000 were young women, representing 66% of the total. In 2023, the percentage dropped to 30% according to official statistics. As for the field study we conducted in the city of Oran, the results indicate that about 335 university graduates, or 40% of the total sample, were looking for work. More than half of them (55.5%) were in the 21-25 age group, while the remaining 40% were between 26 and 30 years old. Most of them (56.6%) were single, less than 12% were married, 90.7% lived in privately-owned flats, and 43% lived in HLM buildings.

The study shows us that the distribution of unemployed and job seekers according to different neighbourhoods in the city of Oran reflects a kind of social hierarchy and gradation of neighbourhoods, as long as the social classification according to class affiliations in the neighbourhoods of Oran remains incomplete.

The available results also indicate that the percentage of unemployed women and job seekers reached 63%, while the percentage of unemployed young men did not exceed 37% of the total number of university graduates seeking employment during the study. The difficulties faced by female university graduates in entering the labour market are not limited to gender but extend to a wide range of areas. It should also be noted that social differentiation is evident in the field of employment and its type, for example when we look at the number of permanent and temporary employees among both genders (ONS 2014, 2).

Gender and social status of university graduates

Table 10.10. Distribution of university graduates by gender and social status of university graduates

Social status of university graduates	Gender		Total
	Males	Females	
Employed	213	293	506
	42.1%	57.9%	100.0%
	<u>63.2%</u>	<u>58.1%</u>	60.2%
Job seekers	124	211	335
	37.0%	63.0%	100.0%
	<u>36.8%</u>	<u>41.9%</u>	39.8%
Total	337	504	841
	40.1%	59.9%	100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

It appears that experience and seniority play a facilitating role in the process of professional integration, given the selective nature of the labour market. We note that recent graduates, i.e. those who graduated after 2012, are the most vulnerable to unemployment, accounting for 69.5% of all university graduates while graduates from older cohorts, i.e. those who graduated between 2009 and 2012, accounted for only 30.5% of the unemployed and job seekers. This is illustrated in Table 10.11:

Table 10.11. Distribution of university graduates and their professional status (2009-2012) and after 2012

		Graduates between 2009 and 2012	Graduates after 2012	Total %
	Employed	28	225	506
		55.5%	44.5%	100.0%
		<u>73.4%</u>	<u>49.2%</u>	60.2%
	Job seekers	102	232	334
		30.5%	69.5%	100.0%
		<u>26.6%</u>	<u>50.8%</u>	39.8%
Total		383	457	840
		45.6%	54.4%	100.0%
		<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	100.0%

The labour market tends to be selective in terms of university degrees and specialisations. Three specialisations stand out, with a surplus of unemployed graduates in law and economics, accounting for 28.7% of the total number of unemployed university graduates, followed by social sciences with an estimated 23%, and finally engineering with 21.5%. It should be noted that medical sciences are not affected by unemployment at all.

While university degrees in law, economics and social sciences have reached saturation point and have been undesirable in the labour market for some time, what is striking is the phenomenon of unemployment among engineers, which is a recent phenomenon, as shown in Table 10.12.

Table 10.12. Professional status of graduates by specialisation 2009/2012/-after 2019

University graduate status		Specialisation						Total
		Social sci-ences	Medi-cal sci-ences	Paramedi-cal sciences	Legal and eco-nomic sciences	Arts and lan-guages	Engineer-ing sci-ences	
	Employed persons	125	22	46	151	82	80	506
		24.7%	4.3%	9.1%	29.8%	16.2%	15.8%	100.0 %
		61.9%	100.0%	52.9%	61.1%	62.6%	52.6%	60.2%
	Job seekers	77	0	41	96	49	72	335
		23.0%	0.0%	12.2%	28.7%	14.6%	21.5%	100.0 %
		38.1%	0.0%	47.1	38.9%	37.4%	47.4%	39.8%
Total		202	22	87	247	131	152	841
		24.0%	2.6%	10.3%	29.4%	15.6%	18.1%	100.0 %
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0 %

Some reasons can be given to explain the phenomenon of unemployment among engineers. One was the higher education reforms in the early 1970s that prioritised technological science specializations. However, the sudden decline in oil prices in 1986 and the subsequent implementation of mandatory liberal reforms to implement structural adjustment policies (1994-1997) all led to a clear decline in the industrial sector and the need for mass layoffs of a significant number of employees (45,000), including a large proportion of engineers. A second reason was the hoarding of employees. Public institutions resorted to the internal labour market when they needed engineers to replace retirees and laid-off employees. A third reason was the diversity and abundance of engineering training centres without knowledge of the market's need for new specialisations. A fourth reason was the continuation of university training for engineers from an academic and theoretical perspective, at a time when the employing sectors are demanding procedural engineers with experience and high competence.

Competency structure at the national level

Table 10.13. Structure of professional competencies at the national level

Inflation of senior administrative competencies		Shortage of engineers
Categories with medium competencies	Inflation of middle management positions	Scarcity of highly skilled workers
Unqualified categories	Inflation of ordinary administrators	Inflation of unskilled workers

The Algerian state implemented a bold policy in the field of education starting in 1970, with the democratisation of the university system, the direct result of which was the expansion of higher education (1971 reform). It can be said that the university system at that time was generally based on merit, as can be seen in the fading relationship between the educational level of parents and the type of university specialisations (see Table 10.5). However, the problem of unequal opportunities becomes clear once students finish their university studies and enter the job market. This is evident in the results reflected in Table 10.10, which shows the individual status of university graduates according to social origin, based on a logic of differentiation and disparities according to social development, whether for the unemployed or the employed.

University graduates seeking employment according to social background

For example, 13.5% of them are from upper-class social backgrounds, 39.2% belong to the middle class, and 46.3% of all university graduates seeking employment are from poor backgrounds. It can be said that the massification and free nature of higher education, while giving opportunities to different segments of society without discrimination, has resulted in new forms of inequality of opportunity: Firstly, at the level of specialisations and their overcrowding, followed by the problem of the significant decline in the value of university degrees and, consequently, the contraction of the traditional function of the education system as the main channel for upward social mobility. Inequality of opportunity clearly continues once university graduates enter the labour market, where new conditions play a role in determining the ease or difficulty of professional integration.

There are two noticeable trends in the length of time spent looking for work. The first and main trend is a short waiting period of less than one year, representing 38.6% of all unemployed university graduates, with women accounting for more than half (53%) of all job seekers during this period. The second main trend is that the job search period exceeds 19 months, which is the longest period and exceeds 46% of all university graduates seeking employment. This is always to the detriment of girls.

Table 10.14. Duration of job search by social category

Duration of job search	Lower class	Middle class	Upper class ¹	Total
1 to 3 months	19%	28.6%	52.4	100.0%
	9.1%	4.5%	6.4	6.2%
4 to 6 months	9.1%	72.7%	18.2	100.0%
	4.5%	12.1%	2.6	6.5%
7 to 12 months	14.4%	36.1%	49.5	100.0%
	23.9%	35.6%	41	39.2%
13 to 18 months	0.0%	50%	50	100.0%
	0.0%	1.5%	1.3	1.2%
From 19 to 24 months	12.7%	38%	49.3	100.0%
	20.5%	20.5%	22.4	21.1%
From 19 to 24 months	11.5%	40.4%	48.1	100.0%
	22.7%	25.8%	26.3	25.8%
TOTAL	13.1%	39.2%	46.3	100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100	100.0%

Duration of job search according to the social origin of university graduates seeking employment

We note that there is a strong correlation between the duration of the job search and the social status of parents or social origins. This can be seen whether we read Table 10.14 vertically or horizontally. Indeed, when we look at Table 10.14, we see that unemployment affects university graduates seeking employment in a discriminatory manner, not only according to gender but also according to class affiliation. This can be clearly seen in the fact that unemployment affects first the university graduates from the lower class, then those from the middle class, and lastly those from the upper class. On the other hand, this conclusion can be reinforced by examining the issue of job insecurity. When we look at university graduates in precarious employment, we find that members of the same professional groups are vulnerable to job insecurity.

The problem of finding employment and its relationship to the strategy of unemployed university graduates

The possibility of obtaining a job and the length of time spent looking for one are determined by the personal attitudes of those concerned, their perception of the world of work, and their strategies for their professional and personal life projects. University graduates primarily resort to competitions and directly approaching economic institutions, then to the employment office (the National Employment Agency, ANEM), and thirdly to family and personal connections to find work. The results of

the National Statistics Agency's investigations seem to show the same pattern of behaviour among university students when it comes to looking for work. For example, the agency's official data indicates that 204,000 job seekers, or 30%, turn to the National Employment Agency.

However, it appears that female university graduates prefer to turn to the National Employment Agency in the first instance, accounting for approximately 29% of all female job seekers, followed by family connections at 30.3%, while male university graduates prefer to turn first to personal and family connections, at approximately 35% of all job seekers, followed by the National Employment Agency at 23.3% and, to a lesser extent, economic institutions, according to official statistics for 2014.²

When we address the subject of the desires of university graduates seeking employment, we clearly remember that most of them want to join the world of paid work (61.4% of the total), but they rarely turn to entrepreneurship, as only 11% of them are interested in it, while 27.7% are undecided, which is a significant percentage and indicates the uncertainty of job seekers' choices in their professional lives. More than half of job seekers, or 55.5%, would accept a job that does not match their qualifications, while 52.3% of the total and 63.2% refuse to work outside their state, especially female university graduates, and accept any job, regardless of its type, even if the pay is low (65%). Approximately 60% accept work far from their place of residence. However, it is noteworthy that more than 58% of these university graduates refuse to accept tiring work, and this logic is completely in line with the populist ideology that is prevalent and entrenched in the minds of society, which rejects the value of effort and merit and encourages dependency and reliance on others.

Strategies of key players in the professional integration process

University students' strategy

The most important ideas drawn from this topic are detailed here. The choice of a life project and its lack of clarity among university students, especially during their university studies, rarely leads to the emergence of a prominent professional project in the future, which complicates the process of professional integration. It can be said that the official university orientation doubles the ambiguity of the professional project. We can exclude some noble specialisations such as medical sciences.

Given the selectivity of the labour market and the decline in the value of university degrees, this leads to the emergence of diverse and different strategies related to social origin, type of degree, gender and family status. University graduates resort to compensatory strategies to address the selectivity of the labour market by either accepting any job in any economic sector on a temporary basis while waiting to find a job that matches their desires and, at the same time, gaining professional experience and establishing social and professional relationships. They resort to working in the informal sector if there are no jobs available in the formal sector. They also resort to taking competitive examinations to further their studies or vocational training to improve their chances of professional integration.

2 Reference cited on P. 6

Most university graduates prefer to work in the public sector, which offers them several advantages that are not available in other sectors, particularly the private sector, such as job stability, salary, social security and career advancement. For those who are moving towards entrepreneurship, there are two different paths in this regard. The first type relates to university graduates who have suffered greatly from precarious professional conditions and have been forced to venture into the world of entrepreneurship, often complicating their professional situations and living in a cycle of precarious and permanent work. The second type involves those who have significant assets, such as economic or social capital, or both, which often lead to the success of their projects.

Family strategies

Family strategies depend first on the social status of the parents and then on their level of education, which contribute to the success or failure of the professional integration process. This strategy may begin with the type of school and university education in general. Economic or cultural capital, or both, may contribute to the success of professional integration and the possibility of correcting one's career path, or the possibility of expanding one's social status.

Strategies of public agencies to support university students

Two public agencies have been set up specifically to guide university students and facilitate the process of finding suitable jobs for university students seeking employment. There is a difference in the strategy adopted by public agencies to support university graduates, which was initially based on social logic and social solidarity, but has gradually shifted to economic logic, leading to conflicting visions and misunderstandings with the economic logic that gives them the opportunity to build successful career paths. The difference between the two strategies has been exacerbated by the prevalence of a passive attitude among young people, which is fuelled and reinforced by official populist ideology.

On the other hand, there is rampant bureaucracy and lack of coordination between employment support agencies, a lack of follow-up and field inspections, a huge increase in the number of applications from university graduates, and widespread nepotism and bribery. All these factors undermine the credibility of these agencies and have caused the young people concerned to turn away from them and approach them in an opportunistic or spontaneous manner.

A final factor that should be noted is the constant fluctuation and change in the state's various procedures and rules in this area.

Prominent career paths and their forms

The following clear and distinctive forms of professional integration are recommended.

Successful professional integration

This concerns certain specialisations such as medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, where the integration process lasts for a certain period and is fraught with difficulties due to the large number of increasing batches. However, in the medium term, most of these individuals find professional stability in line with their specialisations, such as foreign languages, literature and Arabic.

Complex and long-term professional integration

This includes specialisations such as foreign languages, literature and Arabic, which enable them to find employment in education, the public sector and health care. Although they initially experience professional stagnation and instability, they eventually achieve decent professional integration and a career path that guarantees them a stable professional and social life.

Precarious professional integration

This concerns specialisations such as social sciences and humanities, the majority of whom suffer from professional and geographical instability, a lack of competence and difficult working and living conditions at the same time. These individuals belong to the poor and lower-middle classes, and many of them resort to radically changing their specialisation and pursuing a new career.

Integration through entrepreneurial ventures:

There are two forms of entrepreneurship adopted by some university graduates. The first form concerns the fortunate ones who have gains and privileges such as a father's institution or economic or social capital and their knowledge of the secrets of the business market. In general, most of them succeed in their work due to their family's distinguished material inheritance. The second type concerns university graduates who have tasted and grown weary of the bitterness of professional instability and have decided, out of desperation, to embark on an adventure that may end in success or failure and generally leads to a world of professional instability or informal work.

General summary of key findings

The choice of a life project and its lack of clarity among university students, especially during their university studies, rarely results in a clear professional project for the future, which complicates the process of professional integration.

It can be said that the formal university orientation doubles the ambiguity of the professional project and, therefore, of the process of professional integration in general. Some noble specialisations, such as medical sciences, may be excluded from this.

Given the selectivity of the labour market and the decline in the value of university degrees, this leads to the emergence of diverse and different strategies related to social origin, type of degree, gender and family status. University graduates adopt compensatory strategies to address the selectivity of the labour market by accepting any job in any economic sector on a temporary basis while waiting to find a job that matches their desires. At the same time, they gain professional experience and build social and professional relationships. They also opt to work in the informal sector if there are no jobs available in the formal sector or taking competitive examinations to continue their studies or vocational training to improve their chances of finding employment. Most university graduates prefer to work in the public sector, which offers them several advantages that are not available in other sectors, especially the private sector, such as job stability, salary, social security and career advancement.

For those who are moving towards entrepreneurship, there are two different paths in this regard. The first type relates to university graduates who have suffered greatly from precarious professional conditions and have been forced to venture into the world of entrepreneurship, often complicating their professional situations and living in a cycle of precarious and permanent work. The second type has significant assets, such as economic or social capital, or both, which often lead to the success of their professional projects, especially when it comes to compensating their fathers in their activities and institutions.

We propose follow-up fieldwork in successive periods for these graduates by extracting a small sample panel and then following up on the professional and social fate of these graduates. In this way, we can understand the process of professional integration in detail and thus shed light on many of the details and secrets of this complex phenomenon.

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